



DBB 408 TRANSLATION STUDIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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WHAT IS TRANSLATION?



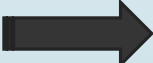
What is translation?

- How can we 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**:

- **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 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).

Source Text  Target text

- The second sense centres on the concrete translation **product** produced by the translator.

- ▶ **Source language:** The language being translated from.
- ▶ **Target language:** The language being translated to.
- ▶ Turkish → English

- ▶ This distinction is drawn out by the definition in the specialist *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997:181):
- ▶ **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 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**. Moreover, the reference to **machine translation** reveals that translation is now no longer the preserve of human translators.

From Peter Newmark's (1981) Approaches to Translation:

- 1. A translation must give the words of the original.
- 2. A translation must give the ideas of the original.
- 3. A translation should read like an original work.
- 4. A translation should read like a translation.
- 5. A translation should reflect the style of the original.
- 6. A translation should possess the style of the original.
- 7. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
- 8. A translation may add to or omit from the original.

Principles of Translation

► Meaning

- Is the meaning of the original text clear? If not, where does the uncertainty lie?
- Are any words “loaded”, that is, are there any underlying implications? (ex: Correct me if I’m wrong but...)
- Is the dictionary meaning of a particular word the most suitable one?
- Does anything in the translation sound unnatural or forced?

- ▶ Form: The ordering of words and ideas must match the original as closely as possible.
- ▶ Register: levels of formality
 - ▶ Would any expression in the original sound too formal/ informal, cold/ warm, personal/ impersonal... if translated literally?
 - ▶ What is the intention of the speaker or writer? (to persuade/ dissuade, apologize/ criticize?) Does this come through in the translation?
- ▶ Source language influence:
 - ▶ Does it sound natural in the target language?
- ▶ Style and clarity:
 - ▶ The translator shouldn't change the style of the text.

INTERLINGUAL, INTRALINGUAL AND INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION

- ▶ There is a potential confusion of translation with **interpreting**.
- ▶ **Interpreting**: oral translation of a spoken message or text.
- ▶ The potential field and issues covered by translation are vast and complex.
- ▶ **Benvenuti!** is the 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 sign languages 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.



► **EXAMPLE:**

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.

- In this particular case, it is not translation between two languages, but between two versions or dialects of the same language. This is termed '**intralingual translation**' in Roman Jakobson's **typology**.
- In the Hebrew translation of the same book, the translator chose to substitute the British word with a traditional Jewish sweet, a kind of marshmallow. This is termed «**interlingual translation**».
- In his seminal paper, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' (1959, 2000), 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.

► Examples of intralingual translation:

lift – elevator

lorry – truck

tin – can

telly – television

tube - subway

- ▶ Examples of **interlingual translation**:
- ▶ In the case of **«hello»**, it is pointed out that English does not distinguish between face to face greeting or that on the phone, whereas some other languages like French, Italian, Japanese and German make this distinction.
- ▶ In Japanese, **Konichiwa** is hello there, but when answering a phone, they say **mushi mushi**.

- The threefold definition of translation will thus be:
- 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.

