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Kim Grego

Specialized Translation

Theoretical issues, operational perspectives

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To משה

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Foreword

This work is the result of some observations and reflections derived from my translating experience, a label under which I like to include my training as an undergraduate student of translation, my work as a professional translator and, more recently, my practice as a trainer of undergraduate translation students. Not only, it also draws largely on considerations and lines of thought from various study areas in linguistics, the first of which is English for Specific Purposes, the subject of my postgraduate studies and of my current research work. Such an assorted range of experiences is not uncommon among translators, people landing on the shores of translation from different cultural, educational and working backgrounds and from all walks of life, but sharing the same operational goal. Translation scholars too, although they may be pursuing individual lines of research, can all be seen as working at a single large project rooted in the world's collective time, space and culture.

What novelty this book would like to offer is a transverse view across issues in translation that all too often have been dealt with as founding yet separate blocks: history, theory and practice; literary and non-literary domains; academic and professional levels; research and didactics. The rationale behind the perspective proposed in the following pages is a modular conception of translation as a multidimensional container that provides space for all contributions to the field and can be adapted to supply solutions catering for the different needs of its different users (professionals, trainers, students, purchasers of linguistic services). In practice, a tri-dimensional conception of translation as a product, a process and a practice is proposed here, in order to accommodate the various aspects informing translation. This work itself would obviously fall within the practice domain, as it deals with aspects of the history and theory

of translation, and not with translation products (translations or analyses thereof), nor does it describe / prescribe any translation processes; the latter could certainly be the subject of a different, prospective book.

The issues posed and dealt with in chapter 1 – talent, equivalence, evaluation – are very well-known, and have long been under discussion, apparently because this field of research is still ‘young’ enough to keep stirring debate among its acolytes as to even its basic concepts and boundaries. The advent of computer- and Internet-based technologies has further complicated things by adding, as it does, new issues to contemporary reflection on translation. No volume on the very composite subject of translation can thoroughly deal with all the above-mentioned founding blocks, but will usually focus only on one or a few at a time, as deemed appropriate and relevant according to the author’s own background and interests. This work, by concentrating on specialized translation, is no exception: chapter 2 outlines, discusses and interprets the main perspectives in linguistics that bear relevance to translation, with special attention to the notions of LSPs/ESP, text and genre. Chapter 3, finally, looks at the advent of multimodality, trying to define and describe it in a perspective that may be functional to translating multimodal texts, before moving on to sketch the situation of the translating profession, the possible trends and the future orientations as the world enters the second decade of the 21st century.

This volume has been written with different types of readers in mind: translation students, linguists, practitioners. What was it hoped to offer each of these? To translation students, often having studied for almost as long as they have lived and usually starting out in the profession with little or no work experience: a reason for ‘all that linguistics’ they did at university, and a glimpse of what their future in translation holds for them, should they choose to embark on this career; obviously, the information is all theoretical, as no book can ever substitute for practice. To linguists from other specific subfields of linguistics: nothing new on their respective disciplines, of course; perhaps something about how *we* use what *they* do, where ‘we’ and ‘they’ are open and non-exclusive categories. To practitioners: possible grounds for metareflection, updates on current research on the field for those with a less recent background in it, insights into

why they might or might not want to pursue the matter further for those who have never approached the theoretical study of translation.

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1. Reflections on translation

Quello che Aristotile si dicesse, non si può bene sapere, di ciò, però che la sua sentenza non si truova cotale nell'una translazione come nell'altra. E credo che fosse lo errore delli traduttori [...]

Dante Alighieri, c. 1304-1306, *Convivio*, Trattato II, Capitolo XIV

1.1 Defining problems

In spite of its long tradition as an oral and written practice performed by peoples worldwide for economic, legal or cultural ends since post-Babelic times, translation has often been called a “recent”, “new” or “young discipline” (Bassnett [1980] 2002: 132; Nergaard 1995: 1; Agorni 2005: 13; Baker 1992: 4, [1998] 2001: xiv; Scarpa [2001] 2008: 77). This is certainly true if compared with branches of knowledge that have been the object of investigation for centuries or even millennia, like logics or physics or anatomy. However, the phrase ‘recent discipline’ itself, even if applied to translation in its academic form, can be said to be inaccurate for more than one reason or, rather, to provide only a partial view of the phenomenon. Without embarking on a real deconstructing process, this very phrase will be used as a starting point to offer a few initial reflections on the fascinating topic of translation.

A definition of the subject under discussion, according to both classical logics and the modern-day scientific method, is not only desirable but also necessary to start with, but this is also where the first doubts instantly arise. ‘Discipline’, as in the incriminated phrase, is certainly a possible choice: Bassnett ([1980] 2002), Gentzler (1993), Venuti ([1995] 2005), Ulrych (1997), Taylor (1998), to name just a few translation scholars, called it such, doing so with reason

and following well defined theoretical premises¹. Discipline, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) reports, is

a branch of instruction or education; a department of learning or knowledge; a science or art in its educational aspect.

Etymologically, *discipline*, as pertaining to the disciple or scholar, is antithetical to *doctrine*, the property of the doctor or teacher; hence, in the history of the words, *doctrine* is more concerned with abstract theory, and *discipline* with practice or exercise².

The Latin etymology of the term confirms the teaching focus, the learner orientation, the insistence on the “practice or exercise”, as opposed to ‘doctrine’, “more concerned with abstract theory”. Verified that – like anyone who ever experimented with translating can confirm – translation is indeed a *discipline*, i.e. a practical activity that requires learning, training and practising, new doubts arise as to its possible nature of *doctrine*: where do the well advertised translation *theories* – which anyone interested in the subject will at least have heard of – stand, if this is merely a discipline? The obvious assumption is that a ‘translation discipline’ and a ‘translation theory’ must coexist, the former being the applied form of the abstract model laid out in the latter. The term ‘discipline’ alone, then, would not take into account the entire theoretical reflection – present and past – on the subject. In fact, translation has also been called a “form” (Holmes [1968] 1994), a “science” (Gentzler 1993: chapt. 3), an “activity” (Mounin 1965: 18), a “process” (Bassnett [1980] 2002: 5 ff.), a “field” (Nergaard 1995: 18). None of these definitions *alone*, however, can be said to perfectly fit, in that none fully explains the object it describes; or, rather, they all *partially* fit, but each focuses on just one of its many aspects. The suspicion is that this ambiguity cannot actually be helped, given the complex nature of the translating phenomenon.

¹ The term ‘discipline’, although lacking at the theoretical level, makes a fine operational definition in academic contexts and especially for educational purposes. At an ideological level, its use applied to translation was particularly insisted upon at the outset of Translation Studies, to put it at the same level as other older and more established university ‘disciplines’.

² OED Online, s.v. *DISCIPLINE*.

Indeed, there currently is a recognizable trend towards trying to develop broader, less restricting definitions of translation, so that they can hopefully better ‘contain’ the object they define³. Following this trend, among the options put forward there are: “genre” (Hatim and Munday 1995: 195); “multidiscipline” suggested by Ulrych (1999); “interdiscipline” (Snell-Hornby, Pöchhacker and Kaindl 1994); “vague locus” (Pym 1993: 451); and – perhaps the broadest of all – translation as a “fuzzy set class” (Garzone 2002c, 2005: 70). Again, while all these descriptions are justified and fitting, all result from trying – perhaps forcibly, surely at the risk of creating vagueness – to unify all the different, separate perspectives from which translation has historically been considered.

Is it then possible to propose a definition of translation – neither actually ‘recent’, nor exactly just a ‘discipline’ – that encompasses all the various perspectives it can be studied from? And what are these perspectives exactly? Do they all need to be taken into account, or could some be set aside for the purpose of defining it? The next few paragraphs, while going through some of the main issues in (contemporary) translation, will try to address the problem of ambiguity from an *operational* point of view, i.e. bearing in mind that translation occurs regardless of its theoretical uncertainties. Therefore, the challenge will be to define translation in spite of and not contrasting with its ambiguous nature at the theoretical or ‘doctrine’ level, yet in ways allowing translation specialists to operate practically at the ‘discipline’ level, particularly for the purposes and functions of specialized texts, and with an eye to web-based genres.

1.2 The nature of translation

The omission, in the previous paragraph, to discuss the nature of translation in examining some of its many definitions has not been accidental. Of course, to define an object, it is necessary to know

³ A similar tendency is found for example in recent studies on the ‘new’ phenomenon of web genres, texts and communication (Garzone 2007), where broader categories are called upon to cater for the elusive multimodal texts. Cf. par. 2.5.

what that object is – at least, that helps. With translation, instead, it is quite common to face research abruptly addressing its practical or theoretical issues without providing any hints as to what it is meant by the term⁴, especially by authors with a professional translating background or orientation: in fact, as will be shown later, most ancient and many modern authors who wrote about translation have often omitted to include a definition of it in their otherwise often enlightening reflections on the topic.

The simple explanation for this is that it is largely (and, indeed, correctly) taken for granted that (a) it occurs and that (b) everybody – professionals and laypeople alike – has at least a vague notion of what it is. To put it differently:

translation does take place in spite of differences between semiotic systems. This empirical evidence is not something we need to demonstrate but something we have to explain, and this ought to be the point of departure for any semantic reflection on translation (Eco and Nergaard 1998: 221).

Eco and Nergaard (1998), naturally, speak from a semiotic perspective, but what they say from a semiotic viewpoint is true of translation at large, as a fact in itself: translation occurred long before humankind even started to reflect upon it. In this respect, it is comparable to any natural phenomenon, such as the fire that humans lit before they even knew about combustion, and which is familiar to everybody, if not in its physics and chemistry, at least in its observable manifestation. The other explanation is that defining translation is – oxymoronicly put – simply difficult, for the reasons hinted at in the previous paragraph: the number of other fields it draws upon in order to occur makes it subject to rightful appropriation by experts from all such disciplines, while the ‘recent’ translation scholar is a humble borrower of methodological tools from other research areas. It is therefore relatively easy to say what contributes to translation (linguistics, literature, philosophy, anthropology, etc.), but very hard to define it *per se* and *in toto*.

⁴ One example is Mona Baker’s coursebook *In other words* (1992), a milestone in translation research and training, which however does not clearly define its own subject.

Looking back to thinkers from centuries past, translation has been variously and fascinatingly defined⁵. While the history of translation – or translation in history – is not the scope of this book⁶, some historical views and thoughts on the subject are fascinating, as well as enlightening, to report.

All the great Latin authors who studied the Greeks lamented the inferiority of their idiom to Greek; in the late days of the Republic and early days of Imperial Rome, Cicero and Seneca were two great figures who discussed this issue at length. The latter, in particular, focused on the lexical poverty of Latin, which however he had not fully realized until he had actually set out to translate:

How scant of words our language is, nay, how poverty-stricken, I have not fully understood until today (Seneca, in Gummere ed. 1967: 387)⁷.

Into the Christian era, the reflection on translation mainly revolved around biblical exegesis. Church Fathers from the late Roman Empire include Jerome and Augustine, who were also two of the greatest translators and philosophers of the language of the Western tradition, already supplying modern thoughts on concepts like sign and meaning:

For the thought formed from that thing which we know is the word which we speak in our heart, and it is neither Greek, nor Latin, nor of any other language, but when we have to bring it to the knowledge of those to whom we are speaking, then some sign is assumed by which it may be made known. And generally this is a sound, but at times also a nod; the former is shown to the ears, the latter to the eyes, in

⁵ To provide just one example, André Lefevere, one of the fathers of modern day studies on translation, is one of many to have compiled an anthology of statements proffered on translation by men (and women) of letters throughout the centuries (1992). The originality of his work is that he did so not in a chronological order but thematically, according to specific “constraints” that cannot be considered homogeneous, but nonetheless highlight which and how many different perspectives translation may be and has been addressed from: ideology, poetics, culture (“Universe of Discourse”), patronage, education, practical techniques, major literary and religious texts of Western culture (“central texts”).

⁶ Excellent existing works on the subject include García Yebra (1983, 1994); Venuti ([1995] 2005); Robinson (1997a) and Osimo (2002).

⁷ From his Letter 58, *On being*, 63-65 C.E.

order that that word which we bear in our mind may also become known by bodily signs to the senses of the body. For even to nod, what else is it but to speak, as it were, in a visible manner?⁸ (Augustinus, in Deferraris ed. 1963: 476).

The Middle Ages then saw the development and affirmation of national languages throughout Europe. By the end of the medieval period, the process was over and national literatures began to flourish, and so did the considerations on language, meaning and translation by authors from all over the continent, which only kept multiplying over the following centuries. One of the finest and best-known metaphors on translation ever conceived is Miguel de Cervantes's:

[...] me thinks, this Translating out of one Language into another unless it be out of the Queens of Tongues, Greek and Latin, is just like looking upon the wrong side of Arras-hangings; that tho' the Figures may be seen, yet they are full of Threads which hide them, and they are not seen with the plainness and smoothness, as on the other side, and the translating out of easy Languages argues neither Wit nor Elocution, no more than copying out of one Paper into another; yet I infer not from this, that translating is not a laudable Exercise, for a man may be far worse employ'd, and in things less Profitable (de Cervantes, in Stevens ed. 1700: 372-373)⁹.

Moving to the British area, an author writing in the same years, the Anglo-Italian author, linguist, lexicographer and translator John Florio, reflects:

Shall I apologize translation? Why but some holde (as for their freehold) that such conversion is the subversion of Universities. God holde with them, and withhold them from impeach or empaire. It were an ill turne, the turning of Bookes should be the overturning of Libraries. Yea but my olde fellow *Nolano* tolde me, and taught publikely, that from translation all Science had it's of-spring (Florio 1603)¹⁰.

Also from that period is the *Authorized King James Version* of the Bible, which bears an inspired and evocative description of translation

⁸ From his *De trinitate* (400-417 ca.), book 15, chapt. 10.

⁹ From his *Don Quixote* (1604-1615), tome II, chapt. 62.

¹⁰ From his translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, Note to the reader.

in its Preface by Miles Smith, one of the main translators and compilers of the work, later to be appointed Bishop of Gloucester:

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered (Smith 1611)¹¹.

Later that century, John Dryden was another great translator of the classics to leave many an observation on the subject. In one of these, he commented (negatively) upon imitation:

To state it fairly, Imitation of an Author is the most advantageous way for a Translator to show himself, but the greatest wrong which can be done to the Memory and Reputation of the dead (Dryden 1680)¹².

Into the 18th century, Samuel Johnson, best-known by linguists for his *Dictionary* but also a translator, considered, in his essays on the history of translation:

Among the studies which have exercised the ingenious and the learned for more than three centuries, none has been more diligently or more successfully cultivated than the art of translation; by which the impediments which bar the way to science are, in some measure, removed, and the multiplicity of languages become less incommodious (Johnson [1759] 1811: 240)¹³;

adding:

He that reviews the progress of English literature, will find that translation was very early cultivated among us, but that some principles, either wholly erroneous or too far extended, hindered our success from being always equal to our diligence (Johnson [1759] 1811: 245)¹⁴.

¹¹ From his note “The Translators to the Reader” to the *Authorized King James Version* of the Bible (1611).

¹² From his Preface to Ovid’s *Epistles* (1680).

¹³ From his *Idler* essay no. 68, “History of Translations”, of 4 August 1759.

¹⁴ From his *Idler* essay no. 69, “History of Translations”, of 11 August 1759.

A consideration by the Scottish writer and translator Alexander Tytler, from the end of the century, can be of use to close this very short selection of thoughts on translation and move back to the key issues at stake and into the contemporary age:

If it were possible accurately to define, or, perhaps more properly, to describe what is meant by a good Translation, it is evident that a considerable progress would be made towards establishing the Rules of the Art; for these Rules would flow naturally from that definition or description (Tytler [1790] 1907: 7)¹⁵.

As Tytler comments, the problem revolves around *defining* translation and whether this is really possible. Indeed, it is worth noticing that all the historical views on translation just quoted above (and most others not reported here) take its nature for granted, and are only concerned with *descriptions* of it. Employing metaphors and other figures of speech, some of them are among the most brilliant aphorisms of all times, yet they say what translation *is like*, but fail to say what it *is*.

In fact, it was not until the 20th century that definitions of translation in present-day terms started to be formulated, still bearing the legacy of millennia of Western culture but also, more clearly, the mark of current linguistics and philosophy of the language. Main contemporary figures in these fields have provided less evocative yet more systematic views on translation than in earlier times that, although not or not yet conceived within a translation-specific field of study (cf. par. 1.5 on the outset of Translation Studies), have had a strong influence on it. Again, a full account of all recent authors from across disciplines that have had an impact on Translation Studies cannot be given here, but a few will be reported nonetheless, as a sample of the shift in the approach to defining translation undergone in the 1900s.

At the turn of the century, a renewed interest in the theory of signs was best interpreted by Charles Peirce in America and Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe. Despite having been identified as the founders of differing schools in semiotics (Eco 1975, 1984), both considered translation as serving the role of an intersemiotic operation. In Peirce's amply arbitrary view of the relationship between sign and referent, translation is a "replica" of a sign:

¹⁵ From his *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (1790).

The being of a sign is merely *being represented*. Now *really being* and *being represented* are very different. Giving to the word *sign* the full scope that reasonably belongs to it for logical purposes, a whole book is a sign; and a translation of it is a replica of the same sign. A literature is a sign (Peirce [1904] 1998: 303, italics in the original)¹⁶.

De Saussure, the founder of modern linguistic structuralism, saw translation as the link between thought and sign:

language [...] [has been] dubbed a *function* of the human organism, in an unpardonable confusion between what relates to the *voice* and what relates only to the translation of thought by a sign which may be of any type whatsoever and may reach a high level of perfection and involve the use of a grammar both in visual or tactile signs and in the no less conventional vocal signs (de Saussure 2006: 183, italics in the original)¹⁷.

In the wake of Saussurean structuralism, Roman Jakobson, in the 1950s, as well as organizing translation into his famous intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic categories, called it “interpretation” and even “reported speech” (1959: 139).

Past the Prague School and into systemic functionalism, but still based on the notion of meaning, for M.A.K. Halliday: “Translation [...] is meaning-making activity”; more than that, “it is *guided* creation of meaning” (1992: 15, italics in the original).

Moving to a literary-philosophical perspective, as the last insight in this selection of 20th century definitions of translation, George Steiner – like Halliday focusing on the creational aspect – writes that

translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges ([1975] 1992: xii);

and concludes:

All serious art, music and literature is a *critical* act. [...] (1989: 11, italics in the original);

¹⁶ From his essay “New Elements” (1904), par. III.

¹⁷ From his “Reflexions concerning entities”, among his newly (1996) found notes published collectively in 2006.

Translation is [...] interpretative in its very etymology. It is also critical in the most creative ways. Valéry's transposition of Virgil's *Ecolgues* is critical creation (1989: 15, italics in the original).

The few but significant views just reported above well show the shift in the approaches to defining translation that occurred in the course of the 20th century, obviously reflecting the novelties arisen in linguistics (but not only that) during that period. However, what also emerges is, again, the invariable divergence of these definitions: they are all viable, enriching and profitable, but none unique or exhaustive or definitive and, while contributing to saying more about translation, they also paradoxically multiply the facets of the problem, ultimately resulting in increased vagueness.

In other words, back to the starting point, the only certainty is the mere phenomenological evidence: like fire, translation can safely be called a 'phenomenon', something that manifests itself naturally in the world and which everybody has more or less experienced; to specify what *else* this phenomenon is is also possible, and it has been done – as seen – by many in the course of history; to explain its true nature *univocally* and *universally* appears a still unsolved and much harder task. The next paragraph will try to circumstantiate why.

1.3 The equivalence trap

The main difficulty in defining translation can, both simply and complicatedly, be ascribed to just one of its traits, well highlighted in the last definition considered in the previous paragraph, Steiner's, focusing on translation as 'creation'. This term and its underlying concept have always been associated to translation, and it is very easy to see why: writing is considered creation, and translation – as *re-writing*, or a particular instance of writing – is seen to belong in some marginal area of the world of creation. This marginality is due to translation often being deemed a second-rate *art*¹⁸ or, better, a *craft* (Biguenet and Schulte 1989). Thus, while the writer is an artist creating art anew, the translator is a craftsman reproducing –

¹⁸ 'Art' is another definition recurring throughout history; in contemporary times, one early work that purported this notion is Theodore Savory's essay on translation of 1957.

necessarily – the existing. But, while such a view places translation, the child of a lesser art, at a lower level compared with literature, far from being offended, many an author, past (Dante Gabriel Rossetti: “The task of the translator – and with all humility be it spoken – is one of some self-denial”¹⁹, in Rhys ed. 1912: 152) and present (Morini 2007, to name one TS scholar who particularly insists on it), has underlined the great degree of humility needed by translators to carry out their artisan work, as well as the great pride they take in their minor creations when successful. In spite of their dissimilar prestige, something to highlight is that both the ‘art’ and the ‘craft’ share the implied notion of ‘talent’. This is particularly relevant as it also shares basic theoretical implications with another concept, that of ‘equivalence’ – the longest-discussed issue in the history of translation and crucial to understanding the nature of the phenomenon and, consequently, trying to define it.

Perfect, specular equivalence is not possible according to most. For Roger Bacon, for example, “the quality of one language can never be perfectly reproduced in another” (in Bridges ed. 1964: 66)²⁰. Anne Dacier held that “the thing itself is impossible” (“Il vient donc de la chose mesme où il est impossible de reüssir”, Dacier [1699] 1711: xxxviii)²¹, and John Dryden, to name another, that “it cannot always be so sweet as [...] the original” (in Frost ed. 1987: 334)²². Nevertheless, at least some sort of equivalence, however imperfect, is evidently possible, otherwise – against what has been established as the only certainty so far – translation could not take place at all. To define what this equivalence consists in, simple and ingenious metaphors and similes have been coined. For some, focusing on the transmission of the content of a text, it is a transfer (“in alias linguas transferre” Juan Luis Vives 1533²³). For others, aware of the creative nature of translating, it is the “truest kind of imitation” (“La plus vræ espeçe d’Imitacion, c’èst de traduire”, Peletier du Mans 1555²⁴). Among the earliest and most famed testimonies, Cicero’s

¹⁹ From the Preface to the 1861 First Edition.

²⁰ From *De utilitate grammaticae*, Pars tertia, Capitulum I (ca. 1268).

²¹ From the Preface to her 1699 translation of the *Iliad*.

²² From the Dedication of his 1697 translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

²³ In Mattioli (2002: 232).

²⁴ In Boulanger (1930: 105).

comments express the orator's point of view, in which equivalence serves eloquence:

[...] I translated the most famous orations of the two most eloquent Attic orators, Aeschines and Demosthenes [...]. And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the 'figures' of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language. For I did not think I ought to count them out to the reader like coins, but to pay them by weight, as it were (Cicero, in Hubbell ed. 1949: 365)²⁵.

Indeed, Cicero's praise of interpretative as opposed to literal translation inaugurates a school of thought in history that finds contributors in Jerome:

Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery – I render, not word for word, but sense for sense (Jerome, in Carroll ed. 1956: 136-137)²⁶;

John Trevisa:

I desire not translation of these [books] the best that might be, for that were an idle desire for any man that now here alive, but I would have a skilful translation, that might be known and understood (Trevisa, in Pollard ed. 1903: 207)²⁷;

Alexander Pope:

It is certain that no literal Translation can be just to an excellent Original in a superior Language: but it is a great Mistake to imagine (as many have done) that a rash Paraphrase can make amends for this general Defect (Pope in Mack ed. 1967: 17);²⁸

²⁵ From *De optimo genere oratorum*, V (46 B.C.E.).

²⁶ From his 395 C.E. Letter 57 to Pammachius.

²⁷ From the *Dialogue Between a Lord and a Clerk upon Translation* (1387) from his translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*.

²⁸ From the Preface to his 1715-1720 translation of the *Iliad*.

and Wilhelm von Humboldt, one of the main modern intellectuals to have provided thoughts on translation, who stated that,

As long as one does not feel the foreignness (Fremdheit) yet does feel the foreign (Fremde), a translation has reached its highest goal; [...] It should not contain ambiguities caused by insufficient understanding of the language and awkward formulations (von Humboldt [1816] 1992: 58)²⁹.

Opposite views have also been expressed in the course of history, of which a notable example is Erasmus's:

I do not fully share the freedom in translating authors that Cicero both allows others and (I should almost say excessively) practises himself, or perhaps because as a novice in translation I preferred to err in seeming to keep too close rather than be too free (Erasmus, in Ferguson ed. 1975: 109)³⁰.

All – both the supporters of *belles infidèles* and of *laides fidèles* versions – acknowledge the need and the importance of finding an equivalence of sort between languages as a means of exchange between cultures. Thus, for Cicero, translation is a “patriotic service” (in Rackham ed. 1914: 9)³¹, but even Erasmus (on a slightly quantitative note) considers a translator one

who speaks not only one of the languages but both, and also has an extremely rich baggage of knowledge [of both cultures] ready at hand (Erasmus [1506] 1642: 1742, my transl.).

