



Roman Jakobson (1959/2000) 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in R. Brower (ed.) (1959) *On Translation*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 232-9, reprinted in L. Venuti (ed.) (2000), pp. 113-18.

We distinguish three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols. These three kinds of translation are to be differently labeled:

- 1) Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
- 2) Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
- 3) Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.

The intralingual translation of a word uses either another, more or less synonymous, word or resorts to a circumlocution. Yet synonymy, as a rule, is not complete equivalence for example, 'every celibate is a bachelor, but not every bachelor is a celibate.' A word or an idiomatic phrase-word, briefly a code-unit of the highest level, may be fully interpreted only by means of an equivalent combination of code-units, i.e., a message referring to this code-unit: 'every bachelor is an unmarried man, and every unmarried man is a bachelor,' or 'every celibate is bound not to marry, and everyone who is bound not to marry is a celibate.'

Likewise, on the level of interlingual translation, there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages. The English word 'cheese' cannot be completely identified with its standard Russian heteronym 'сыр', because cottage cheese is a cheese but not a сыр. Russians say: *принеси сыру и творогу*, 'bring cheese and [sic] cottage cheese.' In standard Russian, the food made of pressed curds is called сыр only if ferment is used.

Most frequently, however, translation from one language into another substitutes messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language. Such a translation is a reported speech; the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.

Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics. Like any receiver of verbal messages, the linguist acts as their interpreter. No linguistic specimen may be interpreted by the science of language without a translation of its signs into other signs of the same system or into signs of another system. Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability; widespread practice of interlingual communication, particularly translating activities, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science. It is difficult to overestimate the urgent need for and the theoretical and practical significance of differential bilingual dictionaries with careful comparative definition of all the corresponding units in their intension and extension. Likewise differential bilingual grammars should define what unifies and what differentiates the two languages in their selection and delimitation of grammatical concepts.

Both the practice and the theory of translation abound with intricacies, and from time to time attempts are made to sever the Gordian knot by proclaiming the dogma of untranslatability. 'Mr. Everyman, the natural logician,' vividly imagined by B. L.



Whorf, is supposed to have arrived at the following bit of reasoning: 'Facts are unlike to speakers whose language background provides for unlike formulation of them.' In the first years of the Russian revolution there were fanatic visionaries who argued in Soviet periodicals for a radical revision of traditional language and particularly for the weeding out of such misleading expressions as 'sunrise' or 'sunset.' Yet we still use this Ptolemaic imagery without implying a rejection of Copernican doctrine, and we can easily transform our customary talk about the rising and setting sun into a picture of the earth's rotation simply because any sign is translatable into a sign in which it appears to us more fully developed and precise.

[...]

All cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language. Whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions. Thus in the newborn literary language of the Northeast Siberian Chukchees, 'screw' is rendered as 'rotating nail,' 'steel' as 'hard iron,' 'tin' as 'thin iron,' 'chalk' as 'writing soap,' 'watch' as 'hammering heart.' Even seemingly contradictory circumlocutions, like 'electrical horsecar' (электрическая конка), the first Russian name of the horseless street car, or 'flying steamship' (лета паравот), the Koryak term for the airplane, simply designate the electrical analogue of the horse-car and the flying analogue of the steamer and do not impede communication, just as there is no semantic 'noise' and disturbance in the double oxymoron – 'cold beef-and-pork hot dog.'

No lack of grammatical device in the language translated into makes impossible a literal translation of the entire conceptual information contained in the original. [...] If some grammatical category is absent in a given language, its meaning may be translated into this language by lexical means. Dual forms like Old Russian брата are translated with the help of the numeral: 'two brothers.' It is more difficult to remain faithful to the original when we translate into a language provided with a certain grammatical category from a language devoid of such a category. When translating the English sentence 'She has brothers' into a language which discriminates dual and plural, we are compelled either to make our own choice between two statements 'She has two brothers' – 'She has more than two' or to leave the decision to the listener and say: 'She has either two or more than two brothers.' Again in translating from a language without grammatical number into English one is obliged to select one of the two possibilities – 'brother' or 'brothers' or to confront the receiver of this message with a two-choice situation; 'She has either one or more than one brother.'

As Boas neatly observed, the grammatical pattern of a language (as opposed to its lexical stock) determines those aspects of each experience that must be expressed in the given language: 'We have to choose between these aspects, and one or the other must be chosen.'¹ In order to translate accurately the English sentence 'I hired a worker,' a Russian needs supplementary information, whether this action was completed or not and whether the worker was a man or a woman, because he must make his choice between a verb of completive or noncompletive aspect – нанял or нанимал – and between a masculine and feminine noun – работника or работницу. If I ask the utterer of the English sentence whether the worker was male or female, my question may be judged irrelevant or indiscreet, whereas in the Russian version of this

¹ [Jakobson's note] Franz Boas, 'Language', *General Anthropology* (Boston, 1938), pp. 132f.