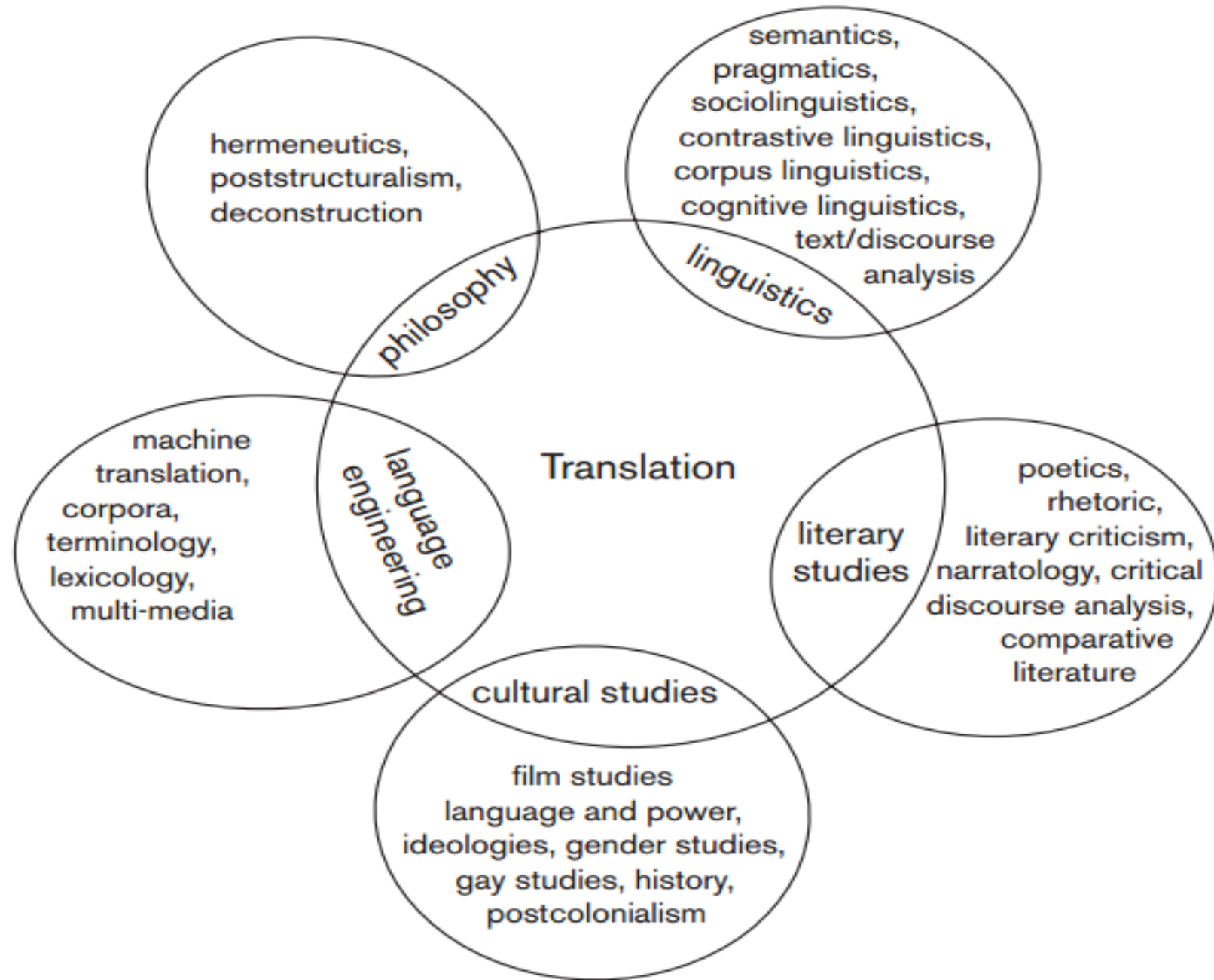
WHAT IS «TRANSLATION STUDIES»?

- ▶ 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 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.
- ▶ According to Holmes, the objectives of translation are two-fold:
- ▶ 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.

- ▶ Holmes's paper refers to many key aspects of translation. It talks of translation as:
 - a **process** – what happens in the act of translating the ST
 - a **product** – analysis of the TT
 - a **function** – how the TT operates in a particular context

DEVELOPMENTS IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

- ▶ 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.



Translation ↔ Linguistics

- ▶ Linguistics is the study of language and has produced such powerful and productive theories about how language works, and translation is a language activity. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language - a general linguistic theory".
- ▶ Linguistics is a discipline which studies language both in its own right and as a tool for generating meanings. It should therefore have a great deal to offer to the discipline of translation studies
- ▶ The relationship of linguistics to translation can be twofold: one can apply the findings of linguistics to the practice of translation, and one can apply a *linguistic* theory of translation to a literary, economic or psychological theory of translation.

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Research into translation is possible from many different angles, from scientific to literary, cultural and political.

CONCLUSION

- This introduction has discussed the definition of translation and the different types of translation.
- Most written translation is understood as **interlingual** translation, but we must acknowledge that the concept is more fuzzy (unclear) in real life since other forms of translation (such as posters and street signs) often co-exist with the written text.
- In relation to the study of translation, the term **Translation Studies**, as coined by Holmes, covers the varied phenomena around the **process, product** and **function/context** of translation.
- It remains debatable whether it is possible to determine any **universals** or, a general theory of translation that is valid for all texts and situations.