Talent, too, as mentioned earlier in this paragraph, is inescapably connected with the notion of art and, in turn, with that of translation, if this is to be considered (at least a minor) one. Also very hard to define and quantify, talent has been discussed by many who reflected on art and genius. One mastery view about it, summing up all the questions about its nature and relationship with translation, is Anne Dacier's:

²⁹ From the Introduction to his translation of *Agamemnon*.

³⁰ From his 1506 Letter to William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury.

³¹ From *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, book I-III (45 B.C.E.).

It is not perhaps impossible to express this better by means of a comparison based on music: every day we see musicians who, very learned in their art, sing exactly and rigorously the note that is presented to them; they do not incur in the slightest fault, yet the whole thing is a fault because they, talentless (*dépourvûs de génie*) and cold, cannot grasp the spirit with which those airs were composed [...]. Instead we see others who, livelier and gifted with more fortunate talent (*génie*), sing these airs in the same spirit in which they were composed, preserving all their beauty, and making them sound very different, in spite of their being the same. Here is the difference, if I am not mistaken, existing between good and bad translations (Dacier [1699] 1711: xliii, my transl.).

All the above views, arbitrary as they may be, nonetheless contribute to approaching the core of the problem, which is that both talent and equivalence share a non-quantifiable nature. This quality they carry over and transfer to translation by transitive property: talent and equivalence are non-quantifiable; talent is needed to carry out translation; equivalence is the defining feature of translated texts; therefore, translation is itself non-quantifiable. This raises, among other questions, a number of issues about the didactics of translation (and not only that): e.g. is it possible to evaluate translation? And according to which (objective) criteria (e.g. Salmon 2003 and 2005b)? Suggestions as to how to assess translation (e.g. House [1977] 1997) and interpretation (e.g. Garzone 2002a, 2003) are being put forward all the time (e.g. Klaudy 1995, Hatim and Mason 1997, Scarpa 2006), often adopting objective, recognizable and quantifiable criteria that contribute to returning fairly approximate, satisfactory results for the intended purposes of specific translation events (e.g. academic examinations, public job competitions, etc.).

Delimiting areas of application, however, does not help solve the issue at its source: how to quantify talent and equivalence? How to evaluate them, not based on subjective, arbitrary standards alone? Is translation a repeatable, falsifiable process, i.e. is it scientific in its nature? Not even the older and more prestigious art and literary criticisms have come up with definitive answers yet, perhaps because the reason behind this attested uncertainty is to be sought elsewhere, not in linguistics or literature or (Biblical) hermeneutics alone, but in all of these, and also in tools unusual in studies on translation, such as those from neurophysiology, neurobiology, neurolinguistics and

ultimately from cognitive neuroscience at large, all tightly linked – through the intrinsic ideological implications they carry – to philosophy, which in turn underlies all fields of research. The following paragraph will try to make explicit this suggestion by discussing aspects of the quantifiability of knowledge from a linguistic / translational perspective.

1.4 Talent, equivalence, translation

As seen so far, any theory of translation will attempt to define its object of study, and encounter insurmountable problems at least and necessarily when facing the notion of equivalence. Linked to this is the other problematic concept of talent, in turn involving that of evaluation: in translation, the translator's *talent* influences the obtainable degree of *equivalence* (cf. Fig. 1 for a suggested depiction of the relationship between them), but how is either unambiguously measurable, therefore evaluable?

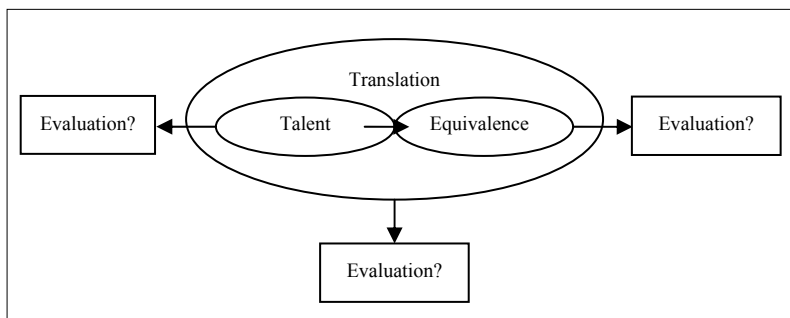


Fig. 1 Talent, equivalence, translation and the other linguistic incommensurable

Considering how translation and language use (or, in its artistic realization, literature) share the notion of talent and the problem of equivalence, it is easy to see how close this question is to similar ones commonly raised in linguistics and literature (to name just two translation-related fields), or art in general: are language, communi-

cation, genius, beauty innate? Are they measurable?³² The debate over these specific questions has a long tradition, contrary to the analogous questions posed in the more ‘recent’ Translation Studies³³. What is being suggested here is that, if to *define* translation it is necessary to elevate one’s standpoint to include a wider horizon, made of the various aspects of knowledge it encompasses, to *learn* about translation it is indispensable to look more closely at its constituents, of which the linguistic element must be accorded prevalence over the rest as translation’s defining character. In other words, if there is an answer to these questions, it lies in the nature of language itself; thus, tackling the issue of the nature of translation equals establishing that of language in general, and the way linguistic communication functions in particular. Such an immense subject has been under scrutiny for millennia, providing an ambitious line of investigation and possibly representing the earliest and most attempted metalinguistic reflection in human history. The following lines report a number of observations on the issue, with a view to prove its ‘non-definitive non-answerability’.

To start off, culture, tradition, as well as less vague aspects of human knowledge, such as biology and genetics, show that everything about and in life revolves around information. In a simplified view, information is passed on through generations in culture and tradition at a macro level, and in individuals’ genetic pools at a micro level. Language too is about information. Specifically, language is about *passing on* the information; it is in fact an innate tool strategically developed to communicate information. However, the descriptive study of language as it is now or even in its historical development will not contribute to providing any answers about the intrinsic nature of syntax, or grammar or language itself, unless the physiology and evolution of the phenomenon is taken into account too (Kaan and Swaab 2002; Marcus 2004; Poeppel 2004): diachronic studies can go back in time until they can propose the existence of one or

³² Cf. Harris (1976, 2008) and Harris and Sherwood (1978), on bilinguals’ innate talent expressed in ‘natural translation’ “as the translation done in everyday circumstances by bilinguals who have had no special training for it” (1976, abstract).

³³ They have also been answered variously in history by different schools of thought which, in the case of these ‘older’ branches of knowledge, pertain more specifically to the fields of poetics and aesthetics.

more pan-human, prototypical languages but, even thus, the *functioning* of human language will not be explained (cf. Fisher and Marcus 2005 on language evolution).

In order to understand the notions of language, grammar and syntax, we must probably look further back in time, at human phylogenesis, at when humankind first developed language (Tettamanti et al. 2002). What makes humans the most advanced form of life on earth is their specialization and adaptability, of which brain evolution, in terms of quality and quantity of information it can store and make use of, is evidence (Gilbert, Dobyns and Lahn 2005). Humans developed so much as a species that part of the information they collected, and came to need and use, was assigned to external sources, i.e. it was not internally stored in their genetic code, but was stored externally as cultural notions being taught to their offspring at a family or community level (Varki, Geschwind and Eichler 2008). This is why humans – unlike most animals whose offspring are self-sufficient or need very little parenting at birth – are born at a stage in which extensive parental nurture and care are necessary in order for them to survive and successfully pass on their individual and species, genetic and cultural, inborn and acquired information (Tomasello and Call 1997; Tomasello 1999; Boyd and Richerson, 2005). Language is believed to have developed in order for humans to communicate with each other for practical everyday needs, such as those required by survival and/in community life, which is not in contrast to saying that language was developed to help humans store information and pass it on to the following generations (Tomasello 2008). In this regard, written language is just a further step in our cultural evolution: a means to enlarge the quantity of information we can safely store and pass on as a community. Within this view, it is only logical, for example, that those civilizations that could best optimize the accumulation and the transmission of these enormous quantities of data often proved the most successful in cultural survival terms (e.g. those populations that made use of writing as opposed to those that preferred orality). Into this view could still well fit a now historic theory in Translation Studies, Evan-Zohar's "polysystem theory" (1979), conceived by one of the fathers of the field and accounting for the transfer (through translation) of cultural items from one

“cultural system” to another, on the assumption that ‘weaker’ systems would draw on ‘stronger’ ones:

If this is the case, a literature lacking the necessary items, is “weaker,” so to speak, than an adjacent PS [polysystem], possessing them. It follows that the “weaker” will readily borrow, if nothing interferes, the wanted item³⁴. (1979: 302-303).

But language in humans developed alongside with many other intellectual and practical (the distinction is possibly just a formal one) abilities (Lieberman 2002; Castro and Toro 2007), this being the reason why it is difficult to clearly separate language from (other forms of) cognition. In fact, the unfinished debate on the modularity of cognition that has been continuing for more than 20 years in evolutionary psychology, following Fodor (1983) and subsequent works supporting / opposing / developing the notion (e.g. Pinker 1997; Tooby and Cosmides 2005, Carruthers 2006; Richardson 2007), shows that no definitive answer can be provided about the true nature of cognition – and thus of syntax, grammar and language – as yet (Confer et al. forthcoming). Key to understanding the underlying nature of language is then first and foremost to understand the neurological processes involved in cognition, any form of it: humans break their cognitive code once, they access their brain’s entire database, including the functioning of first and second language acquisition (Kuhl 2004). Easier said than done but – evidence suggests³⁵ – disturbingly possible.

Also assumable – and soundly assumed, at least in information theory and philosophy (Negroponte 1995; Longo 2003) – is the ultimately discrete (at least to an operational point) nature of information as utilized by the human brain. In that case, indeed, the deciphering of the cognitive process could possibly only become easier. Not only, the moment it is understood how acquisition, storage and retrieval of information works at the brain level, the key will be available to learning how to copy and reproduce brain

³⁴ The ‘historicity’ (by no means ‘obsolescence’) of the polysystem theory is evident in it being originally applied to literary (written) texts.

³⁵ The recent and well-advertised discovery that specific gene mutations can affect speech and language functions (cf. Lai et al. 2001 on FOXP2 and ensuing studies) suggests the possible mapping of all language-related genes, for a start.

information and functions (including language), which would then be proven quantifiable, divisible, multipliable and, ultimately, reproducible. Knowing about the basic units of linguistic information and their (re)producibility would naturally mean shedding light on most current riddles in linguistics, including, e.g. child and adult language acquisition, the relationship between meaning and sign, and even how units of meaningful information are reproduced in one or another language, i.e. how linguistic equivalence (or translation) is obtained. The difficulties implicit in such a remote (at least currently) view are evident. However, establishing whether information really is discrete, or how *probable* or *improbable* it is to prove it, is actually irrelevant, as long as it belongs in the realm of the *possible*, which – ontologically at least³⁶ – it does. And what matters for the sake of a theoretical argumentation and the time being is its mere feasibility at the hypothetical level, which is exactly where the true nature of talent and equivalence, in their absolute forms, still belongs.

But the implication of the discovery of human cognition, based on some degree of discretion of the information used at the brain level, is a world (already vastly described, in fact, in literature³⁷ and in the philosophy of information³⁸), in which artificial intelligence and bio-computers, to name just a couple of possible applications, would be not just for prototypical use, but realize one of the ultimate uses they were envisaged for: life re-reproduction (or re-creation, using a more connotated term). It would not be inconceivable, then, for knowledge – i.e. for life, intended as an evolving flow of information – to change containers, aspect, in a word, nature: it would no longer be the same as known until that moment. In such hypothetical circumstances, the symbiosis of man with information machines, begun in contemporary times with his relationship with television and developed into that with computers (McLuhan 1964; de Kerckhove 1991, 1997), would be

³⁶ But related studies on the ‘computational mind’ (Pinker 1997, 2005) and generative grammars are constantly being conducted, some with interesting, if far from definitive, results (e.g. Nowak, Komarova and Niyogi 2000; Moro et al. 2001; Opitzl and Friederici 2004; Friederici et al. 2006).

³⁷ Cf. the vast science fiction utopia / dystopia production of the 20th century, featuring prominent authors such as Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Philip K. Dick and William Gibson, to name just a few.

³⁸ Where the main concern would be the ethical problems related to AI (cf. Bellini 2007 for a recent view on the topic).

complete: human evolution would undergo a dramatic change, becoming endogenous, self-induced, self-oriented and tremendously fast (Longo 2003, 2006). Language, conceived as a resource for exchanging information, would have to evolve too, to cater for the greatly increased quantity and pace of data exchanges, but it could do that with the new awareness of having reached and gone beyond the ultimate metalinguistic goal of disclosing its own intrinsic working mechanisms³⁹.

What, then, is the relevance of these reflections on the possible evolution of research on language and cognition to the notions of equivalence, talent and translation as conceived in the present world and time? It lies in their introducing and supporting a scientific-philosophical stance – here just merely outlined but having deep roots in both Western and Eastern tradition and rich in references from and across cultures and ages – suggesting the impossibility to provide an answer to these issues with man’s present knowledge of the world and the investigation tools in his current possession. This, however, far from “discrediting” or “discarding” the notion of equivalence, as feared by Baker (2004: 64) noticing its loss of favour with contemporary Translation Studies scholars, does not imply setting it aside as ‘impossible to explain thus irrelevant’, but rather invites to focus efforts in language research on its phenomenological aspects, in the absence and anticipation of developments on the enigmas of cognition at large. As anticipated earlier in this paragraph, then, this ‘non-answerability’ is non-definitive. However, while this condition lasts, it is also non-defining, and research cannot only define phenomena by what they are not. It should instead concurrently keep making hypotheses – although they might not be verifiable in the short term – as to what they are, just as physicists or doctors of past centuries never dreamt of giving up developing or testing their theoretical models simply because they could not prove them, e.g. at the molecular level: in fact, many are the laws of physics that were

³⁹ Of course, changes of this kind must be thought of – if ever – in evolutionary terms and time, and with the sound notion that, even though based on currently existing and verifiable research, trends and ever faster developments in computer technology and biogenetics, they remain speculations open to a hardly quantifiable number of not only scientific but also, necessarily, socioeconomic and geopolitical variables.

demonstrated with very limited resources and tools. From this perspective, even in linguistics and in translation in particular (as this book's subject), the best line of research, as things are, seems to be to work in the long term on breaking the human cognitive code (not necessarily because it is right or advisable to, but because humans cannot help trying to, due to their innate inquisitive nature) and, in the short term, to focus on practice as a way of accumulating empirical data that could possibly verify limited theoretical assumptions, i.e. encompassing *aspects* or *manifestations* or *elements* of the translating phenomenon, which cannot currently be comprehended *per se*. Applied to translation, this would mean that to photograph translation at one specific moment in the time – since universal mechanisms can only be uncovered in long-term diachrony – can be the sole possible object of studies on translation. Or, to put it in M.A.K. Halliday's words (1992: 16, italics added), "Linguistics cannot offer any theory of translation equivalence. There can be no such *general* theory". At least, for the time being.

1.5 Translation science, theories, studies

Halliday's view of equivalence in translation, closing the above paragraph with a bleak, abrupt statement, introduces nonetheless another whole set of issues that can prove useful to further circumscribe the field: the theorizations (possible, existing and desired) to which translation can be subject.

Hardly a univocally definable phenomenon, starting from the 1950s-1960s (but building on the millennial heritage of the entire Western civilization) translation has however given rise to flourishing studies that in turn converged into an academic branch of its own during the 1970s, continuing into the present day. Gentzler (1993), Nergaard (1995) and Munday (2001), among others, comprehensively report on the various phases of development of the new discipline⁴⁰, first concerned with establishing, in Nergaard's (1995) wording, a "science" of translation, then "translation theories", and finally opting for focusing on "translation studies" at large, as defined by the Ameri-

⁴⁰ The term 'discipline' will be used to refer to translation in the academic (research / didactics) context by analogy with other subjects (cf. chapt. 1, note 1).

can poet and translator James S. Holmes in his 1972 seminal article⁴¹, considered the foundation of contemporary research on translation. Following Nergaard (1995), the 1950s-1960s “science” was concerned with finding scientific mechanisms in the linguistic transfer (cf. the 1965 work on translation theory by British phonetician John C. Catford), spurred by the then pioneering promises of machine translation (e.g. MIT mathematician-linguist Yehoshua Bar-Hillel and Anthony Oettinger at Harvard), and assuming the quantifiability of information and (re)producibility of generative grammars (e.g. Bible scholar Eugene Nida, another key name in last century’s translation research). Translation “theorists” from the 1970s-1980s throughout the 1990s focused on a mostly descriptive metareflection on the phenomenon of translation, with special attention not just to linguistic but also textual and cultural aspects and variables (e.g. Itamar Evan-Zohar and Gideon Toury, founders of the so called ‘Tel Aviv school’); were almost exclusively preoccupied with literary texts and especially literary critique (cf. the German Katharina Reiss’s pragmatic stance in her major work from 1971); co-occurred with the apogee of 19th century semiotics (as in the figures of Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Thomas Sebeok, to name a few); and included several prominent Eastern European scholars with deep roots in Russian structuralism and formalism (like the Czech Jíří Levý and Anton Popovič, and the semioticians from the Estonian Tartu school led by Yuri Lotman). The 1980s saw the rising, mainly in a European context⁴², of a new approach to translation which, under the umbrella term of “Translation Studies (TS)”, intended to bring together, ideally, all the researchers on the subject, irrespective of differing backgrounds and perspectives. TS was a product of its decade, modelled on similar disciplines, born in earlier years and by the 1980s well established in English-speaking academic contexts, both in its name (cf. Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, etc.) and in the strong critical and ideological load it carried (e.g. Venuti 1998), to the point that, “with all due caution, the TS perspective could be compared to Derrida’s deconstructionism in philosophy” (Morini 2007: 20-21, my transl.). Initiating figures in TS were the Netherlands-born and British-

⁴¹ Significantly titled “The name and nature of translation studies”.

⁴² Though James Holmes, considered the ‘father’ of TS, was American-born.

educated André Lefevere and the British Susan Bassnett, both comparative literature scholars, building upon the original 1972 programmatic proposal by J.S. Holmes. During the 1990s and the 2000s, however, TS tended to lose part of its ‘deconstructionist’ attitude⁴³ and actually move towards the originally intended inclusiveness of multiple perspectives into the discipline.

The novel and interesting contributions brought forth into the discipline over the past thirty years are too numerous to list here, spurred as they were by the now worldwide communication made possible by technology, as well as by the changed political scenario allowing wider cultural exchanges than in the past. To the English-written and English-focused TS, research in and/or about and/or comparing other languages must be added, where studies on distantly related idioms (cf. the increasing studies on non-European languages like Chinese or Arabic appearing in the main TS journals⁴⁴) seem to be the most interesting. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant innovation brought forth by Translation Studies is their opening to reflection on *specialized* texts, which for the first time in history have acquired their own acknowledged, if limited, academic place and bibliography within this discipline. The ‘Translation Studies’ label from the 1970s has also by now proved successful in describing the disparate and thriving research in the field, and to this day it is generally deemed the best and most common option in English-speaking contexts⁴⁵, with the terminological debate within the disci-

⁴³ Cultural and ideological perspectives were still pursued, though: Bassnett developed an interest in feminist (1986) and post-colonial (1999) translation, for instance, while another prominent name in translation, Mona Baker, recently brought the Arab-Israeli conflict into TS by advertising her support for the ‘Israeli Academic Institutions Boycott’ campaign in her academic research (e.g. through her website www.monabaker.com).

⁴⁴ Such as *Meta*, *Target*, *Babel*.

⁴⁵ A debate has been going on intermittently for decades on whether the discipline ought to be called otherwise, to obtain an analogy with ‘linguistics’, which can sport a *nomina agentis*, ‘linguist’, and an adjective, ‘linguistic’, while ‘translation’ and ‘translation studies’ have ‘translator’, which is different from ‘a person researching translation’ that would be ‘translation scholar’, and does not have an adjective. The often proposed option ‘traductology’ (or ‘translatology’) would in fact solve the lexical issue, and its equivalent is used for instance in French, Spanish and Italian, but is frequently understood as something different and/or more specific. Holmes (1972), Morini (2007), and Delisle, Lee-Jahnke and Cormier (2002).

pline now shifting towards internal terminology instead⁴⁶. ‘Translation Studies’ is thus adopted throughout this work, too, but – the subject being specialized translation – only in the sense of a term “representing the entire field of study [...] [and not] restricted to scholars working essentially within a comparative literature framework” (Ulrych and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1999: 221-222).

In light of the above, the question of whether and which translation theories are available, posed at the beginning of the paragraph, is easily answerable (though not easily answered): they do, and there are many of them. They are also better illustrated and examined in works such as Gentzler (1993), Osimo (2002), Salmon (2003), Snell-Hornby (2006), to mention just a few, and bearing in mind that translations are increasing by the year⁴⁷ and so are relevant academic works on the subject. However, what even the simplified sketch provided in the previous lines hopes to be showing is the unquestionable variety of educational and geographical backgrounds – as well as research perspectives – of scholars shaping TS then and now. The debate thus moves on to the question of which of these theories / approaches is the right / best one, excluding – of course – those asserting that no translation theory is possible: to Halliday’s (1992), at least George Steiner’s opinion that

There are, most assuredly, and *pace* our current masters in Byzantium, no ‘theories of translation’. What we do have are reasoned descriptions of the processes ([1975] 1992: xvi)

must be added. The position held throughout this book – based on the views expressed in par. 1.4 – is necessarily close to Halliday’s and Steiner’s in its conclusion, although not in its premise, and could be better reformulated as follows: *probably*, it will be possible, in the very long run, to uncover the neurocognitive mechanisms underlying language, and thus to establish an ultimate ‘theory of translation’. Until then, we can only concentrate on producing “reasoned descrip-

⁴⁶ Cf. Snell-Hornby (2006: chapt. 3) about open terminological issues in translation.

⁴⁷ The French linguist and semiotician Georges Mounin, who opened his classic *Teoria e storia della traduzione* in 1965 reporting data from the UNESCO Index Translationum, would be amazed not only at the current figures, but also at it now being freely searchable online and including countries like China, which he pinpointed in 1959 as “the only (and relevant) absence” (Mounin 1965: 15, my transl.).

tions of procedures”. Therefore, if ‘translation theories’ is taken to mean precisely such “reasoned descriptions of procedures”, and not models trying to explain the ultimate functioning of the translating process⁴⁸, theories describing phenomena could well be formulated from a functionalist perspective and with functionalist purposes in mind, and not be in contrast with the assumption made at a deeper, cognitive level. The ‘right / best’ theory, then, could be any one that can fulfil the function for which it was developed *and* be grounded in reality, i.e. be supported by evidence (translation may be a subject particularly open to philosophical speculation, but also generates very tangible products).

In this work, pre-eminence will be given to linguistic and communicative theories, though acknowledging that multiple disciplines contribute to and draw from translation. The multidisciplinary aspect will however not be considered hindering or intimidating but enriching, and something to carefully yet encouragingly take advantage of, in case methodological tools or views from other fields might help shape translation theories better fitting any one or more of its functions: cultural aspects, for example, which do play an indisputable role in the translating process, can both be studied with linguistic methods (pragmatics, semantics, discourse analysis), and taken into account *per se*, as elements of the environment in which translation takes place and which can never be severed from any human process. The following paragraph will endeavour to propose an organic depiction of the translating phenomenon, consistent with the theoretical stance resulting from the views expressed so far in this chapter about the classic issues in translation of equivalence, talent, evaluation, theory and function.

1.6 Defining translation: an operational proposal

Adhering to a systemic-functional view – nonetheless envisaging the remote but possible eventual disclosure of the universal cognitive

⁴⁸ A distinction could be made by defining ‘theory of translation’ (a singular noun with an explicit, postmodifying specification) the latter and ‘translation theory/-ies’ (a premodified singular *or* plural noun) the former. Obviously, this would work in English and in languages allowing the same distinction, but pose problems in many others.

aspects of language – and building upon several existing models within TS itself⁴⁹, translation is defined, for the purposes of this work, as a *product*, a *process* and a *practice*. These qualities, simultaneously identifying the translating phenomenon, are seen as non-exclusive, complementary and interdependent, and as furthermore modulated by *time*.