Text B1.1
R. Jakobson

sentence an answer to this question is obligatory. On the other hand, whatever the choice of Russian grammatical forms to translate the quoted English message, the translation will give no answer to the question of whether I 'hired' or 'have hired' the worker, or whether he/she was an indefinite or definite worker ('a' or 'the'). Because the information required by the English and Russian grammatical pattern is unlike, we face quite different sets of two-choice situations; therefore a chain of translations of one and the same isolated sentence from English into Russian and vice versa could entirely deprive such a message of its initial content. The Geneva linguist S. Karcevski used to compare such a gradual loss with a circular series of unfavorable currency transactions. But evidently the richer the context of a message, the smaller the loss of information.

Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey. Each verb of a given language imperatively raises a set of specific yes-or-no questions, as for instance: is the narrated event conceived with or without reference to its completion? Is the narrated event presented as prior to the speech event or not? Naturally the attention of native speakers and listeners will be constantly focused on such items as are compulsory in their verbal code.



Task B1.1.2

'Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey', says Jakobson.

- Now that you have read Text B1.1 look back at the examples given by Jakobson and think how they would work between English and a language other than Russian. Do your findings support Jakobson's claim?
- Jakobson sees a compelling need for 'differential' dictionaries and grammars to assist translation. What ideas do you have for how these could be constructed and how they would function? How far do current dictionaries fulfil this need?

Translation Studies initially struggled to be recognized as an academic discipline internationally. Indeed, it was in the translation section of the Third International Congress of *Applied Linguistics* that James S. Holmes, an Amsterdam-based lecturer and literary translator, presented his famous paper 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies' in August 1972 (Holmes 1988/2000). The setting illustrated the fact that, at that time, outlets for researchers working on translation were to be found primarily in other, more established, disciplines. The paper was soon to be considered 'the founding statement of work in the field' (Gentzler 2001: 93). In it, Holmes ponders the impediments to the progress of the study of translation in the academic world which had long deemed translation to be a secondary or derivative activity. He suggests a name for this emerging discipline and maps out its possible 'scope and structure': 'theoretical' ('pure' and 'descriptive') and 'applied'. In the extract below, Holmes classifies possible areas of research in 'pure' Translation Studies.



Task B1.2.1

- Before you read Text B1.2, review the terms 'theoretical', 'descriptive' and 'applied' discussed in Section A, Unit 1, as they refer to Translation Studies. Look at the 'map' of the discipline, based on Holmes's paper, in Toury (1995: 10). This provides a useful overview and guide for this extract.
- As you read, list the different examples of research possibilities under the three headings (i) 'theoretical', (ii) 'descriptive' and (iii) 'applied'.

James S. Holmes (1988/2000) 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies', in *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies* (2nd edition, 1988), pp. 67-80, reprinted in L. Venuti (ed.) (2000), pp. 172-85.

Text B1.2
J. S. Holmes

A greater impediment than the lack of a generally accepted name in the way of the development of Translation Studies is the lack of any general consensus as to the scope and structure of the discipline. What constitutes the field of Translation Studies? A few would say it coincides with comparative (or contrastive) terminological and lexicographical studies; several look upon it as practically identical with comparative or contrastive linguistics; many would consider it largely synonymous with translation theory. But surely it is different, if not always distinct, from the first two of these, and more than the third. As is usually to be found in the case of emerging disciplines, there has as yet been little meta-reflection on the nature of Translation Studies as such – at least that has made its way into print and to my attention. One of the few cases that I have found is that of Werner Koller, who has given the following delineation of the subject: 'Übersetzungswissenschaft ist zu verstehen als Zusammenfassung und Überbegriff für alle Forschungsbemühungen, die von den Phänomenen "Übersetzen" und "Übersetzung" ausgehen oder auf diese Phänomene zielen.' (Translation studies is to be understood as a collective and inclusive designation for all research activities taking the phenomena of translating and translation as their basis or focus).¹

1.1

From this delineation it follows that Translation Studies is, as no one I suppose, would deny, an empirical discipline. Such disciplines, it has often been pointed out, have two major objectives, which Carl G. Hempel has phrased as 'to describe particular phenomena in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which they can be explained and predicted'.² As a field of pure research – that is to say, research pursued for its own sake, quite apart from any direct practical

1 [Holmes's note] Werner Koller, 'Übersetzen, Übersetzung, und Übersetzer. Zu schwedischen Symposien über Probleme der Übersetzung', *Babel* 17 (1971): 3-11, quotation p. 4.