In a micro to macro order, translation is first and foremost a *product* because it results in the production (no matter whether art- or craft-generated) of a tangible token. In the web age, the adjective ‘tangible’, as in the piece of paper traditionally containing the translated text, may be substituted for ‘perceivable’ to account for electronic / digital supports. This would also include the certainly even older oral form of translation (today technically labelled ‘interpretation’), which by definition must be audible and which has in modern times gained as much durability as written documents since it became recordable in audio or audio/video formats. At the intersemiotic level, sign language would also be included as a visually perceivable form of translation. In brief, in order to occur, translation must make use of a medium of *human* communication, thus necessarily perceivable by any one or more of the human senses. The translated message, contained in whatever human conceived support, and communicated through whatever human employed medium, represents a human product, potentially comprehensible⁵⁰ by any human user familiar with the same medium and possessing the required language or code. In addition, the product of translation is intentionally defined a ‘token’, since it stands for an original, representing it in the target language.

Secondly, translation is indeed a *process*. It has long been recognized and defined as such (cf. par. 1.1), and this is possibly its most interesting aspect, the one that scholars from all fields have

⁴⁹ The notions of translation as both a product and a process (concurrently adopted here in) are far from recent or original; among contemporary scholars who particularly focussed on this definition, there are Hatim and Mason (1990) and Hatim and Munday (1995).

⁵⁰ ‘Understanding’, of course, goes much further than ‘comprehension’ as pictured in the classic communication vision of message ‘production → codification → transmission → reception → decodification’ (cf. Fig. 2). This issue will be better discussed later in this paragraph and in the book.

chiefly been interested in and insisted on, in order to understand firstly how it works (philosophical, linguistic, cognitive, IT studies) and, alternatively or simultaneously, to describe how it happens (descriptive TS), or to prescribe how best it should be carried out (prescriptive TS). In contemporary times, the most successful models depicting the translating process are based on those developed to explain linguistic communication. Two classical models are Nida's (1969) representation of translation (Fig. 2):

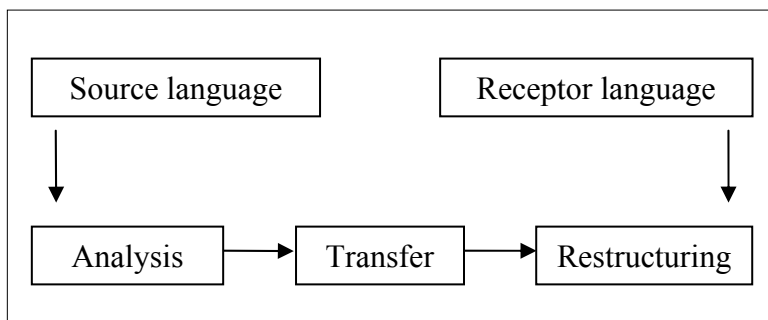


Fig. 2 Eugene Nida's (1969) model of translation

And Jakobson's (1960) (Fig. 3), another historic model of communication in linguistics clearly taken into account by the first:

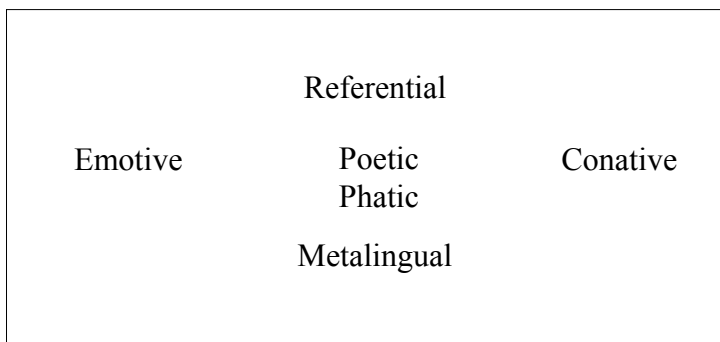


Fig. 3 Roman Jakobson's (1960) model of linguistic communication

Amendments and developments to both models and new suggestions altogether have been and keep being proposed, confirming this is a very productive area of TS⁵¹. A common feature of these models, within each one's specific functional scope, is their general acceptability or rather – deriving from the impossibility to univocally establish the functioning of the process – their non-falsifiability. In fact, almost every translator reflecting on what s/he does when translating would probably come up with a sensible descriptive representation, either coinciding with one of the existing models, or adding yet another facet to this complex object.

Thirdly, translation is seen as a *practice* in that there is more to a text than the text itself: there is the text, its co-text, and there is its context. Studies on the notion of context have been carried out for several decades now and it would not be incorrect to identify their turning point, in contemporary linguistics, in the work done by the 19th-century-born phonetician John Firth, whose school greatly contributed to giving rise to functional linguistics. Best applied to translation, however, is the sociolinguistic notion of context, the only one which, based on a wider set of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, can account for the many variables constraining translation and represented, for instance but not only, by the translator's language variety, knowledge, education, training, as well as his/her age, gender, ethnicity, etc. But even the sociolinguistic notion of context cannot entirely cater for the key variable in translation – experience – in its personal (the individual's), professional (the translator's) and social (the translator's community's) declinations. Furthermore, if considering that a translator's (or anyone's, for that matter) 'community' is a stratified entity – comprising smaller overlapping groups like 'family' and 'friends', but also much larger ones like 'translators' or 'same speech community', to the hypernymic 'human community' – an even more suitable notion expanding on context is the concept provided by Discourse Analysis (DA) and its more ideologically connotated version, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)⁵², of 'social practices':

⁵¹ Torop (1995), drawing on Popovič (1976), and subsequently elaborated by Osimo (2002), is just one of the most interesting and recent examples.

⁵² Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999), Fairclough (1992), Fairclough (1995), Fairclough and Wodak (1997).

articulations of different types of social elements which are associated with particular areas of social life – the social practice of classroom teaching in contemporary British education, for example (Fairclough 2003: 25).

In the specific case of translation, the example could be ‘the social practice of TS classroom teaching in contemporary British education’, or ‘the social practice of professional translation in the Italian translation industry’, but also ‘the social practice of freelance working women in Arab societies’ in the case of an Arab female freelance translator. As apparent, anyone’s social practices are many, overlapping and stratified into what Fairclough (2003: 24) calls an “order of discourse”, “a network of social practices in its language aspect”. The DA’s notion of social practice and especially the CDA’s “order of discourse”, by stressing the intrinsic, indispensable, inevitable social role of any linguistic event, are the concepts from which the definition of ‘translation as a practice’ given here is mainly derived⁵³. Its purpose is to account for the variable(s) of social experience(s) immanent in translation from a clear-cut ideological position, where ‘ideological’ does not necessarily (but can if required) mean ‘politically connotated’, but rather ‘socially responsible’⁵⁴. In particular, when a translation project has ethical implications with not only linguistic, textual or communicative potential consequences, but also consequences of a practical nature in the real world, this inexorably places the translator as a human into a human setting made of practices.

Finally, time joins together these three different but not separate realizations of translation – product, process, practice – in a continuum that is seen not necessarily as linear (Pym 1993) but rather as circular or, better, spiral. Time constrains the *product* in its material support (decayable / durable, destroyable / reproducible) and in its purpose (disposable after use / for keeping after use). It constrains the *process* of manufacturing translation (the time allowed for translat-

⁵³ Just like Fairclough’s “order of discourse” is explicitly derived from Michel Foucault’s (1981), who in turn inherited views from Antonio Gramsci (in Forgas 2000), and they all fall within the macro social practice of ‘Western culture and civilization’.

⁵⁴ The following chapters will further detail and debate the very important concept of (translator’s) responsibility.

ing, reviewing, proofreading – whether in a didactic or a professional context – irremediably determines the outcome of the process, making deadlines the translator’s nightmare). It lastly and more relevantly constrains translation *practice* in its historical dimension, through the various intra- and intertextual references, the information recombinations, reformulations, retranslations, transfer and conservation of collective information at the social level and within social groups, understood e.g. as nations, but also as speech communities and discourse communities⁵⁵. Historical time thus proves the success of single translations as well as of authors (e.g. Shakespearean or Bible translations), and evolutionary time proves the success of life on earth in the way information is translated (non-linguistically but according to a certain code or language) into different or evolved forms of life, and might prove or disprove all theories of translation in the long run. Moreover, translation *products* can be conceived as constrained by time in a linear way (beginning-to-end), *processes* in a circular way (beginning-to-end through all the various intermediate phases), *practices* in a spiralling way (for instance when repeating translation processes over again in different ages because a new translation is needed or desired, with every repeated process being an unrepeatable event in itself, superimposable yet never coinciding with the previous or the following ones, like turns in a spiral). Conversely, the translation phenomenon can be seen as circles of *processes* resulting in a line of *products*, in turn winding up to create spirals of *practices*, as *time* keeps all three dimensions alive, communicating and r(evolving).

The view of translation provided here intends to be a functional or better an *operational* one, adopted as a tool for categorizing and organizing subevents within the translating macroevent, with operational (professional, research, didactic) purposes and specialized texts in mind. It does not expect to explain the neurocognitive mechanisms behind translation or translation’s intrinsic nature, though neither does it seem to contrast with any facts on the neurological processes involved in either language or translation activities known so far, on the contrary leaving room for further developments in that area (cf.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, the diachronic dimension of the medical discourse community and its relevance in medical discourse and medical translation in Fischbach (1993).

par. 1.5). It is anyway only one more among many proposals and, like all, it shares the fate of every theoretical construction: to be willingly discarded in favour of new or improved models better explaining the empirical data derived from phenomenological observation.

2. Specialized texts, specialized translation

ROSALINE: What would these strangers? [...]

If they do speak our language, 'tis our will

that some plain man recount their purposes

William Shakespeare 1598,
Love's Labour's Lost, Act V, Scene II

2.1 From translation to specialized translation

'Purpose' is the keyword in specialized translation. As will be argued later in this chapter, it is in fact the keyword in translation at large. What, then, characterizes specialized translation? How is it different from non-specialized translation? Is there such a thing as non-specialized translation? And where does literary translation belong, in this distinction? These are some of the questions that this chapter will address, and try to answer.

It is interesting to start precisely from the latter. Looking back at the few definitions and reflections reported in the previous chapter, although just a scarce sample of the entire Western thought about the topic, they seem enough to show how the history of translation until about the mid-twentieth century revolved exclusively around literature; not only, it was taken for granted that it should regard nothing but that. While the importance of literature in any culture and of its transfer *across* cultures does not need explaining, the mere fact remains that among the oldest written translations (and texts) into any language and of all times there is a prevalence not of literary but of 'service' documents, i.e. those that would currently be called 'domain-specific' or specialized texts. An outstanding example is the Ptolemaic decree reported on the Rosetta Stone which, the Pharaoh commanded,

should be written on a stela of hard stone, in sacred writing, document writing, and Greek writing, and it should be set up in the first-class temples, the second-class temples and the third-class temples, next to the statue of the King, living forever (Simpson 1996).

The trilingual decree that allowed breaking the Egyptian hieroglyphs' code indeed survived until today: universally acknowledged as a milestone in history and philology, it also ought to be considered one in translation. Like the Rosetta inscription, contracts, accounts, inventories, edicts and laws – to name a few – all pertain to the business and/or legal domains and, for one Bible and one Iliad that were translated many times over and stirred debates continuing into the present day, there are probably millions of humble few-line contracts or testaments that were translated only once and disappeared the moment their purpose was fulfilled; again, time and purpose recur as key concepts. The argument is not (or not only) one of quality vs. quantity, i.e. that one Bible should be deemed worth more, less or as much as millions of contracts, but points to the relevance of both types of communicative events in human civilizations: while artists and scholars wrote literature (poetry, fiction, essays) for the uplift of the spirit, populations subsisted through grains and cattle being sold and bought, cargoes being shipped and received, taxes being levied, justice being administered. The supremacy that literary translation enjoyed until the 20th century lies in its practitioners' possessing the tools, the purpose and ultimately the time not only to carry out their activity, but also to write about it.

It is not as if nobody ever, in the course of history, recognized or wrote about specialized translation; on the contrary, many mentioned it with the specific objective of asserting its inferiority compared to literary translation. Paradoxically, however, some of the very authors who denigrated this phenomenon also provided brilliant descriptions of it, which acquire new significance if observed from a contemporary perspective. Von Humboldt, for example, in writing that

one often hears it said of translation that the translator should write the way the author of the original would have written in the language of the translator. [...] This kind of thinking has not taken into consideration that, apart from discussions of the sciences and actual facts, no writer would have written the same thing in the same way in another language (von Humboldt [1816] 1992: 58)¹,

¹ Cf. chapt. 1, note 29.

affirms that the principle of equivalence, long discussed and for many varying from illogical to impossible, in fact seamlessly applies to “discussions of the sciences and actual facts”. Schleiermacher is more specific, stating that “Business dealings generally involve a matter of readily apparent, or at least fairly well defined objects” (Schleiermacher [1813] 2004: 45). He further expands on the precise nature of “apparent” or “well defined” objects in specialized contexts by specifying that “all negotiations are, as it were, arithmetical or geometrical in nature, and numbers and measures come to one’s aid at every step” (Schleiermacher [1813] 2004: 45). He then identifies the secret to translating commercial texts in the fact that

even in the case of notions that, as the ancients already observed, encompass the greater and lesser within themselves and are indicated by a graded series of terms that vary in ordinary usage, making their import uncertain, even in the case habit and convention soon serve to fix the usage of individual terms (Schleiermacher [1813] 2004: 45),

before concluding that

Thus is translation in this realm little more than a mechanical task which can be performed by anyone who has moderate knowledge of the two languages (Schleiermacher [1813] 2004: 45).

The importance of Schleiermacher’s pages on the translation of specialized texts (he wrote quite a few paragraphs on this non-relevant subject) does not only lie in his being one of the intellectuals that most influenced modern thought on translation². Two centuries before TS established its importance, he also clearly and concisely identified, while dismissing them as non-problematic for translation, the key features of specialized texts: the relevance of their lexicon – usage-determined and community-agreed – and its objectivity, quantifiability and mono-referentiality. As for their translation being just a “mechanical activity”, if this statement anticipated machine translation, it could in a way have been prophetic in predicting it would be pursued, but wrong in expecting success from it; more

² Arguing in favour of bringing the reader closer to the original rather than the opposite, and thus, despite being considered a Romantic, expressing a love for philology very close to that of the German Enlightenment (Crouter 2005).

appropriately, it must be considered in a historical perspective, as pertaining to its author's culture and time.

Specialized translation, then, appears to be strictly linked to the nature of the texts it deals with which, as seen, might belong to different specific domains, but share an operational purpose, and are characterized by specific lexical use in the first place. Understanding in detail what makes a text specialized is therefore the key to understanding what specialized translation is and how it works.

2.2 Specialized purposes, specialized languages

To outline the history of specialized texts means to look back at the history of humankind, at its commercial dealings, at its institutional, political, legal organizations, at its scientific and technological research, from the deeds and contracts that feature among every civilization's first attested documents, to the hyperspecialized information populating today's WWW. This would be a challenging task for a team of multilingual, multidiscipline researchers producing an extended series of volumes. The actual academic research over specialized languages only started as recently as the 1970s, following the major developments that occurred in all fields of knowledge, especially in science, since the second half of the 20th century, and produced the results that are most interesting in a TS perspective.

The Languages for Specific or Special Purposes (LSPs) were initially identified and researched as early as the 1960s, in the wake of the then newly flourishing studies in applied linguistics, though evidence of a reflection on the subject can be ascribed to Ferdinand de Saussure himself and to even earlier authors (Garzone 1998: 75-76). A LSP can be defined as a natural language as typically used in a specific technical or disciplinary field, for a functional or an operational purpose, commonly within a given professional setting. The natural language and the professional setting are the basic variables in LSPs, so that there can be a Business English, an *español jurídico*, a *français medical*, an *italiano dello sport*, etc., according to the specific field and national language considered. The group of professionals or – to use a successful phrase coined by anthropologists and borrowed by sociolinguists – “community of practice” (Lave and

Wenger 1991) involved, however, can be and frequently is international and/or supranational, for example when the *français medical* includes French speakers from Switzerland, Canada and the Ivory Coast, or in the case of UN and EU English.

It is undeniable, in fact, that English takes the lion's share in both practical usage of and theoretical studies on LSPs: when speaking of LSP, it is actually to ESP (English for Specific Purposes) that most scholars look for reference or for a comparison with their own languages³. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6-7), among the most authoritative ESP theoreticians, indicate, as the reasons for the rise of English over other languages in the second half of the 20th century, the “unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale”, “the economic power of the United States” and “the Oil Crises of the early 1970s which resulted in a massive flow of funds and Western expertise into the oil-rich countries”. The past century's affirmation of these English-speaking “scientific, technical and economic” forces tipped the world's scales in favour of the specialized ‘hard sciences’ and drove away interests from the humanities and the ‘soft sciences’. The incongruity of a world where sectorial hyperspecialization pointed to very narrow horizons, while the need to communicate and trade this hyperspecialization required reaching out to very wide ones, only reflected the lines along which scientific research was going, as it headed towards the 21st century: “in search of the microscopic on the one hand (atomic sub nuclei, DNA, microelectronics) and of the macroscopic on the other (deep space observation, satellites, probes)” (Grego forthcoming), and ultimately sowing the seeds of this day's globalization. As English imposed its predominance in all the economically relevant fields, the double need arose to learn to communicate *in* and *through* English: English Language Teaching (ELT), and especially the didactics of ESP, catered for the ‘in’; specialized translation took charge of the ‘through’ (i.e. ‘from / into’).

Since the onset of ESP (Barber 1962, Swales 1971), the field has been delimited (Widdowson 1983, 1998), defined (for instance by Strevens 1988 and Dudley-Evans and St John 1998), and expanded

³ It is also the perspective adopted in this book, which refers to English-Italian translation.

upon by successive generations of scholars. As applied linguistics evolved, the concept of “community of practice” was joined by that of “discourse community” (Nystrand 1982, Swales 1990), the original definition of ESP by the wider one of Domain-Specific English (DSE), and the focus of ESP research also changed: from terminology alone, to communication in general; from the initial register and text analyses, to genre and discourse analyses. The major defining feature of LSPs – *purpose* – has nonetheless remained unchanged. A specialized language’s purpose is defined, delimited and set out by a community of practice exercising within a specific professional domain that can be technical, scientific, or disciplinary in nature. This community can be called a discourse community according to Swales (1990: 24-27) if, as well as sharing a domain-specific knowledge, (a) it also shares “a broadly-agreed set of common public goals”, (b) it employs the same communicative tools and practices through which the knowledge is passed among its members, (c) it uses these tools to actively exchange information, (d) it communicates through specific lexis and genres, and (e) it has an established “threshold level of membership” to distinguish its members from novices and non-members. Fairclough (2003, 2006) furthermore expands the notion of discourse community to that of a social, not only professional, construction. In this view, each member of a community of practice (or anyone, for that matter) belongs simultaneously to various discourse communities, each of which overlaps with the others, and contributes to determining everyone’s general and specific knowledge, his/her set of communicative tools, and the skills to use them – in a word, everyone’s private, professional and public place in society. All the above definitions and specifications of the agents in and the objects of specialized languages only support the key role of purpose in ESP. It is then apparent why, if the purpose is the smooth transfer of information among members but *not* to non-members, ESP greatly seeks, *for its members*, clarity, objectiveness, non-hermeticity, non-arbitrariness of language, and precise and agreed canons and tools for communicating in that language, but exactly the opposite (non-transparent lexicon and communicative strategies) *for non-members*, who should thus remain excluded. However, the meeting of a diatypic variant and a diatopic one creates yet another paradox: that of striving to exclude non-specialists locally while trying to include specialists globally; again, the former task is accomplished by

ESP, the latter by specialized translation. The following paragraphs offer a short summary of the main linguistic features of ESP, with specific reference to the implications these have on translation.

2.3 Lexical features of specialized texts

The established lexical monoreferentiality of ESP is best seen in scientific domains: science, by favouring univocal relations between objects and their referents, between the signified and their signifiers, is especially safe from the alluring dangers of hermeneutics inherent in literary texts, and its translation could theoretically even fit Schleiermacher's definition of a "mechanical activity". This condition, though, has not always existed. In ancient times, dominant civilizations did not feel the need to share their knowledge with subjected populations, but would impose their culture on them. On the other hand, it could happen that one civilization would feel their inferiority in some areas of knowledge with respect to a past civilization, as in the case of the Romans with Greek philosophy (cf. Seneca in par. 1.2). The argument of the inescapable decline of Western civilization since the Greeks survived through the centuries, from the Romans through the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, and one of its effects was the preservation of the specialized vocabulary of Greek philosophy, art and architecture to this very day: considering that philosophy included and coincided with the modern notion of 'science', it is easy to see how, at the beginning of the 20th century, at least three major specific domains already shared a common lexis that had been carefully carried over by successive generations of scholars for over two millennia. This happened in spite of the two main changes in the recognized language of Western culture after the one from Greek to Latin: the move from Latin to national languages, which however never had the time to acquire the same importance as Latin, and that to English which, starting from the Scientific Revolution that inaugurated the experimental method, slowly built itself a then missing scientific vocabulary, until it eventually came to occupy the hegemonic position it still holds to this day.

In other fields, specialized English lexis was not constructed by deliberate choice, but rather underwent a sort of natural selection process, for instance in economics, where it adopted, in turn, the

language and vocabulary of the commercially prevailing culture, but not necessarily discarding words acquired in the course of its early or recent history (*QUOTA*, *FORMULA* from Latin; *CLIQUE*, *NICHE* from French; *WIRTSCHAFTSWUNDER* from German; *OMBUDSMAN* from Swedish). It was not till after WWII, however, that the same feeling of post-war reconciliation that led to the establishment of ESP encouraged the standardization of sciences in the name of common progress, for example by founding the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 1947, an entity with a name “derived from the Greek *isos*, meaning ‘equal’” (ISO 2009a) and the aim “to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards” (ISO 2009b). The other ideological (yet very much real) child of those years is of course the European Union, another institution counting harmonization and standardization among its main objectives, and “one of the biggest employers of translators anywhere in the world” (European Commission 2009).

Domain-specific lexicons, as well as the already mentioned clarity and non-ambiguity, also show a high degree of productivity, necessary for the respective discourse communities to keep the pace with advances in their fields by being able to name new developments (products, services, but also processes, procedures, etc.). It has amply been highlighted (Gotti 1991 and 1996) how originally, to form new words in scientific English, “the model was essentially that of Latin” (Garzone 2006: 16), and included loanwords or direct borrowings, loan or semantic translations, in addition to actually new English terms, mostly created by affixation, conversion and compounding; other types of words found in ESP are abbreviations, acronyms and initialisms, eponyms, noun strings as in collocations. Specialized terms, thus, present with a high degree of technicality – resulting especially from the use of Greek / Latin affixes, the use of several affixes within the same term, the uncommonly large number of syllables – and produce an effect of artificiality, wherein terms deliberately ‘sound’ non-natural to alert both experts and non-experts that they are facing a code.

From the perspective of translation, the highly specialized lexicon, which is what distinguishes LSPs from ‘natural’ languages, also represents the first and stronger barrier making up Swales’s “threshold of membership”, and resulting in non-specialists commonly finding a specialized text perfectly readable yet not comprehensible, which

means an average reader is usually able to follow the syntactic structure of sentences, but not to decipher the meaning of single words (usually, as will be seen, nouns), where these words carry both the specialized information and the text's largest quantity of meaning. A specialized text would then appear to non-specialists as a thinly woven fabric, with few, well-spaced-out threads and many big knots. Undoing the knots is the specialized translator's task at the lexical level.

Strategies that can be applied to do this include examining the etymology of the word, checking whether it has a generic meaning that can help infer its specialized sense or whether it was directly created as specialized, comparing the different (generic and specific) meanings the word has in order to establish which semantic fields it is used in. A combination of all the above would probably prove the best solution, but a prescriptive approach is not the aim of these pages, which rather focus on describing the effects that the specific linguistic phenomenon of ESP has on translation. Obviously, the first of these is the concentration on lexicon on the part of the translator, since s/he would require

not only a firm mastery of both the source and target languages, but also at least an informed layman's (or even journeyman's) understanding of the subject field treated by the text, coupled with the research skills needed to write like an expert on the leading edge of technical disciplines (Wright and Wright 1993: 1).

The specialized translator is therefore faced with concerns that are not only linguistic in nature, but cognitive, sociological and potentially ethical too. Taking for granted the "mastery of both source and target languages", without delving deeper into issues of bilingualism and second language acquisition, the following problems would at least arise: how to learn the desired information; how fast, how detailed and how permanent this cognition ought to be; and which channels in society are available, open and suitable to pursue in order to acquire the information. Wright and Wright go on to recall how, in general,

Technical translators are typically either trained linguists who develop specialized research skills along with ancillary knowledge in selected technical areas, or engineers, scientists and other subject-area specialists who have developed a high degree of linguistic knowledge, which they apply to the translation of texts in their fields of specialization (1993: 1).

The antithetic pair ‘linguist with specialized knowledge’ versus ‘specialist with language knowledge’ is the subject of another classical debate in TS besides those on (in)equivalence and (in)fidelity, and no less passionate. The two figures are, in fact, potentially equal (though speaking from the linguist’s viewpoint here), on condition that they possess the sufficient linguistic *and* specialized knowledge to carry out a given translation. The question is, rather, how to evaluate (linguistic and specialized) knowledge, which leads back to yet another dilemma hinted at earlier, that of epistemology and of the quantifiability of knowledge. Given the current impossibility to solve the issue, a functional view should perhaps be adopted: a sufficient translating knowledge would be that which allows a translation to be received and processed – i.e. used – by a discourse community as any other working text written for the purpose and in the language of the said community. The task (and the responsibility) of evaluation would thus fall onto a professional community that, as an established working group, is bound to possess established internal working standards, which could be applied to test the functionality of its domain-specific translated texts. This is indeed the direction that the field of translation is following, in its own protective / protectionist interest. Many translators’ associations and translation companies recommend / guarantee following client-related procedures and standards in translating. The UK’s Institute of Translation & Interpreting, for example, has published a 39-step guideline that features, as its 5th step, the question

Does the style or terminology used in the translation have to conform to any specific requirements? e.g. consistency with ISO document, house style, pharmacopoeia...⁴.

But standardization also relates to the translation field itself: a technical committee for ‘Terminology and other language and content resources’ has existed at ISO since its founding in 1947, under the code TC37 and aiming at the “Standardization of principles, methods and applications relating to terminology and other language and content resources in the contexts of multilingual communication and cultural diversity” (ISO 2009c). As early as 1977, an ISO

⁴ Institute of Translation & Interpreting, *The thirty-nine steps. Questions you need to ask yourself when undertaking a translation*, [http://www.iti.org.uk/pdfs/newPDF/10FH_39Steps_\(02-08\).pdf](http://www.iti.org.uk/pdfs/newPDF/10FH_39Steps_(02-08).pdf).

2384:1977 standard on the “Documentation - Presentation of translations” already existed. Over sixty years later, this initiative, which had expectedly started as focused on terminology, European languages and the written medium, is furiously striving to keep ahead of the technological and socio-political events that came to pass in the meantime: headed by a Chinese Secretary, it currently boasts 63 between participating and observing countries, and 27 published standards since 1992 (ISO 2009d)⁵, including “Computer applications in terminology - Machine-readable terminology interchange format (MARTIF) - Negotiated interchange” (ISO 12200:1999), “Translation-oriented terminography” (ISO 12616:2002), and “Assessment and benchmarking of terminological resources - General concepts, principles and requirements” (ISO 23185:2009).

The trend, as seen, is towards establishing a common set of international standards in as many aspects of specialized fields as possible, and this comprises their distinguishing communicative element: terminology. This tendency definitely benefits translators, in that it partly makes up for the reluctance of their own evasive discipline to be quantified and evaluated. It is also particularly applicable to lexicon, which indeed is at least apparently discrete, separable as it is into single independent words, especially nouns. Whether perfect, word-to-word equivalence may be found across languages is another matter, usually not insurmountable when dealing with specialized domains and European languages (the shared classical roots and affixes help), but increasingly complex as it comes to languages not sharing a common origin and culture: in this perspective, the monopoly of just one language, such as English today, can help bridge gaps by means of heavy word-borrowing into all other languages. For the same reasons, lexicon is also the linguistic feature best adaptable to comparable database filing, i.e. to the construction of bi-/multilingual glossaries. This was understood and put into practice decades before the diffusion of personal computers, and terminology-building was initially thought of in printed format alone; later mass access to IT only contributed to

⁵ ISO [2010d] “TC 37 - Terminology and other language and content resources”, http://www.iso.org/iso/standards_development/technical_committees/list_of_iso_technical_committees/iso_technical_committee_participation.htm?commid=48104.

speeding up its development. The Inter-Active Terminology for Europe (IATE) online database, for example – started in 1999 and made freely available to the public in 2007 – is a wealthy official EU electronic resource (8.4 million terms in 23 European languages, IATE 2009) now accessible by anyone, but in fact builds upon the terminological efforts of hundreds of EU translators and specialists since the founding of the European Economic Community in 1951.

As with any large-scale trend, standardization too has its opponents. Translation scholars and professionals are no exception, especially – understandably – those researching literary translation. At a general level, though, in specialized translation and particularly in scientific / technological domains, it will probably soon be impossible to do without meeting a certain (growing) number of standards. Without thinking of ISO ones, proof of this is the mere use of computer technology in translation, which is taken for granted at least to a minimum degree (e.g. word-processing, receipt and delivery of documents in electronic formats, etc.). But then again some opposition is perceived, although to a much lesser extent, even against the use of IT technology in translation, mostly concerning the use of CAT (Computer-Assisted Translation) tools: in a 2005 survey on the major professional translators' web portal ProZ, to the question "What is your level of use of CAT tools?", the majority (25.8%) of answering members replied "I don't use any CAT tool" (ProZ 2005). Again, just like standards in terminology, the use of translation memories and the like may not always be necessary – not in very short texts and hardly in literary ones – but as a general trend it cannot be either ignored or denied, and in the majority of specialized translations it is useful and even explicitly required by clients.

Summarizing, domain-specific lexicon has always, correctly, been identified as the LSPs' main vehicle of expert information, and thus as the greatest barrier to a layperson's understanding of specialized texts and the biggest obstacle – if not the only one – in translating them. Researching lexicon for the purpose of specialized translation is therefore a translator's most immediate and time-consuming task, often proving hard to carry out because s/he lacks the required domain-specific knowledge, and terminological resources are not available or reliable. The latter circumstance is often due to an absence of constructive cooperation either (a) between linguists and specialists

(e.g. between translators and their clients) in building glossaries, databases, translation memories, etc., or (b) among linguists, in sharing them. This furthermore implies that, when terminology-building actually takes place (i.e. during the translating process), the translator frequently also lacks any guidelines as to the correct strategies to follow to make the resulting product suitable for the receiving discourse community, and the sources to confirm his/her translation. For all these reasons, when translating for professional discourse communities (already sharing internal sets of harmonized procedures), the existence and application of standards is considered helpful and desirable, to a certain degree, in solving lexical problems and building reliable terminologies. There are conditions, however, if terminological databases and sources are to be shared: the general standards employed can never be unilaterally set, but must be mutually recognized and accepted by both the translating and the professional communities, since the strength and value of standards lie in their recognition and sharedness – the wider, the better. Sacrificing creativity, inventiveness and originality to standards is acceptable and even required in specialized translation for its intrinsic purpose of providing clear and synthetic communication, where clarity and synthesis are reciprocally restraining: at the lexical level, this means a term must be translated as clearly as possible but within the tight limits allowed by any specialized field; it must be translated as synthetically as possible, but amply enough to make it clearly comprehensible⁶.

The argument in favour of the introduction and respect of common standards, defined and delimited according to the specific cases, is furthermore in line with the suggested view of translation as a time-constrained product, process and practice. Product-wise, the focus is on the short-term, circumscribed purpose of retrieving and adapting the terms to complete a specific translation project. Process-wise, it may be relevant to acquire the terms for a longer period and a wider purpose, i.e. to organize and store them in databases for future reference and use (especially within large projects or for future work for the same client), or to be shared with other translators or

⁶ The preferred option is always the ‘one original word, one translated word’ unit, unless culture-specific collocations are available.

specialists. Practice-wise, the discourse community that the translated product will reach and affect ought to be considered too, namely in evaluating the average or expected lifetime of the specialized terms appearing in the product: by observing the pace of change in a specific field, it could be possible to determine whether and when it is suitable to review the product's terminology, and to consider updating old terminological resources and past translations.

Giving in to a degree of harmonization ultimately appears to be beneficial for specialized translation, as well as the general trend within and without the translation field, especially as regards terminology. It does not necessarily mean giving up more creativity or originality than specialized translation requires (very little, though the creative aspect is never ignorable in any type of translation, even if just to understand how a text works in order to reproduce it), nor surrendering to the supremacy of the hegemonic language of the moment if lexical borrowing from that language is imposed by the standards. In fact, lexical hegemony is a historical condition, and successful languages never totally wane, as is still apparent when it comes to naming supranational objects, like the ISO institution or, more recently, the EU's contest for young translators, established in 2007 and deftly christened *Juvenes Translatores*.

2.4 Non-lexical features of specialized texts

Comprehensibly, lexis – as the outstanding feature in specialized languages and the vehicle for communicating expertise with clarity and monoreferentiality – has since ancient times been identified as their major and often as their *only* feature. This is not the case: research, as will be shown shortly, has established that also syntactic and textual features, although in lesser proportions, undergo variations in ESP. In spite of these aspects also being relevant and frequently proving quite problematic in translation, they still suffer from a quantitative bias with respect to lexical issues, which justifies dealing with them in the same section.

Focusing on terminology and that alone is precisely one common *faux pas* of many an inexperienced (and experienced) specialized translator, and it also stems from the hard-dying notion that, once the

lexical problems are solved, the entire translation puzzle is deciphered. Unfortunately, or fortunately for puzzle-lovers and connoisseurs of the complexities of language, that is hardly true. As even laypeople with basic schooling in their own language know, words may be the building blocks of language, but syntax binds them together into sentences and textual construction organizes them into texts endowed with the coherence and cohesion required for the communicative purpose they must serve, all the more so if this is specialized. The risk is, therefore, to find oneself eventually with an accurate glossary for the text to be translated, and experience serious difficulty in laying out words effectively and reproduce not only *terms*, but full *texts*. On the other hand, even the recent years' attention to communication in general, rather than just language, especially in fields like marketing and advertising, has sometimes resulted in the opposite mistake of concentrating only on text-building, where texts are however very short and almost / often coincide with just one sentence, if not one phrase or the juxtaposition of a few of them. In short, fast-paced communication for a past-paced civilization has killed, or at least seriously injured, the articulate use of syntax, still quite necessary in specialized translation, in spite of the common belief that domain-specific texts are syntactically plain.

Halliday and Hasan ([1985] 1991), Swales (1990), Gotti (1991 and [2005] 2008), Halliday (1997), Gotti and Dossena (2001), Cortese and Riley (2002), Garzone (2003 and 2004) and Gotti and Flowerdew (2006), to name some, have singled out the non-lexical features shown by specialized texts. These include (but are not limited to) strategies relating to (a) at the syntactic level: nominalization, modality (Palmer [1986] 2001), depersonalization (passivization, cleft sentences, topicalization, fronting, inversion, postponement, etc.); (b) at the textual level: synthetization (listing, schematization, graphic aids, etc.), cohesion (references, substitution, ellipses, conjunctions as in Halliday and Hasan 1976), hedging (Lakoff 1972). The two levels, however, are not always clearly distinct; or, rather, comprehensive effects like depersonalization and cohesion are achieved by means of elements taken from both. All the above features, and others besides, need to be taken into account when considering specialized texts for both writing / reading and translating purposes. By directly applying one of the above

instances of textual organization, the following lines will provide a schematic sketch of the main non-lexical strategies in specialized texts.

- *Nominalization* is the tendency to an increase in noun forms compared to verbal forms, as well as the grammatical process of transforming words from other classes (verbs, mainly) or verbal phrases into nouns. It has a high occurrence in specialized written texts.
- *Modality* relates to the mood of verbs, expressing possibility or necessity. Modal verbs tend to abound in specialized languages, e.g. they are especially linked to the uncertainty of results / developments in science (possibility), and to necessity in law (deontic use). Mood is differently obtained in different languages; translators need to apply the corresponding linguistic strategy to reproduce it.
- *Depersonalization* aims to make communication impersonal, for different purposes and through different strategies. For example, it could be employed to relieve authors from responsibility for the content of a text (hedging purposes), or emphasize the objective stance taken in presenting the topic, and it can be obtained by using the passive voice without an agent, or cleft sentences that topicalize the object of an action and reduce the role of its subject, etc.
- *Synthesization* includes any recourse functional to communicating the relevant information in the shortest and clearest way possible. It is the same economy principle underlying – as seen – the choice of how to translate domain-specific terminology. It is highly used in specialized texts and it is variously achieved, but mainly relies on the use of lists and iconic elements (graphs, diagrams, figures, photographs, etc.). It is usually little problematic in translation as elements are generally maintained, except for example between horizontally or vertically specularly written languages.
- *Cohesion* is responsible for the functional and orderly organization of relations of meaning within a text (*coherence*), as realized by grammatical means. To obtain it, references can be used to create signposts (temporal, deictic, conceptual) within the text; substitution to avoid repetition by employing

‘weaker’ token words for ‘stronger’ ones; ellipses to expedite and polish communication; while conjunctions are language’s true binding elements, turning sentences into text.

- *Hedging* can be defined as a set of linguistic strategies of any nature employed to place a distance between authors and their statements, thus reducing the former’s responsibility for the latter. Entire phrases can be used (‘unless where otherwise stated’ – in legal language; ‘as it appears’ – in scientific language, e.g. in relating an experiment), adverbs (‘supposedly’, ‘potentially’), modals (‘it might result in’), agent-less passive verbs (cf. ‘Depersonalization’ above), etc.

As indicated, these are just a few of many non-lexical aspects to be found in specialized texts, but they are possibly the most prominent, and their impact on translation is definitely to be evaluated. In particular, some syntactic elements will be analyzed presently, which seem especially interesting in an English-Italian contrastive perspective. It must also be pointed out that, while lexicon can be and has been discussed at a general, multilingual level because the reflections that can be offered about it tend to apply to all languages and certainly do to European languages, non-lexical features, especially syntax, call for comparison.

Nominalization is, expectedly, one of the features interesting to see in detail, which links the reflection on lexicon to that on syntax / text. It explains and is explained by what has been said about lexis being a LSP’s defining and most evident trait. In a self-propelling vicious circle, by nature nouns carry the most specialized information and distinguish LSPs from generic language, so that when new concepts are introduced, the established use encourages practitioners to name them according to custom, i.e. by assigning them a non-arbitrary name, a noun, to be preferred over locutions of other types for its precision and gate-keeping function, with *nomina agentis* and *nomina actionis* being among the most frequent. Not only, the desire for clarity and brevity creates ‘noun prestige’, and induces practitioners to construct sentences in ways that keep the nouns ‘as they are’, to make them stand out and catch the attention of the expert reader, who in turn is looking out for nouns, not locutions or paraphrases. Indeed, the evocative power of nouns over verbs is understandable: the semantic

and cultural load carried just by the simple substantive *logos*, or *lex*, would not be carried by the corresponding verb, ‘to speak’, ‘to legislate’, or by any locution comprising it or its derived forms. So the phenomenon progresses: domain-specific languages develop and increase their terminology dramatically as new advances are made in a field, and internal communication self-feeds the word-creating and word-using mechanisms, with results that in the long run become stereotyped and even paradoxical, as they reverse their original aim and start making communication unclear. This is the case, for instance, of word clusters, strings of juxtaposed noun phrases (also including deverbal and non-deverbal adjectives), and adverbs, which can form practical collocations to a point, but turn into decoding nightmares beyond that. For this reason, certain very large lexical clusters acquire the status of acronyms or initialisms; this way, they abandon their original class, and return to being simple one-word nouns as is desirable in specialized communication, yet losing part of their connotation and becoming non-transparent, with many non-experts even ignoring they were ever ‘something else’ (e.g. ‘quasi-stellar radio source’ or QUASAR; self-contained underwater breathing apparatus or SCUBA). When it comes to translating these words, standardized terminology imposes the use of the English original, so that in Italy very few non-specialists know that SCUBA is an acronym, and even some specialists fail to remember exactly what it stands for. The problems these words raise for translation are obvious and concern the decoding not so much of well-known clusters like ‘global warming’ (with collocation status by now) but of less common, more specialized associations of nouns. In practical terms, to what extent are long English clusters made explicit when translated into Italian⁷? Italian cannot support the same number of clustered words, and by nature it is already less synthetic a language than English just for the fact that its words are longer. For instance, a long but neutral phrase like

[1] high-sensitivity C-reactive protein⁸

necessarily needs to be broken down into its conceptual logical constituents, in Italian, and the ‘correct’ translation

⁷ This volume’s horizon, it is worth recalling it, is English into Italian translation.

⁸ This and the following English examples are all *realia* (see Sources of *realia* used for exemplification).

[2] proteina C-reattiva ad alta sensibilità⁹

manages to add just one more word (the preposition ‘ad’) to the lot, so it avoids making explicit the adjective phrase

[3] C-reactive

[4] reattiva al polisaccaride C dello pneumococco

by establishing a syntactic calque (typical of scientific language) instead. This is just one exemplification, but the subject is complex and fascinating, proving, as it does, how the various elements of language that are by convention separately analyzed are in fact strictly related and influenced by each other.

Verb tenses also deserve special consideration, particularly those that do not enjoy strict or univocal English-Italian correspondence. It is known that the desire for objectivity, together with depersonalization and hedging, creates a preference in ESP for non-finite verbal forms such as infinitives, participles and gerunds. In Italian, this results in the issue of how to differentiate between an infinitive and a gerund, which is often solved by replacing the English gerund deverbal noun with an Italian noun *tout court*, thus nominalising and keeping in line with the general trend:

[5] It was decided *to remove* the tumour

[6] Si è deciso di rimuovere il tumore.

vs.

[7] *removing* the tumour was categorized as routine

[8] la rimozione del tumore era classificata come di routine.

The frequency of participles, on the other hand, requires expanding in Italian, so it is dealt with in the same way as noun clusters, i.e. by applying similar strategies.

Finally, even more interesting is the analysis of the ‘past simple - present perfect’ pair, a tricky topic in EFL didactics, as any EFL teacher well knows. The correspondence between these tenses is nowhere near perfect, and it can even imply addressing a grammatical entity that does not exist in the target language (i.e. Italian, here), in the case where the English present perfect is employed in a duration form.

⁹ Italian definitions [2] and [4] are also taken from real texts (see Sources of *realia* used for exemplification).

The problem lies in the multiple value (and translation) that each English tense has in Italian. The past simple

[9] the patient *responded* well

can be translated into the Italian *passato remoto*, *passato prossimo* or *imperfetto*:

[10] il paziente *rispose* bene

[11] il paziente *ha risposto* bene

[12] il paziente *rispondeva* bene.

The present perfect can actually refer to a past action [13], or be used with a non-action verb as a duration form [14]:

[13] the patient *has responded* well

[14] the infant *has been* in a critical condition [since / for].

In the first case [13], the Italian equivalent is the *passato prossimo* as seen in [11]. In the second case [14], it is translated using the *presente indicativo* [15]:

[15] il neonato *è / si trova* in condizioni critiche [da].

What is not possible is to translate [14] using a *passato prossimo* [16]:

[16] il neonato *è stato* in condizioni critiche*

[17] the infant *was / had been* in a critical condition

A back-translation into English would in that case return a different message [17], not implying that the patient's condition is stable, as the original [14] stated, but that it has now changed, for the better or even for the worse. From the specialized translator's perspective, it is hardly indifferent which the correct interpretation is. A wrong or superficial syntactic choice would not only represent a circumscribed mistake within a single sentence: if it determines an incorrect logical implication, this could go on to affect the entire textual organization of the target product and, consequently, the comprehension of the message at large. In other words, it is no use having created / obtained a good bilingual glossary of a text's specific terminology if, when moving to the syntactic level, a patient is killed and the results of a clinical trial are reversed. Above all in specialized texts, the crime would not remain on paper alone: a wrong transfer of expert information can have observable consequences within and without the affected community of practice, potentially lethal, for instance, in

the above case of a medical community, and with relevant legal / economic implications too. As Mounin commented as far back as 1965, “in technical translation, one will note that price concerns are much deadlier than literary ridicule” (1965: 172, my transl.).

The non-lexical features of specialized languages, some of which have been briefly reviewed above with special reference to translation purposes, are first of all hard to list according to clear-cut categories. Elements like verb aspect and mood certainly play a relevant role at the syntactic level, but also at the textual, discursive and communicative one. Likewise, cohesion is studied in text analysis, but it is realized by means of lexico-semantic and syntactic strategies, and of course it also contributes to discourse and communication at large. Syntax, text, discourse, communication do not constitute a hypernymic / hyponymic set, but rather represent overlapping yet separate perspectives that can be adopted to investigate a complex phenomenon like language, requiring and accommodating more than just one research approach. But whereas linguists should be glad to have various resources available, in translation an abundance of them can prove disorienting, and more than ever in specialized settings, where time is of essence and purpose is all-pervading, and tends to eclipse everything that does not seem functional to it. Linguistic approaches *are* nonetheless functional to specialized translation and in fact are essential, as seen, in decoding the original message and re-codifying it into the target product correctly *and* according to the purpose. It takes a selective process to identify what analytical resources are to be employed with each single text to translate; the greater the experience, the faster this process is carried out. However, the ‘crystallization’ tendency in specialized communication – for which successful strategies, like nominalization, are fixed into crystallized norms that are welcome and even expected by the community – makes it possible to identify not only single recurring patterns within the same domains, but various sets of them, each comprising specific lexical, semantic, syntactic, textual, discursive and communicative features: these are better known as genres¹⁰.

¹⁰ The key theorist of genre analysis, John Swales, was actually heavily influenced in the formulation of his perspective by his extensive research on specialized languages (e.g. Swales 1971, 1985).

Genre theory can mediate between the requirements of specialized translation and the variety of analytical tools offered by linguistics.

2.5 Genre theory and specialized texts

Not all textual features were accounted for in the previous paragraph, which left out, for instance, those relating to coherence. This was done on purpose, as it seemed more appropriate to discuss them when addressing genre theory: a functional approach in linguistics that itself contributes to bringing coherence to all that has been said about ESP and its relationship with translation, by providing an organic theory of how lexical and non-lexical aspects combine in specialized texts.

Genre theory, too, results from the evolution of various lines of thought in Western linguistics and philosophy. The very Platonic archetype and the Aristotelian category are amongst its earliest testimonies, through Kant's cognition-centred "categories as the true primitive conceptions of the pure understanding" ([1781] 1855: 65), to Wittgenstein's "Familienähnlichkeiten" or "family resemblances" ([1953] 2001: 52), down to the last century's structuralist and then deconstructionist views which, whether supporting or rejecting structures in reality, nonetheless acknowledged their indisputable role in human epistemology:

Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging. And not because of an abundant overflowing or a free, anarchic, and unclassifiable productivity, but because of the trait of participation itself, because of the effect of the code and of the generic mark. Making genre its mark, a text demarcates itself (Derrida and Ronell 1980: 65).

Isolating from Jacques Derrida's lines the notions of 'belonging' and 'understanding', and combining them with Kant's 'participation', three keywords typical of domain-specific communication, as outlined in the previous paragraphs, emerge¹¹. A genre, being:

¹¹ Mikhail Bakhtin too categorized "all kinds of scientific research" into "secondary genres" (in Holquist and Emerson eds 1986: 62, italics added).

a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually *understood* by the *members* of the professional or academic *community* in which it regularly occurs (Bhatia 1993: 13, italics added),

embodies these underlying concepts, expressed in Vijay Bhatia's above definition by the highlighted keywords. In a specialized communicative event, smooth and immediate *understanding* ("mutually *understood*") must be guaranteed both ways between the sender and the receiver, whose *belonging* to the same group of professionals must be publicly acknowledged ("*members*"), where membership means active *participation*, through information exchange, to their "community" of practice¹². Equally, Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance', and the ensuing reflection on 'prototypes'¹³, is closely related to genre theory in that

exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as *prototypical* by the parent discourse community (Swales 1990: 58, italics added).

In practical terms, then, genres are collections of similar structural and stylistic patterns, applicable to certain domains, for communication within or across certain communities or, even, beyond communities, between specialists and non-specialists. Well-known examples are the legal contract, the research article in hard sciences, the technical report, the patient's medical record in clinical medicine. Genres, however, do not always necessarily belong to so specific fields. Many facilitate communication between specialists and non-specialists, for example for dissemination or didactic purposes: the medical prescription, the instruction manual, the textbook. Others are outright typical of popular settings: the letter to the editor, the agony aunt column, the cooking recipe (e.g. Askehave and Swales 2001 analysed shopping lists) are

¹² An interesting essay on the history of the scientific speech community seen from an evolutionary perspective is Valle (1997). Bazerman (1988) also outlines the evolution of genres.

¹³ Prototype theory developed within cognitive psychology (Rosch 1975, Rosch and Mervis 1975), but found interesting applications in other fields, including linguistics, for example as investigated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1987).

just a few of them. Simply put, whoever does not know the ‘internal rules’ of the specialized genre (e.g. who the sender and the receiver are, what channels they use, what the agreed relation between them is, etc.) can neither access the genre, nor share in the discourse community behind it.