2 [Holmes's note] Carl G. Hempel, *Fundamentals of Concept Formation in Empirical Science* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967; *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Foundation of the Unity of Sciences, II, Fasc. 7), p. 1.

application outside its own terrain – Translation Studies thus has two main objectives: (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. The two branches of pure Translation Studies concerning themselves with these objectives can be designated *descriptive translation studies* (DTS) or *translation description* (TD) and *theoretical translation studies* (ThTS) or *translation theory* (TTh).

1.11

Of these two, it is perhaps appropriate to give first consideration to *descriptive translation studies*, as the branch of the discipline which constantly maintains the closest contact with the empirical phenomena under study. There would seem to be three major kinds of research in DTS, which may be distinguished by their focus as product-oriented, function-oriented, and process-oriented.

1.111

Product-oriented DTS, that area of research which describes existing translations, has traditionally been an important area of academic research in Translation Studies. The starting point for this type of study is the description of individual translations, or text-focused translation description. A second phase is that of comparative translation description, in which comparative analyses are made of various translations of the same text, either in a single language or in various languages. Such individual and comparative descriptions provide the materials for surveys of larger corpuses of translations, for instance those made within a specific period, language, and/or text or discourse type. In practice the corpus has usually been restricted in all three ways: seventeenth-century literary translations into French, or medieval English Bible translations. But such descriptive surveys can also be larger in scope, diachronic as well as (approximately) synchronic, and one of the eventual goals of product-oriented DTS might possibly be a general history of translations – however ambitious such a goal may sound at this time.

1.112

Function-oriented DTS is not interested in the description of translations in themselves, but in the description of their function in the recipient socio-cultural situation: it is a study of contexts rather than texts. Pursuing such questions as [to] which texts were (and, often as important, were not) translated at a certain time in a certain place, and what influences were exerted in consequence, this area of research is one that has attracted less concentrated attention than the area just mentioned, though it is often introduced as a kind of sub-theme or counter-theme in histories of translations and in literary histories. Greater emphasis on it could lead to the development of a field of translation sociology (or – less felicitous but more accurate, since it is a legitimate area of Translation Studies as well as of sociology – socio-translation studies).

1.113

Process-oriented DTS concerns itself with the process or act of translation itself. The problem of what exactly takes place in the 'little black box' of the translator's 'mind' as he creates a new, more or less matching text in another language has been the subject of much speculation on the part of translation's theorists, but there has been very little attempt at systematic investigation of this process under laboratory

conditions. Admittedly, the process is an unusually complex one, one which, if I. A. Richards is correct, 'may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos'.³ But psychologists have developed and are developing highly sophisticated methods for analysing and describing other complex mental processes, and it is to be hoped that in future this problem, too, will be given closer attention, leading to an area of study that might be called translation psychology or psycho-translation studies.

1.12

The other main branch of pure Translation Studies, *theoretical translation studies* or *translation theory*, as its name implies, is not interested in describing existing translations, observed translation functions, or experimentally determined translating processes, but in using the results of descriptive translation studies, in combination with the information available from related fields and disciplines, to evolve principles, theories, and models which will serve to explain and predict what translating and translations are and will be.

1.121

The ultimate goal of the translation theorist in the broad sense must undoubtedly be to develop a full, inclusive theory accommodating so many elements that it can serve to explain and predict all phenomena falling within the terrain of translating and translation, to the exclusion of all phenomena falling outside it. It hardly needs to be pointed out that a *general translation theory* in such a true sense of the term, if indeed it is achievable, will necessarily be highly formalized and, however the scholar may strive after economy, also highly complex.

Most of the theories that have been produced to date are in reality little more than prolegomena to such a general translation theory. A good share of them, in fact, are not actually theories at all, in any scholarly sense of the term, but an array of, axioms, postulates, and hypotheses that are so formulated as to be both too inclusive (covering also non-translatory acts and non-translations) and too exclusive (shutting out some translatory acts and some works generally recognized as translations).

1.122

Others, though they too may bear the designation of 'general' translation theories (frequently preceded by the scholar's protectively cautious 'towards') are in fact not general theories, but partial or specific in their scope, dealing with only one or a few of the various aspects of translation theory as a whole. It is in this area of partial theories that the most significant advances have been made in recent years, and in fact it will probably be necessary for a great deal of further research to be conducted in them before we can even begin to think about arriving at a true general theory in the sense I have just outlined. *Partial translation theories* are specified in a number of ways. I would suggest, though, that they can be grouped together into six main kinds.

³ [Holmes's note] I. A. Richards 'Toward a Theory of Translating', in Arthur F. Wright (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 247-62.