Most relevant for this book are the genres used in professional settings, although popular ones are functional to introduce the notion that ‘specialized’ does not necessarily mean ‘*from specialist to specialist*’: the agony aunt column too is a highly specialized genre in its own fashion, such as requires writing by a professional according to certain “patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience”, but the writer and the reader are on different levels. So far, the concept of purpose in LSPs has been associated mainly to that of discourse / professional community, i.e. with reference, in fact, to the domain. Studies on textual genres introduce a differentiation or, better, a second nuance to it: within their ‘purpose’, LSPs accommodate not only a professional focus linked to a specific domain or topic, but also a degree of specialization that varies from specialist to non-specialist. This is known as a horizontal-vertical framework (Cortelazzo 1994, 2000), where the horizontal variation relates to the domain, and the vertical variation to the degree of specialization. Most researchers in this area (e.g. Cloître and Shinn 1985; Hilgartner 1990; Bucchi, 1996, 1998) consider the vertical variation a continuum, rather than made up of separate stages, and provide finer distinctions. Cloître and Shinn’s successful model (1985: 34), for example, identifies an “intra-specialist level” (specialists communicating with each other within one field), an “inter-specialist level” (specialists communicating across fields), a “didactic level” (specialists teaching below-the-threshold members of a specialized community), and a “popular level” (specialists communicating with non-specialists). Cloître and Shinn’s (1985) categories are a function of both the sender and the receiver, and can be described as ‘sender-receiver’-based. They could further be functionally grouped into ‘internal’ and ‘outbound’ levels, with the intra-specialist and inter-specialist levels making up the internal levels, and the didactic and popular levels the ‘outbound’ (directed to receivers outside specialized discourse communities) ones.

Genre theory introduces and highlights the relevance of the horizontal-vertical variation communicative model in order to define genres, which are cognitive and communicative models – or ‘containers’ – featuring own specific sets of linguistic patterns. Genres may then be used across domains and levels: e.g. the textual genre of the ‘report’ may be filled with economic content at the intraspecialist level and take the form of the annual reports issued to their shareholders by large multinationals; or it can pertain to the technical domain and the inter-specialist level and be embodied by an engineering consultant’s report on the safety standards of a school carried out for the Ministry of Education. A report with didactic purposes could be one that students have to write and hand in to their teacher about an experiment they conducted in the lab. A popular level report could be the feature article published in a tabloid newspaper about dresses worn by red carpet actresses at the Academy Awards. Not all genres are as flexible as the report. Some, on the contrary, are very rigidly constrained: e.g. the invoice, which may vary from country to country but not within the same country, where the data it has to include are regulated by law¹⁴. Some texts may be said to pertain to different genres at the same time, for example the above-mentioned fashion report, which can also be called an ‘article’ or, to better delimit it, a ‘tabloid article’, or a ‘fashion and showbiz tabloid article’. In fact, most texts would belong to more than one genre or, differently put, show features of various genres simultaneously. Very few, on the other hand, would fulfil all the prototypical requirements of a ‘pure’ genre: the prototypical end of this dimension is occupied by highly crystallized genres, usually typical of highly intraspecialist levels and particularly of legal language, where formulas often appear as “performative utterances” in John Austin’s ([1955] 1962) terms. Another crystallized genre is the medical research article, where the need for maximum clarity and non-arbitrariness has even imposed a specific logical-argumentative structure to follow when reporting case studies or clinical trials (a broadly and long researched topic, e.g. by Swales 1971, Gotti 2003 and Halliday 2006).

However, to disprove what has just been suggested, popular communication too, commonly at the other end of the crystallization continuum, can make use of strictly rigid genres, again depending on their

¹⁴ Though specific textual features like the layout and graphics may vary.

purpose. For example, a grandmother's cooking recipe, if it must be successful, shares the same need for absolute clarity as the description of a newly synthesized molecule, so it follows very crystallized rules and has a scientific content like a chemical formula's, if for the fact it may use different systems of measurement, e.g. tablespoons and cups; in translation (and in the kitchen), it is treated with the same thoroughness as any 'real' scientific text. In view of this discrepancy caused by purpose, the definition of specialization variation as two-dimensional should perhaps be adapted into a tri-dimensional structure, linking domain, specialization and purpose at all levels¹⁵. The classical horizontal (domain) - vertical (specialization) variation realising *specialized languages* could then be seen as integrated into a widely reaching framework comprising a horizontal (domain) - vertical (specialization) - oblique (purpose) variation, realising *specialized communication* (Fig. 4).

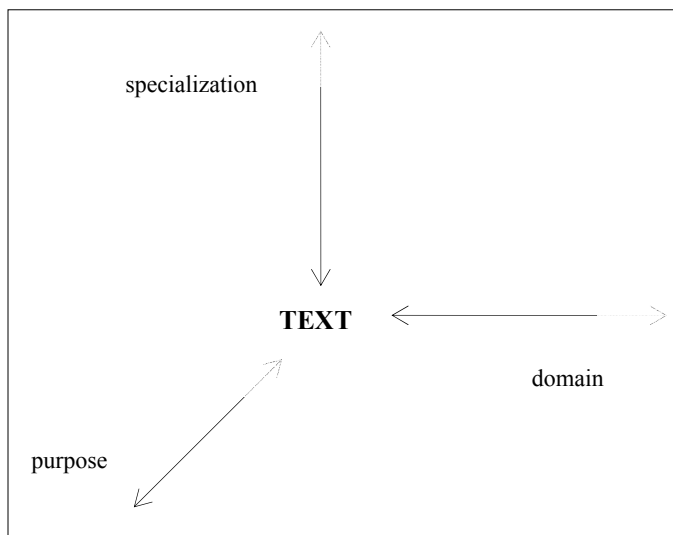


Fig. 4 Specialized communication: a suggested model of representation

¹⁵ Askehave and Swales (2001) suggested a redefinition of the concept and role of purpose in genres, for example.

Here, while specialization and domain are seen as predominantly *inbound* characteristics, determining as they do the inner nature of the text (but not exclusively, because a specialized text also needs to be easily received outside, by readers within the same domain and with the same degree of specialization), purpose is seen as a mainly *outbound* feature, i.e. relevant in shaping the text internally, but affecting the external use that is done of it in greater percentage.

A more articulated framework could indeed help account for the evasive nature and use of genres.

The problem is that, however the typology is set up, any real text will display features of more than one type. This multifunctionality is the rule rather than the exception, and any useful typology of texts will have to be able to accommodate such diversity (Hatim and Mason 1990: 138).

For this reason, ascertaining beyond doubt what a genre is can still prove problematic. An established view in literary studies upholds that a genre really is one when it can be parodied (“As a rule, the testing of discourse is coupled with its being parodied”, Bakhtin in Holquist 1981: 413), i.e. when a set framework is filled with unusual content, thus disrupting the audience’s expectations about its message and creating irony. This can also be done with a different and more questionable purpose in mind, i.e. when genres from one domain and level are used to convey a message destined to a different audience. The classic example is found in advertising, where a message is often ‘masked’ as a scientific publication using features of this genre to convey to lay-people the same authority that intra- / interspecialist texts do:

[18] Studies show rosemary may protect against free radical damage both internally and externally¹⁶.

[19] I test clinici dimostrano che Notox-Hepaxil protegge il fegato, ma anche il cervello e lo stomaco¹⁷.

In translation too any variation from the established use of a genre is identified and may be either reproduced or altered, depending on the purpose, but bearing in mind the deontological problems this can create (Scarpa 2007a).

¹⁶ From a slimming product’s advertising website.

¹⁷ From a food supplement’s advertising website.

All this “fuzziness” (Swales 1990: 33) inherent in genre definition and use may produce the feeling that genre theory is nowhere near providing any reassuring norms and stable models, and discourage employing it in translation. Far from this, genre analysis ought to be well-received and adopted by specialized translators looking (as outlined in par. 2.3 and 2.4) for signposts, rules and standards, as it provides them with sufficient sets of these to receive and attain the desired harmonization, but also with enough flexibility to customize their application to suit the needs of each single translating job¹⁸. The professional translator, following Kant’s and Wittgenstein’s cognitive categories, does not look for genres in texts, but interprets a text according to the genre features that best describe it: genre analysis as applied to translation is essentially a matter of choices (a theme that will be discussed later on in this and the next chapter).

The connection existing between genres and textual coherence, mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, can now be made more explicit, together with the relevance these concepts hold in translation. Genre analysis is a functional-linguistic approach¹⁹ with roots and applications in philosophy, literature and the arts. It is inherently concerned with coherence at the textual level as obtained by the combination of cohesive lexico-semantic and syntactic elements. However, since “coherence is provided not only by the ordering of sentences, but also by their meaning and reference” (van Dijk 1985: 110), establishing the meaning of sentences is a semantic operation related to interpretation – one aspect of translation. It furthermore provides the specialized translator with a variety of analytical tools from which to choose that are this time well-structured and ‘packaged’ into ready-made yet flexible, adaptable and interchangeably constructed textual frameworks: genres. This way, the translator is offered the possibility to choose from an abstract ‘library’ of basic interpreting canons or standards arranged into concretely applicable models. Finally, genre

¹⁸ Ulrych (2005) goes deeper into the relationship between genres and translation and, based on previous studies including Even-Zohar (1979) and Toury (1980), proposes the notion of translation as a genre of its own.

¹⁹ M.A.K. Halliday too published on ESP (Halliday, Macintosh, and Stevens 1964, Halliday and Martin 1993, Halliday 2006) and did extensive work on coherence (Halliday and Hasan 1976 and 1991).

analysis redefines and enriches a translator's purpose by introducing the diaphasic dimension or level of specialization. All this is supposed to endow translators with increasing(ly) suitable tools to address their task, leaving it to personal training, experience, effort and – for want of a better word – talent to apply them to their best use in specialized translation. Indeed, the same reflection as was made about lexical standards in par. 2.2 relates to genres: like words, genres also evolve, and since many of them are connected to contemporary communication, they do so at its changing pace, i.e. very fast. For this reason, genres too can and ought to be regarded in and over time, and related to translation differently depending on this being considered in its product, process or practice form.

2.6 Approaches to specialized translation

The considerations made and reported in chapt. 1 about translation in general, and those presented in this chapter about the theoretical tools provided by applied linguistics that can contribute to the translator's work, do not say in detail how this *should* be carried out. This shortcoming is partly due to this book not taking a prescriptive stance, but being concerned with how specialized translation *is* carried out. Although these and often do coincide, it is not always so. The didactics of translation is an altogether separate yet closely related topic, that part of translation concerned with discipline rather than doctrine, as defined by the OED (cf. par. 1.1) and, again, different from its practice. Translation – this much is clear by now – is all these things at the same time and, in writing about it, each of these aspects can take precedence over the others, but never ignore them. This quality of translation is derived from its being after all an *art* – though according to many a minor one, not the child of creation but of the lesser god that is imitation. Still, even as a secondary art, it shares the same traits and problems of the arts as regards equivalence and talent, and didactics is the aspect of translation most concerned with them. Any strictly prescriptive work will then have to deal with these aspects, though art and talent seem hardly teachable if absent, just refineable or developable if present. The extreme difficulty of presenting a comprehensive prescriptive view does not mean that

good and even excellent didactic supports do not exist; they do and they are very significant to follow at the practical level and to compare at the theoretical one. The reason why this paragraph reports some of the main authors in English-into-Italian translation teaching is, however, different: didactics is seen as really bringing together the various linguistic theories touched upon in this chapter and demonstrating in practice how they apply to the translation process. It is worth remarking the originally didactic purpose of research on ESP and, subsequently, on genres, as many key linguists who contributed to these fields – Widdowson (1992, 1994 and 1997), Halliday (2007)²⁰, Swales and Feak (2004), Swales et al. (1998) – also carried out extensive work on EFL, which has of course close ties with translation. Recent studies on specialized translation all take into account contemporary research in applied linguistics. While it is impossible to mention them all²¹, a selection of texts particularly relevant for their links with linguistics is given below.

Peter Newmark's books (1981, 1988 and 1991) were, for about a decade, in the 1980s, the main source on specialized translation, among a majority of studies that were still focused only on literary and biblical translation (Hermans 1985, Toury 1980). He was also one of the first authors in TS to provide indications that were openly prescriptive and directly applicable as a manual. Newmark's contribution lies especially in having definitely brought specialized translation into Translation Studies. He also introduced a systemic-functional approach, although questioning the perfect application of Halliday's functional categories and notion of register to translation, and rather finding it "refreshing to return to Chomsky" (1991: 55), whom he appreciates not in all aspects, but essentially for his "creative view of language" (1991: 55). Newmark's functional approach differentiates between semantic and communicative translation. The first is author-centred and tends towards literalness; the second is reader-centred and less constrained. For most specialized texts, he recommends communicative translation, while he sees semantic translation closer to literary texts. Not a completely original view, because it builds upon a histori-

²⁰ This volume collects the most relevant papers on the subject by M.A.K. Halliday, who also authored studies in Chinese language (2009).

²¹ A clear account of the recent methods in TS is Snell-Hornby (2006).

cal dualistic opposition, and relatively outdated today because of its 'mere' bidimensionality, it was however relevant at and for the time in which it was proposed, and highly influential for the future development of the specialized branch of TS²².

Many interesting works were published in the 1990s. Among these, Hatim and Mason's, although not strictly didactic²³, had a lasting influence on other texts on translation didactics of the following two decades (Baker 1992, Taylor 1998, Scarpa [2001] 2008). *Discourse and the translator* (1990) testifies to its authors' functionalist view:

in its insistence on according priority to the investigation of 'competence' (the ideal speaker / hearer's language faculty over the investigation of 'performance' [...]), transformational grammar drew attention away from language as communication, the very substance of the translator's work (1990: 32).

It also reports their interest in register analysis (chapt. 3) and genres (chapt. 8), and introduces machine translation (pp. 22-25), the then developing notion of discourse (chapt. 4), and the importance of the social framework (pp. 1-20), with which the focus moves from 'reader' to 'reader in *society*'. In *The translator as communicator* (1997), the same authors move on to consider translation within even wider horizons, thus leaving the bidimensional plane for the holistic view of translation *in* communication. Newmark's semantic and communicative translation is substituted by static and dynamic translation (1997: 30-35); the concept of register blends into social semiotics (1997: 22-24); coherence is introduced as a key element in translating texts ("Indeed, one might define the task of the translator as a communicator as being one of seeking to maintain coherence", 1997: 12); and an overall textual analysis approach is followed and recommended (chapt. 2).

²² Sergio Viaggio (1991, 1992, 2000), a UN interpreter and former Chief of Vienna's UN Interpreting Section, offers detailed and highly critical analyses of Newmark's work.

²³ "The title of this book might lead some to believe that our intention is, somehow, to teach translators how to translate. Nothing could be further from the truth" (Hatim and Mason 1990: xi).

Mona Baker has been publishing extensively on translation and TS. Her 1992 influential classic is an actual *Coursebook*, offering a comprehensive linguistic approach to translation that is also immediately understandable and applicable by the expert and the training translator alike. Baker adopts a bottom-up or micro-to-macro method that starts by taking into account as usual the lexical level, however still traditionally divided into “word level” (chapt. 2) and “above word level” (chapt. 3). As expected, the next level accounted for is grammar, while the following is text analysis. In fact, Baker’s text analysis is much more articulated than Hatim and Mason’s, taking three chapters and exploring theme and topic organization (in the Hallidayan sense), textual cohesion and, finally, what she considers responsible for “pragmatic equivalence” (chapt. 7): coherence. Coherence deals with “how texts are used in communicative situations that involve variables such as writers, readers and cultural context” (1992: 5): a concept that recalls LSPs and anticipates genres. Genres are actually mentioned throughout the volume, but are only explicitly described in a subparagraph of the chapter on grammar as an “introducing” feature of texts (1992: 111).

Taylor (1998), conceived as a “user-friendly” tool (1998: 3), is representative of various shifts in both content and form. Firstly, it adopts the now common structure (in translation didactics) of a two-section volume, with the first part dealing with translation and linguistic theory, and the second presenting real sample texts from different domains, translated and commented on, to illustrate how the translating process takes place in effect. Secondly, it introduces a view of genre theory among the tools suggested for analyzing texts before and while addressing them. Thirdly, a specific and original methodology is illustrated: translation as a “rolling” (part two) or circular process, made up of the various subsequent stages leading to the actual translation, from the first literal version, through the analysis of the various levels of the text, to the final version. Lastly, this book also addresses specifically, e.g. in the choice of sample texts, an English / Italian translating audience (possibly with a necessary bias towards Italian into English translation), who shares specific and recurrent sets of problems at all linguistic levels and in both transfer directions.

Ulrych (1999) focuses on the multidisciplinary nature that translation has always enjoyed – reinforced by the holistic approach that imposed itself as a general trend at the end of the 20th century – and on the changing role of the translator in its three main manifestations: the translation student, the translator-trainer and the professional translator. In particular, she perceives and receives the changes in the media that were taking place at the end of the 1990s, especially as regards the mass use of computers. An evidence-based perspective in Translation Studies – similar to the same-name paradigm shift occurred earlier that decade in medicine – is thus proposed, which would find its best expression in the use of corpora for translating purposes. An unquestionable revolution in linguistics, corpus-based technology as the only or even just the main paradigm in TS would in later years prove to pose various issues, chiefly that of self-referentiality (cf. par. 3.2 on corpus linguistics and TS and par. 3.5 on the web as a corpus).

Moving into the 2000s, Scarpa ([2001] 2008) represents an organic, articulated didactic instrument, directed at English into Italian translators. Like Taylor starting from linguistics and moving to translation, it is nonetheless no longer divided into separate sections, but is presented as a continuum. LSPs occupy the first chapters, followed by the actual chapters on translation in its general, preparatory and productive aspects. The final chapters, dealing with the ever-returning, very complex issue of quality evaluation and translation competence, discuss didactics at the theoretical level, a topic amply explored by the author (2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c and 2007d). Scarpa returns to a traditional distinction between “*traduzione letterale*” and “*parafrasi*” (par. 4.1), the latter articulated into various strategies (par. 4.1.2). Her methodology includes the following stages: identification of text types or genres, identification of models in the target language; identification of purposes which, based on *skopostheorie* (Vermeer 1989, Nord 1997), can differ from the source text’s; reading; identification of translating problems.

Osimo (2007) is a self-defined “*manuale pratico*” (2007: 3). Although focusing on essays, the method it proposes can also find applications in specific domains. The theoretical section in this book is very limited compared to the space dedicated to the step-by-step

analysis and translation of *realia*, but the prescriptive aim amply justifies this, as well as the fact that this volume follows an earlier, thorough account of translation history and theory (2002). Osimo sees translation as a process (mediated from Popovič 1976 and Torop 1995) leading from a prototext to a metatext through a number of stages: the linguistic and cultural analyses, the mental elaboration of the message, the identification of the model reader and of the dominant, the first draft, the review. The linguistic analysis in turn comprises linguistic as well as socio-economic levels, i.e. the identification of the text's typology (or genre), style and content; and of the target market and reader. The translation, like in Scarpa ([2001] 2008), is thus built on a first, service draft, to be lately reprocessed taking into account the lexical, syntactic and textual levels, and finally analysing the problems and any loss occurred during the transfer.

The selected publications about the didactics of specialized translation reviewed above, although a restricted sample, represent some of the recent developments, i.e. over the past thirty years, in the reception and application of linguistic theories within translation²⁴. Changes went from an originally bidimensional model (Newmark 1991, 1988), deriving from previous research on literary texts but not necessarily fitting them either (e.g. Toury 1995), to multilayer approaches focusing not only on purpose and not only on lexicon, but on text, genre and discourse (Hatim and Mason 1990, 1997; Baker 1992) and, furthermore, on the writing and re-writing phases of translation (Taylor 1998), on the factors influencing reception and evaluation (Scarpa [2001] 2008), and on the wider socio-economic contexts in which translations occur (Osimo 2007). Specialized translation, it seems, has dropped the bidimensionality of its traditional paper support, and has acquired increasing degrees of depth, until it has come to be seen as an event set in co-text, context and eventually society, and it has done so thanks to the application of relevant aspects of relevant linguistic theories to the initially innovative though limited studies on LSPs/ESP. The following paragraph, drawing from existing research and introducing personal reflections,

²⁴ More works on scientific and technical translation in particular include Finch (1969), Pinchuck (1977), Hann (1992), Wright and Wright (1993).

outlines a suggested description of the mechanisms at work in specialized translation.

2.7 Specialized translation: an operational approach

The proposed interpretation of the factors determining and influencing specialized translation cannot but start from the underlying concept recurring since the beginning of the chapter: purpose. The framework followed is definitely functional and functionalist, in line with the nature of specialized languages themselves and of all research on LSPs/ESP and genres. It is also founded on aspects of critical discourse analysis as a perspective rooted in linguistics yet looking to society as the place where linguistic events occur, and it moves from the product / process / practice conception of translation described in par. 1.6.

According to this view, the parameters of domain, specialization and purpose, amply discussed above, are joined by a third one: time. Supposing a specialized text is to be translated, a process aiming to manufacture a product starts that is essentially selective in nature. The notion of translation as a selection process is intuitive, of course, and it has been formulated theoretically by various researchers in past and recent history (e.g. Levý 1967, Katan [1999] 2004, Salmon 2002, 2005a). Only, the time allowed to complete this choosing task is always limited, and the limit is as theoretical as it is practical. Every 'real' translation that is carried out in actuality has a time schedule. The professional translator knows it very well, since it is a major constraint and concern in his/her job, the variable that goes down in contracts with agencies and clients, and one over which breach-of-contract lawsuits are more often filed, as it is much easier to evaluate than – again – quality. But a deadline applies to just *any* translating project, not only strictly professional ones. The issue is also well-known in didactics: any translation course at any level is usually characterised and/or followed by one or more assignments, which must be carried out within a given deadline. The few hours allowed for an exam, or the days or weeks in case of a project, constrain the translation in not insignificant ways, so that tasks are (ought to be) carefully planned and structured in relation to the time given. Failing to either design a suitably timed task or to hand in the project within

the set deadline has negative consequences and involves responsibility issues just as in any professional environment, because even academic / educational settings *are* professional settings, if not (mistakenly) from the student's viewpoint, certainly from the teaching and managing staff's. Even without contemplating clear-cut, prototypical examples such as assignments in the well-known professional and academic settings, the situation is similar. Suffice it to think of 'open projects', those considered to have no deadline. The great translating works commanded by King Alfred in 9th century England or by King Alfonso X 'the Wise' in Spain to the men of letters of the Toledo Translation School, c. 13th century²⁵, come to mind. Less grandly, there are several living authors who are being translated into various languages and whose works make up open and in-progress corpora, i.e. J.K. Rowling of Harry Potter fame, translated even into Latin (Meddemmen 2006-2007), or the Italian writer Andrea Camilleri (Gutkowski 2009). In the first case, the projects were constrained by the sponsoring mentor's lifetime, or by the lifetime of the individual translators, or by that of the school or centre hosting it. In the second case, it is the author's lifetime and prolificacy that determine when the project ends. On a larger scale, taking into account works being constantly re-translated because they are the founding texts of their cultures – of which the Bible is the classical example – radical geopolitical changes could put an end to their importance and see the rise of other key texts from emerging cultures. Finally, the translation of the important texts of humanity could ultimately end with the end of the human species itself. Either on a small or a big scale, thus, the end of a translation project is always assumable.

For all these reasons, it is suggested that, in translating a specialized text, *domain, specialization, purpose and time* – or, better, *domain, specialization and purpose in time* – be *all* considered first level factors affecting the translating product, process and practice. Once the source and the target texts' purposes have been established – as well as other socio-economic variables such as the receiving market, or the type of client who ordered the job done – the text will definitely need to be read and analyzed at

²⁵ Cf. Bately (1988) and García Yebra (1983) for reference.

all the various levels identified by research as laid out in par. 2.6, including by way of text and genre analyses. However, since the project does not occur out of the temporal dimension, as most manuals seem to assume, time will constrain which of these levels will take priority, according to the initially identified purposes. So starts the selection process that will lead the translator to eliminate options at all linguistic and extra-linguistic levels and come up with the final product. In a prototypical performance of this process (Garzone 2005), the ideally conceivable yet inexistent ‘perfect’ translation is thus produced. Rather than describing how this exemplary performance is obtained, which would be impossible unless at least a text, a domain, a purpose and a deadline are provided, and difficult even in that case, some examples of unsuccessful choices will be envisaged below, with reference to the product / process / practice translation model.

To start with, assuming a purpose has been clearly specified, time could be assigned disproportionately to each linguistic level, thus taking up all the translator’s attention, leaving little or none for the others: this would be an issue of time misuse in translation as a process. In specialized translation, lexicon, for the reasons seen in par. 2.2, often is that level. At the lexical level, outdated terminology could be relied on and used; this would be a problem regarding time in translation as a practice. At the co-textual level, for example, the text’s source (and, consequently, any parallel texts) could fail to be correctly identified in place and time (e.g. an American patient information leaflet from the 1990s instead of a 2010s’ British one²⁶), resulting in loss of time (process problem) and/or in a target text not in line with the project’s requirements (source text out of temporal context: product problem). Most of the problems would however occur at the contextual level. Assuming the set deadline is appropriate for the project, time could be generically misused and run out of (process problem), or unsuitable / ineffective tools, from dictionaries to CAT tools, could be employed (practice problem). The typology of issues that can be incurred in during the translation is very wide, especially at the

²⁶ Legislation on drugs may change from country to country and over time; drugs that are sold over-the-counter in one country may even not be marketed in another.

practice level. The point of mentioning some is to illustrate how the lexico-grammatical and textual dimensions intersect purpose and time to create complex networks in which chains of causes and effects are activated by choices. These choices affect the translation at all the posited levels: as a product (target text), as a process (in its realization), and as a practice (in the way it relates to translation at large as a profession, as a global corpus, as a cultural event). Moreover, the entire system is immersed in context, which further expands the sets of variables that can affect the mere linguistic process.

Following such a view, domain, purpose and specialization make up an at least tri-dimensional representation of translation, joined by *contextual time* – time in context, and context in time – as a fourth variable, itself a multivariable. Time is considered to be what makes any model of translation viable, i.e. not just functioning theoretically, but actually *operational*. This way, translation would appear (Fig. 5) as:

- ❑ domain-defined (according to LSPs/ESP studies);
- ❑ purpose-oriented (in line with *skopostheorie*);
- ❑ lexico-grammatically-made (as in functional grammar);
- ❑ text- and genre-organized (following text / genre analysis);
- ❑ context-influenced (or immersed in society, in critical discourse analysis terms);
- ❑ pursuing a prototypical target text (as postulated in particular by Garzone 2002c, 2005);
- ❑ a multidiscipline (as implied by many and theorised in particular by Ulrych 1997 and 1999);
- ❑ time-constrained (in a historical / hermeneutic / philosophical dimension) (Torop 1995); and, ultimately,
- ❑ choice-determined (in a cognitive and neurocognitive view as in Levý 1967, Katan [1999] 2004, Salmon 2005a, 2005b).

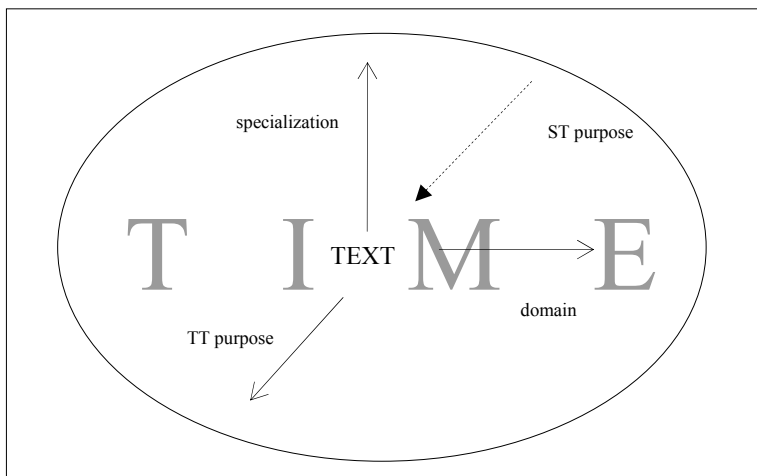


Fig. 5 Specialized translation: a suggested model of representation

Demonstration of the underlying nature of translation is, according to the cognitive-agnostic view outlined in the first chapter, impossible, either in absolute terms or in the short run, so models can only try to bring together and hypothetically account for phenomenal evidence. This representation of the phenomenon of translation is thought to accommodate the various aspects listed as defining it, and possibly leave room for more. It applies, in particular, to specialized texts as identified in this chapter. ‘Specialized’, though, is a definition that goes further than the vertical, diaphasic variation it is associated with because, as seen, even popular genres could be deemed the domain of specialists (e.g. those used by advertising experts in specialist-to-non-specialist communication), at what has been termed the ‘outbound’ specialist level. A tri-dimensional horizontal (domain) - vertical (specialization) - diagonal (purpose) variation framework as expressed in par. 2.6 is seen as better fitting the concept of specialization variation in communication.

One of the two questions asked in the first paragraph and unanswered so far was: how is specialized translation different from non-specialized translation? Perhaps, in a perspective where specialization is so closely related to domain and purpose, it is not.

Translation always regards a piece of communication and, just as there is no such thing as purposeless communication, there is no purposeless translation, which in turn prevents the existence of non-specialized communication and translation, as a consequence.

The other question – ‘where does literary translation belong, in this distinction?’ – is much harder to answer and requires hermeneutic tools not contemplated by this investigation. In a phenomenal-descriptive view, it could be just said that the difference with literary translation is that specialized translation is particular instead of universal, and for immediate consumption, not generally destined to last. This would be a view of literary translation as heavily influenced by context and time. With time as the main descriptor, though, literary translation too could possibly be inscribed within this model, although the weight of the variables from each dimension would be differently distributed, with literary translation tending to have much higher relevance at the practice level. In so doing, literary language would appear to be one type of specialized language according to domain, purpose, specialization and time, where contextual time prevails, the domain variable value is usually very low on a generic-to-specific scale, the specialization variable is set to all values (the literary author is a literary specialist writing for all, fellow specialists, other specialists, non-specialists at the same time), and the purpose is whatever epistemology, hermeneutics and literary criticism say the purpose of literature is: entertainment, beauty, etc. – or even no purpose at all, where no purpose is, after all, a zero-value purpose. Obviously, the degree of choice allowed a literary author is as wide as that of the literary translator is critically limited – much the same as in the case of the specialized translator. Whether or not literature can be entirely perceived along the suggested lines, it seems that this may be possible at least in terms of choice, and choice is definitely, together with time, the major focus of this model, as the cognitive, neuro-biological, universal element that makes the same text translated with the same purpose, deadline and tools, but by different people, a different target text.

Lefevere and Bassnett’s view (1990: 11) that “translation, like any (re)writing, is never innocent” is not subscribed to. Translation *is* innocent; it is the translator who is not: like anyone who makes choices for a living, s/he takes (or ought to take) responsibility for

his/her choices, and has to live with those mistakes that s/he makes. Choice is seen as the ultimate decision factor in translation, amplified in specialized translation by the immediate economic repercussions that it has on the client, the translator and the receiving discourse / practice communities. Choice calls for responsibility, in turn calling for commitment, as in the Italian '*impegno*': an obligation, promise, task, appointment, event, effort, but also "attivo interessamento ai problemi sociali e politici da parte dell'uomo di cultura"²⁷ (a man of culture's active interest in social and political problems). 'Purpose' is the keyword this chapter opened and dealt with; 'choice', and its corollary concept of '*impegno*' as social responsibility, will be informing the next.

²⁷ Zingarelli 2010, s.v. *IMPEGNO*.

3. Into the web age

C-9D9: How many languages do you speak?

C-3PO: I am fluent in over six million forms of communication, and can readily—

C-9D9: Splendid! We have been without an interpreter since our master got angry with our last protocol droid and disintegrated him.

Kasdan, L. & G. Lucas 1983, *Return of the Jedi*, Scene Ten

3.1 The digital turn

It has been a deliberate choice, in the previous chapters, to make little or no reference to any of the related concepts of ‘channel’, ‘medium’ and ‘support’. Whenever the word ‘text’ was mentioned, no further specifications were given, assuming and letting readers assume that it meant, in traditional terms, a text conveyed through the written medium. Thinking along these lines is justified by this having been the situation for the largest part of human history to this day, actually until less than a century ago: first during the manual writing age, then after printing was introduced, until the digital revolution (by this meaning the invention of hardware, software and methods of digital information exchange) of the mid-20th century. All the major changes in vehicles of communication following printing occurred over the last 150 years, after electricity found applications in technology and industry, with a concentration in the final decades of the 20th century.

A few extra details are worth adding. To start with, it took several years, even decades, for technological developments to become available on a large scale, which they did only in the early 1990s. Then,

a new technology always has a significant effect on the character and use of language, but when a technology produces a medium that is so different from anything we have experienced hitherto, the linguistic

consequences are likely to be dramatic, involving all areas of English structure and use, and introducing new considerations into the methodology of its study (Crystal 2006: 401).

This statement's relevance is maximum for the culturally leading language of the historical moment involved but, of course, it is also valid for any language at large. Finally, there are currently an estimate 750 million personal computers (United Nations Statistics Division 2006), 1.5 billion Internet users (International Telecommunications Union 2009), and “over 100 million” websites in the world, “but although about 70% of the population now has access to the Internet in North America, the figure is just 11% in Asia and less than 4% in Africa” (*The Economist* 2007: 31).

The ensuing consequences are several. Firstly that, when discussing ‘new technologies’, as digital calculators have existed since the 1940s (Ceruzzi 2003), the real subject is often their *effects*. Secondly that, barely into the 2010s, the effects of the new technologies on all fields are still in their early stages of investigation. Thirdly, that “new considerations into the methodology” of their study call for modified theoretical representations able to accommodate both the old and the new. Languages and translation are two fields certainly affected by the digital turn (another of Snell-Hornby's 2006 “turns in translation”): as recipients of the change but, also and especially, as vehicles of it.

The next few paragraphs will first discuss some of the many influences this shift produced on language, then move on to see how they affect translation and what trends (if any) are identifiable for the near future.

3.2 Corpus linguistics and/in specialized translation

Related to the digital revolution, though not strictly to the Internet, corpora represent perhaps the major consequence that digitalization has had on translation, except of course for word-processing and the personal computer itself. The concept and creation of corpora are no 20th-century invention, though the extent reached by their applications certainly are. A corpus, in its original Latin sense, has always been understood as ‘a collection of texts’. An example is the

Roman emperor Justinian's *Corpus Iuris Civilis* from the 6th century, bringing together all the existing imperial laws into an organic set. The *Iuris Civilis*, however, differs from the definitions of 'corpus' currently adopted in corpus linguistics, for example John Sinclair's:

A corpus is a *collection* of pieces of language text in *electronic* form, selected according to external *criteria* to represent, as far as possible, a language or *language variety* as a source of data for linguistic *research* (2004a: par. 1.12, italics added).

What is similar are the notions of 'collection' and of 'text' but, to get to contemporary corpora, several further restrictions must apply, namely

the *verbal* nature of texts;

one or more selection *criteria*;

the '*real*' origin of the texts, i.e. their being representative of naturally occurring languages or varieties thereof;

the *electronic* format;

research as its collecting purpose.

The most important of the above features is definitely the second: the existence of at least one criterion guiding the choice and the assembling of the texts. In the case of the first, unrestricted definition ('a collection of texts'), therefore, this variable c can be $c \geq 0$, which includes $c = 0$, or no criterion at all. This is not provided for in corpus linguistics according to Sinclair (2004a), as it would invalidate the research purpose as in point 5. However, a corpus as intended in Bartoletti Colombo (1990: 453) for example, used for "the creation of a Dictionary of Justinian's constitutions based on the emperor's legislative lexicon formed in the *Corpus Iuris* and elsewhere", would instead qualify as a corpus linguistics-centred (lexicography-oriented) study, not only because it is *verbal* (in the written form) and follows a *criterion* (Justinian's original aim), but

also because it is *electronic*, used for a clear *research* purpose, and represents an *original* instance of imperial ‘Latin for a Special (legal) Purpose’.

The example provided is merely meant to show how, in reality, neither the concept nor the realization of a corpus are or should be seen as anything separated from the inheritance of past culture and research. Not only, contemporary corpus studies originated around the 1960s not for the exquisitely linguistic aims now vastly pursued within this field, but to offer instrumental support to *literary* studies (Quirk 1960, Tognini Bonelli and Sinclair 2005). Classical corpora of an author’s works, like the Shakespeare corpus (e.g. Montgomery and Burnard 1989), did not just appear the moment they were transported into digital format, though in a way they did start a new life, by acquiring the quality of being *fast-computable* through the discreteness bestowed on them by the new medium. The quantitative aspect is exactly what makes any electronic collection revolutionary compared to standard printed editions: the speed at which great quantities of *information* – because this is what even Shakespeare’s works become, in digital format – can be processed creates a quantity / quality direct proportionality that goes further than statistics. This can be better explained by means of exemplification. In corpus linguistics, the analysis of a text essentially consists in its being broken down into pre-set units (words, typically) and ‘counted’, producing lists of these units (Sinclair 1991, Facchinetti 2004). The operation can be much more complex than its basic version, of course, by taking into consideration larger units, for example, or keywords (Scott 1997), or by using annotated corpora (Garside, Leech and McEney 1997), in which each unit is labelled according to one or more criteria (e.g. marked-up, semantically tagged or syntactically parsed, etc.). If the considered text is short, even as short as a single page or less, the analysis will return results that are most relevant at word level, i.e. interesting in lexico-semantic terms. This is one aspect that part of corpus semantics largely concentrated on, especially at the beginning (Sinclair 1996 and 1998; Stubbs 2001), with extremely successful operative results like the COBUILD Collins Dictionary (Sinclair 1987). However, the larger the quantity of text analysed, the more detailed *patterns* in texts apparently emerge: this way, by

increasing a quantitative variable, the qualitative result is also enhanced, thus demonstrating an important correspondence between a discrete feature and pragmatic realization. Studies in this direction gave rise to concepts like “semantic prosody” (Louw 1993, Tognini Bonelli 2001) and to investigations on non-lexical patterns, like syntax (Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998), metaphor (Partington 2006), and even genre (Bondi 2001).

The possible applications of corpus technology and studies to linguistic analysis are easily imaginable. For a start, corpora can be applied to language teaching and ELT in particular¹ (Aston 1995, 2001, Sinclair 2004b). They have been usefully employed in genre analysis (Scarpa 1999) and in ESP research to identify the lexical and non-lexical characteristics typical of specialized texts (Gavioli 2005) using *realia*. They also find many and important applications in specialized translation: corpora can be divided into mono- or multilingual, parallel or non-parallel (collections of the ‘same’ texts in various languages), comparable or non-comparable (collections of similar texts in the source language or in other languages). In their bi- or multilingual and parallel versions, they obviously represent an invaluable source of information for translators, the more precious the larger the corpus because – as seen – large corpora return steadier, i.e. more reliable (from a translator’s viewpoint) patterns. One obvious example is that of translators (learners and professionals alike) of EU texts: the EU institutions, through their freely accessible websites, provide a parallel corpus of millions of plurilingual documents from which to draw or which to check for reference. These are also searchable via specific terminological databases provided by the institutions themselves and also online and free to the public²; for instance, looking up *TRANSLATION* in the IATE database for the English-Italian pair returns an answer as in Fig. 6.

¹ For reasons similar to those explaining the prevalence of English, outlined in par. 2.2.

² For instance, the InterActive Terminology for Europe (IATE) database (cf. par. 2.3), the Joint Research Centre’s Acquis Multilingual Parallel Corpus (JRC-Acquis), or the Directorate General for Translation’s Multilingual Translation Memory of the Acquis Communautaire (DGT-TM).

Domain	EU institution
Domain note	EC Commission
en	
Term	Translation DG
Reliability	3 (Reliable)
Term Ref.	Interinstitutional Style Guide, http://publications.europa.e... (12.1.2009)
Date	12/01/2009
Term	Directorate-General for Translation
Reliability	3 (Reliable)
Term Ref.	Interinstitutional Style Guide, http://publications.europa.e... (12.1.2009); Europa > European Commission > Translation DG, http://www.ec.europa.eu/dgs/_ (12.1.2009)
Date	12/01/2009
it	
Term	Direzione generale della Traduzione
Reliability	3 (Reliable)
Term Ref.	http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/tran...
Date	16/05/2007

Fig. 6 Results of the search for *TRANSLATION* in the IATE database

Corpus-based Translation Studies has become an established sub-discipline within TS with its own various lines of investigation (Baker 1993, 1995, 1996; Bernardini 2003, 2005; Hunston 2002; Laviosa 1998, 2002). One of these postulates the existence of ‘translation universals’ (Baker 1993, 1996), tangible patterns recognisable in translations which could, if demonstrated, provide applications in evaluation and didactics. The presence or absence and the quality of any such universals in learners’ translations, for example, could be functional to establishing objective criteria for marking them. Taken their existence for granted, the difficulty in defining the nature of these patterns and whether they can really be considered or even just called ‘universals’ (a very connotated term in linguistics³) is still under discussion (Mauranen and Kujamäki 2004) and makes up one of the most up-to-date and open topics in current TS.

Other interesting reflections stemming from the relationship between corpora and translation take into account the introduction of the online condition: not only corpora can go digital, they can also be shared through the Internet and enrich the World Wide Web. This aspect of the new technologies will be discussed in

³ Cf. the issues raised by and around Noam Chomsky’s hypotheses on generative grammar (1965).

greater detail in the next paragraph. Here, it is merely interesting to focus on a very simple, yet important extension of a notion recently put forward in corpus linguistics, with relevant implications for translation: that of the World Wide Web itself seen as a corpus (Kilgarriff and Grefenstette 2003, Baroni, Bernardini and Evert 2006). At an individual (the translator's) level, corpora of translations (products) can be grouped according to various criteria, probably not much different from any translator's criteria for filing his/her work (domain, author, client, year, etc.). However, at a more abstract level, ideal sets can be conceived, such as 'all the legal translations in the world', or 'all English-into-Italian translations', with potentially infinite criteria and sub-criteria that can be applied to create a variety of different sets. Such a representation, which would have been only a speculative exercise until a few decades ago, now finds practical and promising applications thanks to the Internet, which makes the connection of potentially anybody in the world possible. This implies the potential sharing of innumerable documents, among which innumerable translations: a simple search engine can already answer finely tuned queries, extracting texts with the specified characteristics out of billions. In ideal terms, it is possible to conceive a moment when everybody is Internet-connected, and all translations are Internet-shared: thus, the largest set of 'all translations in the world' would be obtained, and would also coincide with 'the largest corpus of translations in the world'. In this case, the usefulness would lie in the quantity of the information available and in (the speed of) its searchability: a translator working on a given text could make use of all the previous translations of the same text or of similar ones, much like it happens with EU documents hinted at above.

At the dawn of the digital turn, machine research made scholars, including linguists, believe that the future of translation lay in automated machine translation, and that this would prove apparent within a few years (Bar-Hillel 1951, Dostert 1955). Computer-based tools have indeed become prominent⁴, but human-less automated translation at human level just proved unattainable (Bar-Hillel 1960,

⁴ See par. 3.5 for more on current translation tools.

Garvin 1967)⁵. Into the web age, it seems established that the future of translation certainly does not lie in machines alone; conversely, there is no foreseeable future in translation without them.

3.3 Multimodality, multimediality: multitranslation?

The ‘web as a corpus’ – anyone would agree – is a fascinating, powerful image. It is also, in its power, quite frightening. The uneasiness is caused by the great uncertainties existing about the physical and non-physical limits of the web, raising further difficult questions such as: is the web measurable? According to which criteria, internal ones (bytes, words, documents, websites, webpages, webportals, etc.), external ones (users, accesses, data exchanges, Internet subscriptions), or combinations of elements from both? The feeling of dismay in front of the new or the incommensurable – including translation – is well-known in human culture. It is probably the same awe the Romantics felt in front of nature, or the Postmodernists’ sense of fragmentation at the many possibilities of the new world engulfing traditional convictions. The feeling that everything is possible, generated by the demise of cold war ideologies at the end of the 20th century, soon lost its initial optimism, but somehow established a certain faith in (or habit to) feasibility; the new technologies that just then, in the 1990s, reached mass diffusion brought forth a general replacement of ideologies with the belief in technology (Severino [1988] 2008). In other words, the end of the 20th century saw a move of Western civilization from an age of blocks, barriers, crystallized ideologies and no choice, to an age of blurred boundaries, no ideologies and maximum openness towards all possibilities, coupled with increasing numbers of resources from which to choose. But too many choices can also result in disorientation, leading back to the doubts surrounding the ‘web as a corpus’.

Internet is the “global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP)” (Wikipedia 2009, s.v. *INTERNET*); the World Wide Web “a system of interlinked hypertext documents contained on the Internet”

⁵ More on the famous 1954 Georgetown I.B.M. experiment on machine translation that raised the hopes of automation enthusiasts in Hutchins (2004).

(Wikipedia 2009, s.v. *WORLD WIDE WEB*). The web-based encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* has been intentionally selected as the meta-source of such definitions, with the knowledge that, for its very nature, they may be undergoing changes as these lines are being written / read. It is nonetheless thought to well exemplify the main features and issues (often coinciding, in a branch of knowledge still under definition) of multimodal language which, like hyperdocuments, can be summed up by means of tags: medium, semiotics, choice, participation. In practice, most webpages today, even the simplest ones, usually communicate through more than one medium and one mode, for instance verbal language (text), colour(s) and graphic layout, to which sound and video and animations could be added; if the page is a little articulated, it would contain sections, which the user could choose whether to visit or not; finally, it may include a forum or another tool for participation, to invite and publish its users' views – any newspaper's online edition would fit as an example.

The channel as in Jakobson's model of communication, in which it is named "contact", has long evolved since it was posited as "a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication" (1960: 353). Not much later, in the booming years of television, Marshall McLuhan put forward his famous provoking argument that "the medium is the message" as it "shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (1964: 9). Today, the focus has definitely shifted towards the physical aspect of the channel, thus identifying it with the 'medium' used to convey the message. As for the "psychological connection", the concept has rather been taken up by text linguistics, discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics (cf. par. 1.4), concerned with text in context, the social aspects in which communication is immersed, and how it occurs; what has remained is the implication that both the sender and the receiver must share knowledge of and access to whatever connects them.

'Multimediality', a highly affixed word with all the characteristics of the ESP term (cf. par. 2.3), is the combined and simultaneous use of different media. As the Estonian semiotician Peeter Torop of the Tartu School specifies, it indicates two distinct levels:

The semantic field of multimedia and multimodality has been moving from technical understanding towards cultural interpretation. Note that this natural conceptual traveling has taken place on two terminological fields. One of them is medium-bound and historically hybrid. This means that multimodality as a concept may but function as one of a bigger association, but it may also derive from multimedia as a metaconcept. The key concepts of this field are multimedia, hyper-media, intermedia and transmedia. The other field is historically more complex, centering on text as the most common entity enabling analysis of communicational processes in different media. Here the key concepts are multimedial text, transmedial text, hypermedial text and intermedial text (2008: 734).

The focus has shifted from Jakobson's physical and psychological channel, to a medium that is both a physical instance of technology and an abstract element of the communicative process. In describing the effects of multimodality on language and translation, the interest is definitely in textuality.

'Multimodality', on the other hand, is a purely semiotic concept, building on Jakobson's notion of "code" ("fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and the addressee", 1960: 353), rather than "contact". In 'visual designers'⁶ Kress and van Leeuwen's words, it is "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event", but – they add – "together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (2001: 20): like Torop, they also distinguish between the actual combined en-/de-coding systems and the communicative effects they produce. As research, multimodality therefore acquires cultural and social aspects, making it

an approach to text studies and human activity that provides different answers in a wide-ranging set of social contexts (Baldry 2008: 242).

The multimedia / multimodal move has brought forth the need for a complete redefinition of communicative models developed and applied before the mass digital era (O'Halloran 2004, LeVine and Scollon 2004, Baldry and Thibault 2006, Gotti 2007). This involves not only the code and the channel / medium in their physical and

⁶ Kress and van Leeuwen pioneered the field in 1996 with their classic text *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*.

semiotic meanings, but also – especially relevant in translation – the sender and the receiver.

The number of web texts variously authored and received by more than one person and usually by many (conversations on forums, chats, but also simple webpages) has only been increasing. At the outset of the Internet, the web was populated by ‘frozen’, static hypertexts, hardly different from printed texts except for their digital support, and which users could not interact with. As technology and especially its diffusion increased, sender-receiver interaction, previously limited to just e-mail exchange, boomed into different applications, giving rise to a real change of paradigm, subsequently labelled Web 2.0. The term is contested by technical experts as standing for no substantial development in the technologies used to support it. In WWW co-inventor Tim Berners-Lee’s words,

I think Web 2.0 is, of course, a piece of jargon, nobody even knows what it means. If Web 2.0 for you is blogs and wikis, then that is people to people. But that was what the Web was supposed to be all along (Berners-Lee 2006).

Tim O’Reilly, however, the organizer of the annual Web 2.0 Summit since 2004 and considered to be the inventor of the term (Britannica 2010, s.v. *WEB 2.0*), addresses the issue from a more sociological perspective:

Like many important concepts, Web 2.0 doesn’t have a hard boundary, but rather, a gravitational core. You can visualize Web 2.0 as a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system of sites that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at a varying distance from that core (O’Reilly 2005).