1.1221

First of all, there are translation theories that I have called, with a somewhat unorthodox extension of the term, *medium-restricted translation theories*, according to the medium that is used. Medium-restricted theories can be further subdivided into theories of translation as performed by humans (human translation), as performed by computers (machine translation), and as performed by the two in conjunction (mixed or machine-aided translation). Human translation breaks down into (and restricted theories or 'theories' have been developed for) oral translation or interpreting (with the further distinction between consecutive and simultaneous) and written translation. Numerous examples of valuable research into machine and machine-aided translation are no doubt familiar to us all, and perhaps also several into oral human translation. That examples of medium-restricted theories of written translation do not come to mind so easily is largely owing to the fact that their authors have the tendency to present them in the guise of unmarked or general theories.

1.1222

Second, there are theories that are area-restricted. *Area-restricted theories* can be of two closely related kinds; restricted as to the languages involved or, which is usually not quite the same, and occasionally hardly at all, as to the cultures involved. In both cases, language restriction and culture restriction, the degree of actual limitation can vary. Theories are feasible for translation between, say, French and German (language-pair restricted theories) as opposed to translation within Slavic languages (language-group restricted theories) or from Romance languages to Germanic languages (language-group pair restricted theories). Similarly, theories might at least hypothetically be developed for translation within Swiss culture (one-culture restricted), or for translation between Swiss and Belgian cultures (cultural-pair restricted), as opposed to translation within western Europe (cultural-group restricted) or between languages reflecting a pre-technological culture and the languages of contemporary western culture (cultural-group pair restricted). Language-restricted theories have close affinities with the work being done in comparative linguistics and stylistics (though it must always be remembered that a language-pair translation grammar must be a different thing from a contrastive grammar developed for the purpose of language acquisition). In the field of culture-restricted theories there has been little detailed research, though culture restrictions, by being confused with language restrictions, sometimes get introduced into language-restricted theories, where they are out of place in all but those rare cases where culture and language boundaries coincide in both the source and target situations. It is moreover no doubt true that some aspects of theories that are presented as general in reality pertain only to the western cultural area.

1.1223

Third, there are *rank-restricted theories*, that is to say, theories that deal with discourses or texts as wholes, but concern themselves with lower linguistic ranks or levels. Traditionally, a great deal of writing on translation was concerned almost entirely with the rank of the word, and the word and the word group are still the ranks at which much terminologically oriented thinking about scientific and technological translation takes place. Most linguistically oriented research, on the other hand, has until very recently taken the sentence as its upper rank limit, largely ignoring the macro-structural aspects of entire texts as translation problems. The clearly discernible trend away from sentential linguistics in the direction of textual linguistics will, it is

to be hoped, encourage linguistically oriented theorists to move beyond sentence-restricted translation theories to the more complex task of developing text-rank (or 'rank-free') theories.

I.1224

Fourth, there are *text-type* (or discourse-type) *restricted theories*, dealing with the problem of translating specific types or genres of lingual messages. Authors and literary scholars have long concerned themselves with the problems intrinsic to translating literary texts or specific genres of literary texts; theologians, similarly, have devoted much attention to questions of how to translate the Bible and other sacred works. In recent years some effort has been made to develop a specific theory for the translation of scientific texts. All these studies break down, however, because we still lack anything like a formal theory of message, text, or discourse types. Both Bühler's theory of types of communication, as further developed by the Prague structuralists, and the definitions of language varieties arrived at by linguists particularly of the British school provide material for criteria in defining text types that would lend themselves to operationalization more aptly than the inconsistent and mutually contradictory definitions or traditional genre theories. On the other hand, the traditional theories cannot be ignored, for they continue to play a large part in creating the expectation criteria of translation readers. Also requiring study is the important question of text-type skewing or shifting in translation.

I.1225

Fifth, there are *time-restricted theories*, which fall into two types: theories regarding the translation of contemporary texts, and theories having to do with the translation of texts from an older period. Again there would seem to be a tendency to present one of the theories, that having to do with contemporary texts, in the guise of a general theory; the other, the theory of what can perhaps best be called cross-temporal translation, is a matter that has led to much disagreement, particularly among literarily oriented theorists, but to few generally valid conclusions.

I.1226

Finally, there are *problem-restricted theories*, theories which confine themselves to one or more specific problems within the entire area of general translation theory, problems that can range from such broad and basic questions as the limits of variance and invariance in translation or the nature of translation equivalence (or, as I should prefer to call it, translation matching) to such more specific matters as the translation of metaphors or of proper names.

Task B1.2.2



- Holmes describes what he terms the 'ultimate goal' of a 'full, inclusive theory of translation'. Having read Text B1.2, what kinds of phenomena and predictions do you think that such a theory, if possible, might consist of?
- Holmes provides many examples of different categories of research. Give further examples of possible similar research projects involving your languages which would illustrate each category.