The term ‘practice’ is perhaps the best piece of evidence in favour of the link between discourse, language and the web, all deeply immersed in society, influencing and being influenced by it. Participation – as in social-networking and collaborative projects like *Wikipedia*, from which this paragraph’s initial definitions were taken – has been the new focus in web communication for the last few years, and participation implies choice, both on the sending and on the receiving side, as both the sender and the receiver must indeed *choose* to communicate through the message. However, Jakobson’s

(1960) author is now a *multiauthor*, the receiver a *multireceiver*, the medium a *multimediu*m, the mode a *multimode*, the text a *hypertext*, the context a global context, the message the *multifaceted* result of its original purpose, conveyed through all the above. ‘Multi-’ is this heavily prefixed era’s number one prefix. Choices in multimodal communication are more than multiple: they border on the immense.

Not that multiauthored texts never existed before the Internet; the Bible, whether or not it is believed to be God-inspired, is certainly man-written, and the most outstanding example of a multiauthored – as well as multitranslated – text. It is the large quantity of actors and modes at play, connected through a large quantity of media, which determines the epochal quality of the change (Tapscott and Williams 2006). As a result, communication is no longer explainable through either a static or a mono-dimensional paradigm; it takes at least a *bi-dynamic* model to accommodate both the changes in the senders and the receivers (endo-dynamic), and its own need to prove renegotiable as the communicative elements evolve (meta-dynamic)⁷.

While unanswered questions about the nature and effects of multimedia / multimodal communication still abound, multimedia / multimodal *translation* poses no fewer questions, if not more. What is a multimodal source text? How to turn it into a mono- or multimodal target text? Do multimediality / multimodality change across languages? How to translate a website when this evolves daily? How to use online resources? How to exploit collaborative resources without falling victim to them? How often to update terminology, translation tools, methodologies, perspectives? In the present context, no manual can answer these questions and stay up-to-date for long. The same collaboration as in wikis is required of linguistic, sociological and media studies, due to and in spite of the little-defined boundaries between them. Translation Studies, as in the past, will draw from all of them the operational tools it needs to explain translation in the Internet age which, as ineffably as usual, takes place despite the scholars’ doubts and the engineers’ confidence. The only certainty is that the issues raised by the ‘Internet turn’ (following the merely ‘digital’ turn) of language in the

⁷ Askehave and Ellerup (2004 and 2005a) propose a “two-dimensional perspective to the genre analysis model” (2004: 1) of Bhatia (1993); cf. par. 3.4.

past couple of decades cannot but variously affect translation: as a product that can derive from a multimedia original and be made into a multimedia target text, as the process of transfer from one multimode into another via multimedia operations and tools, and as a practice immersed in a global, multimodal society.

3.4 Genres and hybridization

It was stated earlier that the influence of the Internet and the web on genres was purposefully left out when tracing the main features of genre theory and analysis in the previous chapter; by now it should be clear why. Genres, like all verbal communication, have been dramatically affected by the Internet turn and, just as text and genre analyses began to clearly describe ‘traditional’ genres, in the 1990s, new multimedia / multimodal ones came into play. The ‘new’ genres did not wipe out all that research had highlighted until then, but certainly, like in other subfields of linguistics, they did change many perspectives. According to many, multimodality is present in just every text (“all texts are multimodal”, Kress and van Leeuwen 1998: 186; “all pages are by definition multimodal”, Baldry and Thibault 2006: 58), in that associating images to written texts (like in many instances of printed matter, e.g. magazines, books, etc.) is itself a basic form of multimodality, and even the written page, without any images at all, must be arranged into a certain graphic layout. Again, newspapers may be considered a good example, especially when comparing their online and offline versions for different layout, content distribution, graphics, etc. The Internet added further media and modes (sound, animation, navigation, etc.) to the bi-dimensionality of ‘print and pictures’ that had been the standard since prehistoric inscriptions, as well as made participation and exchange available to unheard-of numbers of people. The complexity of the change that language and communication underwent in recent years has been hinted at earlier in the chapter; the way it affected genres will be addressed in this paragraph.

Initially, researchers wrote about a migration of traditional genres to the web (for instance Kwaśnik and Crowston 2005). However, some 20 years after the creation of the WWW, it is possible to

suppose such a migration concluded, just as the ‘new’ technologies can no longer be considered so ‘new’. Still, when it comes to establishing how genre theory can be amended to take the online element into consideration, the debate is still open. Garzone (2007: 20 ff.) identifies eight detailed properties to consider in developing any framework explaining web-mediated genres: immateriality, extension in participation framework, multimodality, hypertextuality / hypermediality, co-articulation and interactivity, intertextuality and granularity. While agreeing with these being key aspects to bear in mind, it still seems apparently easier to identify what features a web genre *has*, rather than what it *is*. Askehave and Swales (2001) suggest redefining purpose as the one criterion informing genres, maintaining the communicative purpose, but granting much more relevance to contextual aspects:

We thus suggest that purpose (more exactly sets of communicative purposes) retains the status as a ‘privileged’ criterion, but in a sense different to the one originally proposed by Swales. It is no longer privileged by centrality, prominence or self-evident clarity, nor indeed by reported beliefs of users about genres, but by its status as reward or payoff for investigators as they approximate to completing the hermeneutic circle (2001: 210).

They also propose repurposing genres either through a text- or a context-driven procedure for genre analysis, depending on the approach (linguistic or ethnographic), only mentioning in passing the “mode of transmission” (2001: 209). Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen (2004 and 2005a) take one step further and specifically focus on digital genres, i.e. those that digital texts belong to (especially interesting are, of course, webpages and their various components). In par. 3.3 a bi-dynamic framework was suggested as the minimum requirement capable of explaining multimodality / multimediality: Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen (2004 and 2005a) propose a bi-dimensional model, building on Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), in which the users’ purpose – reading or navigating – makes them focus on the text or on the medium respectively. In particular, they stress the importance of the medium itself as a mode: “not only a distribution channel but also a carrier of meaning, determining aspects of social practice” (2005a: 7). The above perspectives all

seem compatible, as they all stress the need for a new framework that takes into consideration the social dimension of communication which, in the Internet era, means accounting for multimodality / multimodality. The Web 2.0 view of “the web as a platform” for social practices (O’Reilly 2005) has room for all the key features identified by Garzone (2007), can accommodate Askehave and Swales (2001)’s shift of focus on context, and is compatible with Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen (2005a)’s bi-dimensional model. Combined, they could return a view as in Fig. 7.

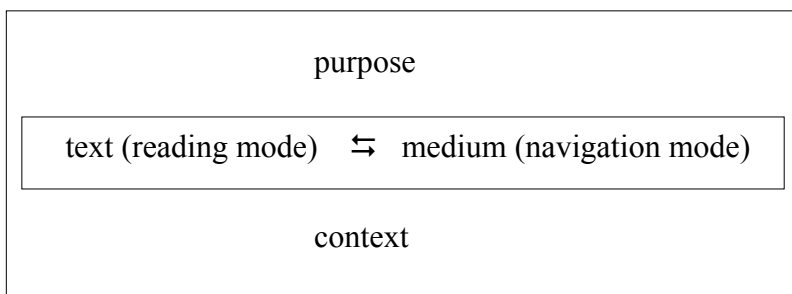


Fig. 7 Web genres as in Askehave and Swales (2001) and Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen (2005a)

Starting from this representation, which is an *interpreted* adaptation of two different perspectives, further specifications as to how to visualize multimodal genres will be proposed.

The definition of the multimodal genre could perhaps start with its name. Given the time elapsed since the diffusion of the Internet and the familiarity with it acquired by its users, it could be suggested that a term like ‘multigenre’ should be preferred to either “web genres” or the even longer “web-mediated genres” (Garzone 2007: 20, 27), because it is a single word (handy and monoreferential, as required by LSPs), its polyvalence being implicit in the prefix, and because users no longer perceive the novelty of the web as a medium, which is now as familiar as printed paper, so that any pre-modifiers would sound redundant, as in ‘paper-mediated genres’. Furthermore, though the prefix ‘multi-’ recalls multimodality and multimodality, the ‘med-’ / ‘mod-’ morphemes do not appear in it, thus the focus in

‘multigenre’ is no longer on the medium, but on the genre itself, which can then be seen as ‘multiple’ not strictly because it is based on more than one medium / mode, but because it encompasses various genres that can or cannot be multimedia / multimodal. This way the name would be a little vaguer, but it could also account for a wider spectrum of multiplicity: the ‘webpage multigenre’, for instance, could alone account for all the mono-/multimedia and mono-/multimodal elements that it may or may not include (e.g. text, images, video, sound, animations, etc., in turn belonging to genres of their own), and express its manifold nature in its very name.

Secondly, it has been argued that it is easier to list what features web genres have than what they are, as web communication indeed appears to be made of many different, overlapping layers at a time. However, their most relevant feature, for the purpose of better defining multigenres, remains its high degree of interactivity and the large audience(s) it can reach (“extension in participation framework”, Garzone 2007: 20). On the Internet, no text of any genre is safe: the moment it enters the web in electronic format, it becomes a string of bits lost in the virtual multidimension, and is potentially lost to its author, put up for copying, modification, editing, reproduction and use. Not even Adobe PDF documents (initially considered a ‘frozen’ genre) and similar graphic formats, which are sometimes employed by users when they wish to preserve texts from immediate interactivity, prove the still snapshots many think they are: they can contain hyperlinks too, and legal and illegal converting software allows seizing content from these documents too. Fig. 8 reports the first page of the IATE brochure (cf. par. 2.3), a PDF document downloadable from the IATE website. Simple though it may look, it contains text, images (the IATE logos), and three hyperlinks, of which one to a webpage (<http://iate.europa.eu>), one to the PDF document itself (<http://iate.europa.eu/brochure>), and one to a contact e-mail address (iate@cdt.europa.eu). It is also interesting to notice how the three-column layout would allow anyone who printed it onto an A4 sheet to fold it into a common three-fold (or standard letter) brochure⁸, thus certainly changing the medium (electronic to

⁸ This deriving from the PDF being a graphic format originally designed for printing only.

paper), and partly the mode (the written and visual modes remain, the hyperlinks as such are lost, becoming normal text falling within the written mode).

Content provided by professionals

Terms are fed into the database by EU terminologists and translators on the basis of information from translators, administrators, lawyer-linguists, experts and other reliable sources.

Project partners

European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, Court of Justice, European Court of Auditors, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, European Investment Bank, European Central Bank, Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union.

IATE administration


The IATE web site is administered by the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union in Luxembourg on behalf of the project partners.

Background


In 1999, the EU institutions decided to develop a brand new database merging the content of all their terminology databases in order to enhance interinstitutional cooperation, taking advantage of new technologies.

In 2004, IATE was launched for internal use in the European institutions.

In June 2007, IATE was made available to the general public.



<http://iate.europa.eu>



The EU's multilingual term base

In IATE you can find EU-specific terminology and jargon, as well as terms from all sorts of areas, such as law, agriculture, information technology and many others.

It brings together all the information previously included in the European institutions' former terminology databases, such as:

- EUROCAUTOM (Commission)
- EUTERPE (Parliament)
- TIS (Council)

IATE has 8.4 million terms, including approximately 540 000 abbreviations and 130 000 phrases, and covers all 23 official EU languages.

New terms are added every day and the contents are constantly updated.

IATE plays a major role in ensuring the quality of the written communication of the EU institutions and bodies.

<http://iate.europa.eu>

EN

IATE is here for you

IATE is a live database. You can contribute!

This brochure is available online in all official EU languages from <http://iate.europa.eu/brochure>

Please send us suggestions concerning IATE by e-mail to: iate@ctf.europa.eu.

Fig. 8 The first page of the IATE Brochure

It is therefore worth commenting on the concepts of author, reader and community on the web, which appear to be quite different from those traditionally intended in text and genre analysis. The high interactivity of online communication, as seen in par. 3.3, has made it necessary to identify multiauthors and multireceivers, terms that include all the various interconnected users who modify an original text, and all those who willingly or unwillingly (e.g. chance readers) happen to read it. The key feature of these new actors is, naturally, their potential anonymity: they can act as individuals with a real or false identity or as a group, like in newsgroups or in social networks, which are nothing else but web-linked discourse communities. A web discourse community – or even the entire web community itself – may be sketched as communicating through genres as in Fig. 9.

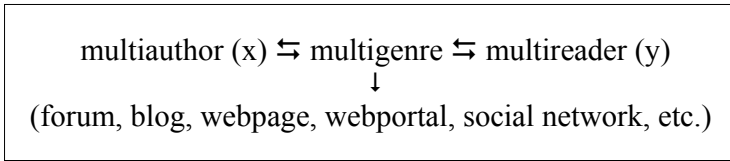


Fig. 9 A representation of web discourse community

In this representation, x is the set of all the authors of a web text, y are all its readers, and ↔ represents the interaction between them, which is expressed by means of the multigenre in its various declinations. Marketing and corporate communication experts know very well what great resource for reaching audiences the web is⁹. In terms of reachability, a web text is potentially directed to a global audience (y). In practice, as things are with current technology distribution, its actual audience can only be (y-n), where n indicates all those potential readers who do not have access to the web, are not interested in the text, are interested but miss it, or simply do not chance to see it (specific reasons are of course innumerable, e.g. bad advertising, bad searching, etc.). The same can be said about a potential global author (x), who actually turns out to be (x-n). However, since the web is part of the global “semiosphere” (as in Lotman [1990] 2001), but is not separate from the real world – and so far virtual reality does not exist without material reality – what happens within this multigenre space is still influenced by non-web reality (i.e. any event taking place in society at a global level), and of course the relationship is biunivocal. The previous vision of web communication should thus be expanded to integrate external factors (Fig. 10).

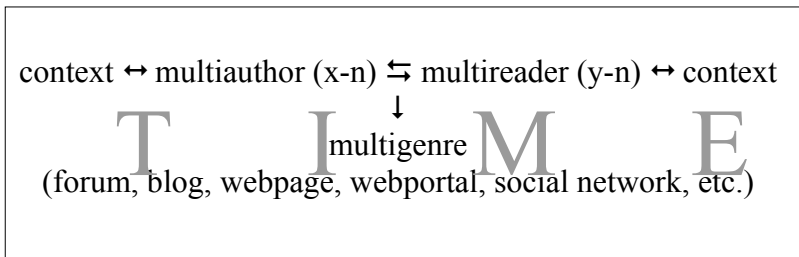


Fig. 10 A suggested representation of web communication through multigenres

⁹ Cf. Boaretto, Noci and Pini 2007 and the newly ensued debate on ‘multicanality’ in marketing.

It is plain that the interesting factor in the study of contemporary web communication, from whichever viewpoint (linguistics, marketing, social sciences) is carried out, is not how many people the web can reach (y), but how many it *cannot* reach (n), and the relationship existing between (y) and (n). Time too, as indicated several times throughout this book, is regarded as a particularly important element that is both within the context (context can be identified as a given situation in a given moment and time), and without it (context is not frozen, but is preceded and followed by and coincides with countless other contexts on the timeline)¹⁰. The entity resulting from the most recent changes in communication could therefore be defined as a container of multigenres that are by now well-established among their communities of users. These are by now perfectly familiar with hypertextuality, interactivity, volatility, multimodality, although as non-specialists they may be unaware of any specific terms. Indeed, though the theoretical debate remains open for the linguist just like for the media or marketing expert, to the ordinary user the web is likely to appear like a single unit of space or a ‘platform’.

The initial phenomenon of genre ‘migration’ ought by now to be over. What many researchers have in fact been observing lately are potential instances of genre ‘hybridization’ (Kwaśnik and Crowston 2005, Santini 2006). Predicted by Kwaśnik and Crowston (“digital genres evolve, and may go through hybrid stages before solidifying into a truly stable form”, 2005: 20¹¹), this phenomenon, even less explored than other web realities, is the ‘natural’ evolution of genres once they have migrated to the digital medium, spurred by the agglutinant effects of Web 2.0 participation. It is certainly influenced by user perception, as emerges from Santini’s interesting study, which

explores the perception of genres when users are faced not only with prototypical genre exemplars but also with hybrid or individualized web pages, and interpret the subjects’ perception in term of genre evolution (2006: 35),

¹⁰ Worth mentioning is also the notion of virtual vs. real time, for instance when observing online games such as *The Sims* or *Second Life*, which allow their players to live in a totally virtual place *in real time*.

¹¹ The page number refers to the PDF document retrieved online, see the Bibliography.

and provides useful insights into how web users asked to “assign ‘labels’ to webpage ‘types’” (2006: 35) found it difficult to do so unambiguously. The interest in digital genres and hybridization is proved by various conferences held in very recent years¹² and by an increasing number of publications, totally or partially centring on the topic (e.g. Devitt 1993, Shepherd and Watters 1998, 1999, 2004, Bhatia 2004, Askehave and Ellerup Nielsen 2005b, Caballero 2008). Many aspects still remain to be defined and explored, the first of which is believed to be what a hybrid (genre) is. It is suggested, first of all, that it is neither a migration / shift (movement), nor a chain or an instance of juxtaposition (linear association), but it is closer to Fairclough’s (2003: 34) “genre mixing” (granularity). The definition could be expanded by adding that the mixture is seldom homogeneous or balanced, that instrumental elements (media) mix with semiotic features (modes), that in this blending the different elements are still recognizable as such, because boundaries between them are indeed dissolving, but they are not totally blurred yet, much like in a chemical suspension (as opposed to a solution). The ensuing result is an altogether new and independent entity, different from and non-dependending on each of its original founding elements. Furthermore, the hybridization process, in any field, follows a usual pattern, in which the new hybrid entity must first be acknowledged, then it must be named (in the Western culture’s *logos* tradition of naming to exist and existing by virtue of naming), after which it can more or less quickly or smoothly become accepted and then taken for granted. The moment it is accepted, though, the hybridization process ends, as the new hybrid is no longer perceived as either new or a hybrid, but as an entity existing in its own right. In the specific case of genres on the web, the process can be visualised as in Fig. 11¹³.

¹² In Italy alone: *Genre(s) on the Move. Hybridization and Discourse Change in Specialized Communication*, to be held in Naples, on 9-11 December 2009; *Diachronic Perspectives on Genres in Specialized Communication*, to be held at Gargnano del Garda, Brescia on 24-26 June 2010; the 10th ESSE International Conference, to be held in Turin on 24-28 August 2010, will host the seminar “Evolving Genres and Genre Theory: Focus on Specialized Communication in English across Contexts and Media”.

¹³ For a further reflection on genre hybridisation and the study of a sample PDF text, cf. Grego and Vicentini (forthcoming).

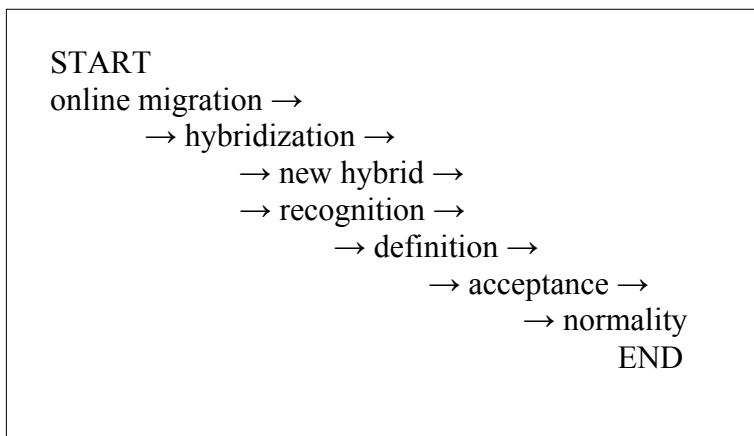


Fig. 11 A representation of genre hybridization on the web

Again, the newspaper and its traditional genres (the editorial, the column, etc.) well exemplify this migration process: as is easily verifiable, an ordinary online newspaper article would usually feature hyperlinks, or ‘clickable’ words in the text redirecting the reader to other connected articles or elements, and possibly many more images than the traditional single picture that used to accompany such texts, or even hyperlinks to entire galleries of them, videos, audio files, etc. Web users can be considered already perfectly aware of the differences between the traditional newspaper article (the classic ‘paper clipping’, to be clear) and the online article and, if not of its micro-structure, at least of the potentialities it offers, to which they should by now be well used, and which they would probably even *expect* of any web article.

The suggested notion of ‘multigenre’ as a label for the ‘new web-mediated genres’ is thought to stand, in fact, for web genres *while* they are undergoing their process of hybridization: this would also be supported by the hybrid nature of the label itself which, like many specialized terms created by affixation, defines a new object by building on an existing concept / noun.

In conclusion, it is clear that the changes brought forth by the Internet medium and the web modes have disrupted the established

reference frameworks previously used to interpret communication, imposing the need to widen epistemic horizons by including contextual variables, not as peripheral but as central factors. The effects that the digital and the Internet turns manifested on language doubly affect translation: as a product, a process and a practice that is both linguistic and semiotic in nature and has always had to bear on (some vaguely defined) context anyway. To help the translator in this choice, language research had identified textual genres that applied well to traditional, non-digital, offline genres. This was no longer the case when texts went online. It is believed, however, that contemporary and future research into genres and multigenres can and will provide new lines of interpretation to adapt to new communication, even if it is obvious that translation cannot stop occurring while or until this happens. The first instances of a new¹⁴ paradigm embracing technology, participation and communication have already emerged, and point to the direction of a “semantic web” of hyper-documents marked up by semantic tags and interconnected through relations of meaning (Talmy 2000a, 2000b; Berners-Lee and Hendler 2001), a definition that sounds very similar to that of a (giant) text. ‘Web as a corpus’, ‘web as text’, ‘semantic ontologies’ are all new phrases with old conceptual and terminological roots. If they embody the future of language and communication, while the layman may use them daily but struggle to even understand their names, the translator as an operative semiotician by definition will find him/herself at home with them, and translation might even be one of the fields to profit the most from the envisaged ‘semantic future’. For the time being, translators need to make do with whatever hybrid, granular present they live in: the resources available to do this will be dealt with in the next paragraph.

3.5 Translation tools 2.0

Translation, as said earlier, has always had to bear on context. While beforehand the choice of how to relate a text to its context was only the translator’s, at the discretion of his/her common sense (‘good’

¹⁴ Again, originating ideas are only followed by their practical realisation with a few years’ delay.

sense, meaningfully, in its Italian counterpart *buon senso*), today s/he is surrounded by and immersed in – off and online – great numbers of theoretical and practical resources supporting him/her. This creates a paradox: the options are more, but freedom seems less, as the choice is subjected to a much longer and more complex decisional process that has to take into account very many options, including peer comparison and evaluation, *per se* a stimulating or a blocking resource depending on the viewpoint. The following is not a list of specific resources for translators¹⁵ in the ‘hybrid era’ but, in line with the latest trends, a review of the types and categories into which they fall.

The ‘type’ of the resource indicates the translation purpose or the aspect of translation that it is meant to target. Terminology, of course, is often the main issue in specialized translation, and it can be addressed by means of dictionaries, glossaries and encyclopaedias (paper or digital, on or offline) but, as seen, also by an entirely new set of machine-assisted tools, like corpora interrogation programmes, translation memories (software memorizing chunks of translated text and re-proposing them whenever they come up during a new translation), up to *people* interrogation resources, as in web-based forums, discussion groups, mailing lists, social networks, etc¹⁶. The same options apply to syntactic and grammatical needs in general. Textual issues, as seen, are better explained by text and genre analyses, and there are advanced studies on what has been termed ‘machine learning’, for example, which relates essentially to text recognition inductively carried out by computers following patterns found in texts ‘fed’ to them (Sebastiani 2002), and which, in due time, may considerably affect genre studies and thus translation.

¹⁵ Resources for translators are explicitly and interestingly dealt with in detail by many authors on and offline. Especially in the case of online tools, the right medium to discuss them is surely the web itself, maintaining them accessible and up-to-date much better than print does. For recent research on the English into Italian pair of interest here, cf. Scarpa ([2001] 2008: par. 7.3), Catenaccio (2005) and Osimo (2007: chapt. 2).

¹⁶ Examples are: the WordReference forums, the ProZ discussion groups, any Google or Yahoo translators’ group’s mailing list, the LinkedIn professional social network.

Where, then, can translators acquire notions in all these fields? It is well-known that the experienced translator learns about them inductively. For those who wish to learn them through instruction, the viable option, naturally, is training, the level and duration of which vary greatly and cannot be thoroughly addressed here¹⁷. Other possibilities include corpus-based text, genre and discourse analyses, which again can take the form of dedicated software and/or training, carrying them out or teaching to carry them out, or that of self-made interrogation of the web as a host of parallel / comparable corpora. For other, non-linguistic aspects of translation, for example document composition, revision, editing, layout, transmission or filing, word-processing and desktop publishing packages, as well as a myriad of other machine-based tools and people-administered services, are widely available. The same applies to the marketing and commercial aspects of paid translation, which varies from hand-written, half-page documents translated and paid for on the spot (e.g. letters to / from emigrated relatives translated in street markets in many developing countries¹⁸), to large projects outsourced to teams of translators, based in different continents but Internet-connected, sharing translation memories and glossaries online in real time, and being paid electronically (e.g. by PayPal).

The lists of tools available to specialized translators are by and large organized into categories following the distinction commonly applied of late to distinguish between digital and non-digital (e.g. paper, oral, etc.) resources, i.e. based on the medium. The proposal is to arrange them, instead, around the semantic area of ‘choice’. This can be done deductively, for example by specifying classifying criteria by which to identify them. Table 1 reports a classification of translation resources according to two arbitrary criteria associated with choice: ‘collaborative’ or ‘non-collaborative’ (with respect to translator’s choice), and ‘existing’ or ‘new’. The *Oxford English*

¹⁷ Suffice it to say that ‘training’ is here meant in its widest sense, from post-graduate education in TS, to the informal suggestions of fellow translators or field experts.

¹⁸ A similar but intrasemiotic and fictional version of street market translation is the memorable depiction of poor people’s love messages being artistically ‘doctored’ and made into flowery written letters in García Márquez’s *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* ([1985] 1997: 245-247).

Dictionary, e.g., would then appear as a non-collaborative (not because it is single-authored, but because the translator's choice is limited to choosing among given options), existing (the translator has not made it up in person) resource. The collective decision of a forum of translators over a member's query would fall into the 'existing' category, if the solution is attested and based on existing sources, or into the 'new' category if it provides a majority decision resulting in a new word, practice, etc.

Choice	Non-collaborative / self / individual	Collaborative / others / joint
Existing / retrieved / deduced	dictionaries glossaries encyclopaedias customer instructions international standards ...	forums, mailing lists, field experts training ...
New / created / induced	web queries corpus queries own glossaries own translation memories ...	forums mailing lists wikis social networks ...

Table 1 Deductive classification of translation resources according to 'choice': a suggested categorization

The classification could however be obtained inductively, by exploiting the users' perception of how choice-constraining a tool is. If, for instance, translators 'reviewed' resources by attaching tags relating to choice to each of them, resources could be selected more precisely according to the translator's needs of the case. By way of example, ten users could tag the OED using the tags reported in Table 2.

User	Tags				
1	OED	reliable	prescriptive	paper	outdated
2	OED	paper	expensive	library	old
3	OED	non-collaborative	reliable	online	quick
4	OED	online	updated	quick	reliable
5	OED	paper	non-collaborative	library	CDROM
6	OED	quick	expensive	online	authoritative
7	OED	difficult	free	library	university
8	OED	heavy	paper	dusty	interesting
9	OED	comprehensive	prescriptive	authoritative	updated
10	OED	online	comprehensive	university	free

Table 2 Imaginary tags assigned by translators to the OED

As even many non-specialist Internet users know, the web hosts many free and simple applications that anyone can access online, and that create ‘tag clouds’ from specific texts by extracting and arranging words so that “clouds give greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the source text” (Feinberg 2009). *Wordle*¹⁹ is one such application, using which a cloud from the tags in Table 2 has been created (Fig. 12).

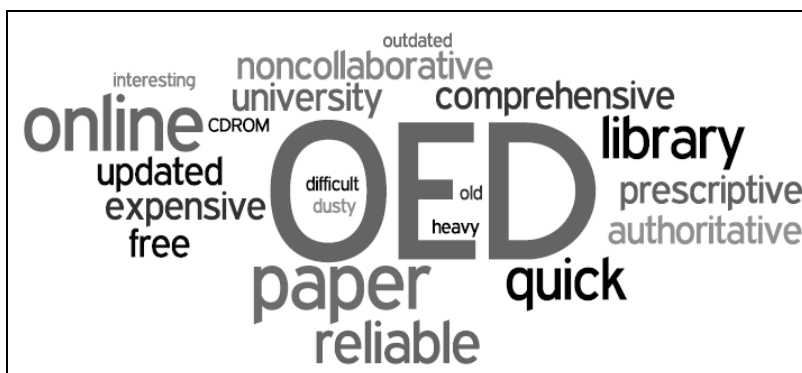


Fig. 12 Tag cloud from imaginary translators’ tags for the OED (Table 2)

¹⁹ Feinberg (2009).

Just like *Wordle*, in his creator's words, is only a "toy"²⁰, the above tag cloud is only a game with no scientific relevance whatsoever, since all the tags provided are imaginary and artificially fed *ad hoc*. The numerical relation between the fictional data and the visual representation is real, though, and what it was hoped to show is precisely the potential impact of community evaluation (an established fact) if organized in unusual ways, for instance along the lines of semantic relations, in the wake of the trends currently followed by technology (what is termed 'folksonomy' in web jargon²¹). This could result in the faster and more accurate targeting of the resources needed by any translator at any given moment. The possible drawbacks are the same as have been highlighted by many scholars from various perspectives – most relevantly, for the scope of this book, by those warning about using the web as a corpus (e.g. Kilgarriff and Grefenstette 2003) – and they all derive from the same problem: the risk of self-referentiality. The "garbage in, garbage out" effect (Scarpa [2001] 2008: 300) does not only represent a translation problem, but is also a constitutive trait of the web itself, which is fed by its own users and used by its own feeders. If the data fed into the web are not rearranged in creative ways, the same combinations of them are coming out of it, much in the same way that a wrongly translated term posted somewhere on the web is picked up by other translators and starts replicating itself virally, or like genetic information constantly recombined from the same restricted pool will end up returning, at least in genetic terms, 'errors'.

It has been noticed before (cf. par. 3.4) how the Internet turn has caused the introduction into everyday language, not only into web idiolect, of large numbers of affixed words. Another successful web-related neologism is '2.0', from the version number of software programmes, used as a post-modifying determiner meaning 'the second, improved version of something' (cf. par. 3.3). Semantically organized web resources – considered as a whole as if they were a homogeneous set – could be for translators their 'translation tools 2.0'.

²⁰ "Wordle is a toy for generating 'word clouds' from text that you provide", Feinberg (2009), *Wordle*, "Homepage", <http://www.wordle.net/>.

²¹ The word is reported to be a "portmanteau of folk and taxonomy", coined in 2004 by Thomas Vander Wal (Wikipedia 2009, s.v. FOLKSONOMY).

Also hinted at earlier in this book (cf. par. 1.4) is the notion that translation is an instance of language use and of communication but is furthermore determined by human abilities and human behaviour in general. Consequently if, in the Canadian philosopher Pierre Lévy's words, "the main obstacle that prevents human collective intelligence from crossing the next cognitive threshold [cyberspace] is the current absence of systematic self-awareness" (Lévy 2009: 32), then this is the same obstacle faced by all web users, including those searching it for translation purposes.

3.6 Localization, multitranslation, no translation?

Starting from the early 1980s, but actually booming in the 1990s (Esselink 2003),

localization is a buzzword for the translation and adaptation of documents to meet the requirements of new 'locales' (country / regions and languages), especially in the fields of software and websites (Pym 2002: 168, italics in the original).

The feeling is that this term could be used as a 'semantic tag' to position translation experts on the basis of their nearness to the contemporary translation market: the more familiar one is with localization (theoretically or practically), the closer s/he is to the current translation industry. For example, many have a clear idea that localization requires adapting a product (mainly software: classic examples are the Microsoft Office suite or world famous videogames like Nintendo's *Super Mario*) to different local realities; fewer know that, e.g. in the case of software, this can be divided into software ('container') and content localization, and that verbal translation is only part of the adaptation work; fewer still have heard of specific software used in localization – e.g. CATALYST or PASSOLO, representing an antithetic pair on the market, each having its share of fans, like PC and MAC, or TRADOS and WORDFAST, etc. – and so on, down to the deepest levels of localization knowledge. The great divides between translation theorists and practitioners, literary and specialized translators, the CAT tools savvy and the IT illiterate, etc. all reflect the multiple perspectives

from which it is possible to perceive and perform translation. Besides, visualizing these differences as making up the fuzzy set of ‘translators’, or as a tag cloud, well renders the absence of clear-cut categorizations within this agglomerate. A translator could know all about localization through training and updates, yet work for small family businesses only translating a page or two at a time which, for their intended uses, might even be handwritten. Or s/he could make a living out of localizing chunks of immense projects outsourced by large translation companies (what Anthony Pym, one of the keenest observers of contemporary translation, defines as a possible cause of the “dehumanization of discourse”, 2002), but translate science fiction by night just out of passion. The possible cases are as many as the translators are. Chances are that most people working in this field have at least once translated at least one text different from the mainstream projects they carry out, if only to find out they and a specific domain / genre were incompatible. When it comes to translation as a business, to obvious factors like education, training, experience, domain specific expertise and personal interests, economic ones must be added, both translator- and industry-centred, requiring careful human resource profiling. On the one hand, there are the translator’s proven skills, inclination toward individual or team work / self or hired employment, financial expectations, investment capacity, time investment, etc. On the other, simply put, there is the demand of the market, in which greatly prominent is, today, localization.

What the relationship is between localization and translation – i.e. where the one stands with respect to the other – has been under discussion for some time now. Some see them on the same level, overlapping (Scarpa [2001] 2008); others in a localization > translation inclusive relationship (O’Hagan 2006; Lommel 2007); others see localization as translation with the addition of other steps and modifications (Pym 2009); others incorporate both into globalization, in the famous (among localizers) “GILT formula”

GLOBALIZATION = INTERNATIONALIZATION +

N* LOCALIZATION [N = number of locales],

where (very vaguely put) “Translation is often the largest part of localization” (Cadieux and Esselink 2002)²². These differing views do not stem from inconsistencies in the object being described, so much so that the corporate-run²³ Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA)’s definition of localization as

the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets (Lommel 2007: 11),

is comparable to Pym’s, whose voice is often critical of the predominance of the market-oriented drives in localization (e.g. Pym 2001, 2005, 2009). They rather seem to arise from whether an inductive or a deductive operation is carried out in order to describe it, with practitioners abstracting their conclusions from experience and theoreticians fitting the phenomenon into representational frameworks. The ‘academic vs. professional’ clash (even lexically inappropriate as the terms are not exclusive) is the subject of yet another classic *querelle* in this field and in other fields too (again, cf. Pym 2001), having led nowhere so far, except to sensible observations that any phenomenon is better explained by a combination of both theory and practice.

The notion of localization can indeed be rightfully seen as exclusive, inclusive, level with, etc. that of translation, depending on the perspective: sociological or linguistic or cultural outlooks on localization are as good and interesting as business ones. Saying that all perspectives are viable, however (even if argued from sound theoretical bases and supported by experimental evidence), may sound generalist, post-modern and ultimately relativist, but relativism is just round the corner from nihilism, and nihilism is exactly what translators, who make choices by profession, cannot afford. The value of choice in translation and of translation as a decisional process has been stressed throughout the book; how to place, then,

²² According to the GILT equation, localizing e.g. the Microsoft Office suite would thus mean: (a) to *conceive* or design it as an international product in the first place, i.e. to be customizable to specific markets; and (b) to translate all text into and adapt all culture-bound elements to the receiving language / culture.

²³ “LISA is a member-governed organization led by a board of leading figures in globalization and related industries”, LISA 2010, “About Lisa”, <http://www.lisa.org/About-LISA.31.0.html>.

localization within (or without, or with) translation, at least from a *linguistic* perspective? Again, there is no single answer: LSP studies would probably claim that localization is ‘translating for globalization purposes’; systemic-functional views that it is the purest expression of linguistic functionalism; text analysis might label it the affirmation of the contextual over the (source) text, and critical discourse analysis the expression of a shift in the power relation between profit and performance. One thing, however, emerges from and is common to all: the fact that, just like ‘globalization’ is a term acquired and used by many fields but claimed as ‘owned’ by economics, so the undisputable prevalence of the business rationale over other types of interests makes the economic view of localization prevalent too. Whether or not it will be written down in history as the GILT equation, to the outrage of translation scholars from the humanities and social sciences, *also* depends on translators’ choices, and this is deemed to be the real relationship between localization and translation: the human link.

As an industry, translation (including localization, for sake of convenience) will follow the market’s offer-and-demand cycle, but there is already a noticeable shift towards outsourcing translations into a given language to speakers of that language residing in countries with the lowest cost of living, so as to pay the lowest prices in absolute terms. By means of example, when comparing offer and demand, a Chinese translator living in London will not be able to charge the same prices, for a project that can be done at a distance, as a colleague based anywhere in China, but a mediation job in the UK requiring the mediator in person would favour a London-based professional: individual choices, in this respect, are strongly constrained. It is precisely at the global level that phenomena like globalization can be modified and shaped, i.e. through the web technologies that best serve them.

A multiauthor and a multigenre have been proposed earlier on to account for the changes that communication as a whole is going through, specifying nonetheless that, whenever a definition is taken one step back towards generalization, it can accommodate more phenomena but can also prove less systematic a tool for analysis: the larger the framework, the looser the support it offers. If, however, the development is too quick or multifaceted to be effectively investigated

in depth, taking one step backward is not necessarily synonymous with regress. The Internet era's translation business in its various facets, including localization, could perhaps be fitted into a generic 'multitranlation' phenomenon as a functional label, valid meanwhile their evolution and the ensuing relationship between them become clearer. Multitranlation, exploiting all the power of translation tools 2.0, is where translators' participation is now expressed, and where individual choice can affect the virtual and the real world through democracy.

The risks of Internet democracy are intuitive and have been mentioned earlier; there are also Internet-ensuing practices that can find virtuous applications: for example, crowdsourcing, free translation and Lingua Franca English (LFE). Crowdsourcing is a blend meaning 'crowd outsourcing', or 'outsourcing a job to the crowds', by this implying precisely the entire world population connected to / through the WWW. The phenomenon is wider than calls for specialized participation in discussion forums, mailing lists, or other resources with minimum community restrictions. Crowdsourcing implies limitlessly broadening one's potential audience, obtaining services for free, much "like panning for gold", based on the (little explored and explorable) idea that "groups of amateurs can often produce better results and do so far more cheaply than professionals" (*The Economist* 2008: 88). While some companies are happy to save money and trust their users to return good translations²⁴, the quality issues raised about using the web as a corpus are taken, here, to their extreme consequences, in which legal considerations also arise, for example when an unpublished work is crowd-translated and posted online, as happened with *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Rowling 2007) in France before it was officially published (Willsher 2007). Thus, another as yet unexplored but interesting consequence of the newly-emerged multiauthor's identity is: who is responsible for the source text? Therefore, who to sue for breach of copyright²⁵? The number of web-based projects aiming to translate large or in-progress corpora into

²⁴ The social network *Facebook*, to name one, promotes crowdsourcing of translations into all languages, <http://www.facebook.com/translations/>.

²⁵ And, at an abstract level, this questions the very need to uncover the language production process in order to reproduce it, including for translation purposes (cf. par. 1.4), if it must be applied to innumerable authors at the same time.

a number of languages is already vast and growing: from song lyrics, to subtitles, to open source software packages²⁶. In all these cases, however, not only the author's money is at stake, but also the professional translators', who lose shares of the market. The debate rages on, mostly on the web itself, with many translators firmly denouncing the practice (Bennett 2009) and others (including the author of this book) welcoming it as just a further expression of Web 2.0-induced changes²⁷, to be of course regulated so that no one's rights are infringed²⁸. Whatever the position upheld, this debate can be seen as an instance of 'glocalization', i.e.

The action, process, or fact of making something both global and local; *spec.* the adaptation of global influences or business strategies in accordance with local conditions; global localization (OED 2009, s.v. *GLOCALIZATION*),

in which global and local drives coexist and often conflict. Another – indisputably commendable – practice born of Web 2.0 multitranslation is that enforced by initiatives like *Translators without borders*²⁹, “providing voluntary or very low cost translations”³⁰ to those in need.

²⁶ Cf., respectively, Lyred (lyrics), TED Open Translation Project (video subtitling), Translation Project (software).

²⁷ See for example the freely accessible and searchable forums of Proz.com, www.proz.com, one of the largest portals for professional translators in the world.

²⁸ The translating profession is so unregulated, actually, that it seems it makes little sense to stand for the translators' self-declared right to be the only providers of this service when in Italy, for example, an official *albo* or register is still being demanded. Who decides who is a translator and who is not? According to which criteria? National, international and supranational entities provide some reliable criteria, and these are necessary – as stated in chapt. 2 – and welcome in specific (e.g. intraspecialized) settings, but are hardly thought to apply to web users-created, -managed and -translated content. Similarly, what sense does it make to demand a protectionist national register of translators, when globalization is pushing the world in the opposite direction? Trying to oppose global trends has never been much successful. This is a relevant and topical debate that cannot of course be properly dealt with here, and the above is just one opinion, as valid as any other on the subject; only time will probably tell not who was right, but where translation as a global practice decided to go.

²⁹ *Translators without borders*, <http://tsf.eurotexte.fr/spip.php?rubrique46>.

³⁰ As long, of course, as such initiatives are not used to vehicle marketing. *Translators without borders*, Terms of use, <http://tsf.eurotexte.fr/spip.php?article26>.

Finally, a third phenomenon to watch carefully, not web-generated but surely web-amplified, is the global trend towards a *lingua franca* English (LFE) (Flowerdew 2002, Mauranen 2003, Seidlhofer 2004, Jenkins 2006). The diatopic dimension of (English) language varieties has not been addressed here, for the imaginable complexity of the subject and its context-situatedness (e.g. Trudgill [1974] 2000, Meyerhoff 2006), which makes it best explorable in a translation manual. LFE is “a contact language used only among non-mother tongue speakers” (Jenkins 2006: 160). The relevance of a variety of English (the world’s economic and web-dominating language) that is spreading fast and allows increasing numbers of speakers to develop a minimum knowledge of it to use it at least operationally can be paramount in a LFE speaker’s decision to use or not to use translating services. Moreover, a global space (the web) where a non-native variety is the prevalent variety could in time favour its prestige and diffusion within and without the cyberspace, endangering both the role of standard varieties of English (Gnutzmann and Intemann 2005) and translation even in the non-virtual world. The phenomenon of LFE could furthermore be seen as an internalized type of translation, where the non-native speaker writes / translates internally and directly into an operative language, whereas his/her interlocutor, allowing a certain variation in decoding, would most of the times be able to receive at least the gist of the message. An example: a *Super Mario* player in Argentina could interview a more expert colleague in Japan about game levels and tricks and get an answer all through LFE; their high level of (*Super Mario*) specialization would allow them to carry out specialized communication even with a minimum knowledge of English. The classic antithetic pair ‘linguist with specialized knowledge’ versus ‘specialist with language knowledge’ (cf. par. 2.3) could thus be made instantly outdated by the LFE speaker, who could come to represent the ‘any-domain specialist with minimum (English) language knowledge’, whose linguistic level would anyhow be acceptable to operate, because his/her interlocutors’ would be the same, even within a specialized community. If translators’ guilds are worried about crowdsourcing, the future sketched by this latter phenomenon makes it pale in comparison.

Translation in human history has received innumerable definitions, some of which were reported at the beginning, in the first

chapter. In the Internet age, it has been defined as a multidiscipline (Ulrych 1999), a pluridimensional process (“il carattere essenzialmente pluridimensionale del processo traduttivo”, Garzone 2005: 56) and no later than this paragraph it has been suggested to temporarily call it multitranslation. This in response to a process begun in the 1990s to widen categories and interpretational frameworks to accommodate a more complex, fragmented reality, as opposed to the static polarization of the 1980s, the last decade of 20th century ideologies. This does not mean that ideologies, or the spirit that informed them, have merely disappeared. They moved, in some cases, into non-strictly political positions, e.g. into gender studies, women studies, (post-) feminist studies and cultural studies in general, a move that has found its supporters in TS too (e.g. Bassnett and Trivedi 1999 and Robinson 1997b on post-colonial translation; Godard 1984 on gender and translation). In other cases, the ideological spirit returned or remained political (Baker 2009). In all cases, most lines of thought in TS and in contemporary culture in general have gone in the direction purported by Levý (1967) in the 1960s, inspired by choice: the translator must always come up with a solution to the puzzles inherent in his/her work and not only in making a translation product, or carrying out a translation process, but also and especially in participating in the translating practice. The 2000s saw the crisis of ideologies deepen, the concurrent rise of faith in technology, and the affirmation of (online) participation made possible by the Web 2.0 paradigm, but also the great uncertainty and fragmentation that these brought forth. The 2010s will hopefully be the decade of a renewed move from ideology to responsibility in all fields, through a reaffirmation of personal morals, public ethics and professional deontology. TS is foreseeably going to continue at least for the next decade, and translation in its manifold aspects – in spite of LFE forging on – for even longer; whether the ‘ethical turn’ foreseen and called for in the 2010s is received by this no longer young, not yet old discipline based on choice could contribute to determining its future prospects.

Conclusions

The history of translation is full of brilliant aphorisms on its manifestations and void of any definitive certainties about the cognitive process(es) behind it. Research on translation is full of differently valued prescriptive notions and non-evaluable descriptions. Most reflections on its practice are still based on what Cicero said about it over two millennia ago.

In 2010, the Royal Society will celebrate its 350th anniversary online with a themed *Facebook* page. Its founding fathers played an influential role in the dramatic changes brought about by the scientific revolution, whereby English ended up imposing its primacy in all scientific fields. The world in 2010 is perceivably different from that of 1660.

Equipped with a new baggage of theories and tools, 2010s translators nonetheless confront the challenge of operating in the face of this paradox, playing against the same difficulties as ever, plus many new ones. Not that theirs is a unique situation; however, their position is undoubtedly central, not peripheral, in the present communication-dependent world. Not that ‘central or peripheral’, on the web, have the same meaning as in the real world: as seen, a personal computer and an Internet connection are enough to link up with anyone on the web, thus making a peripheral position that of somebody without regular access to it. Not that the ‘web-based reality’ is not real— and so on, the chain of objections raised when analyzing the current complexities through traditional frameworks clearly proves the latter’s inadequacy to do so. Yet, it is common in history to call upon existing models and theories, duly elaborated, at times of impasses, in the attempt to come out of them. Thus classical terms such as ‘categories’, ‘ontologies’, ‘prototypes’ are heard once

again in research, though they may undergo lexical restyling and get released to the public as unheard of ‘folksonomies’.

The specialized translator must operate in spite of all this. For instance, s/he can address the new evasive multigenres exploiting, instead of falling victim to, the new technologies: s/he can take ‘webinars’ (or web-seminars) to keep up-to-date with contemporary trends in the profession, s/he can post terminological requests on forums, and contribute to translation wikis. These resources, however, do not only pertain to translators. The “demands of a brave new world”, identified by Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 6) with reference to the post-war decades, have remained the same, if they have not increased – for all, not just for translators. For translators specifically, today’s world, in which one can *glocalize* his/her website by *crowdsourcing* the job on the web and get paid by PayPal, is particularly brave and new. Since Huxley’s times, though, with every new development it seems a little less brave, a little less new. The amount of technological advances has perhaps just made it less surprising.

The challenge specific to the specialized translator is dual. The first aspect of it is to preserve the excellence of the profession and the tradition of language, not in order to uphold nostalgic visions or to brandish old-school certainties against the changing tide (opposing ‘natural’ evolution does tend to prove disastrous), but for future reference and in case a change in global trends takes place: human habit to fast-paced and dramatic changes, as well as depriving the species of the ability to surprise itself, should at least have taught it that dramatic changes can and indeed do occur, even within a single individual’s lifetime. The second is to accept the necessity of change, the one indispensable requirement to attempt to take control of it, which in turn implies taking responsibility for it, i.e. choosing. This might result in extreme thinking and planning, for instance even in contemplating the potential death of the translating profession, at least as it has been conceived so far. Better, it is suggested, to accept the evolution of the translator’s work, and not to end up like a corporation of weavers at the onset of the industrial revolution. If there is an advantage to translation’s multidisciplinary, compensating for the dispersion it creates, is that it allows rightfully talking about it drawing from various fields, *e pluribus unum*. The translator is an opportunist

by profession – as this book has tried to show with respect to the relationship between translation and linguistics – exploiting whatever tools and resources are of use to him/her, from any field or subfield available, in order to accomplish his/her task, which is to come up with solutions no matter what. The highly skilled opportunist translator is expected to successfully survive the change.

As for translation itself, what humans cannot explain has always been thought of as having an inscrutable will of its own and, for this reason, has often been personalized to express their inability to understand it. Accepting to talk about translation this way, its extinction as a living entity, in fact, is not actually believed to be likely. This line of thought is necessarily speculative but, into the 2020s, researchers born well into the Internet era will probably still describe ‘the old concept of localization’ and its evolution over the past 30 years. Translation will as usual evolve along with the human species, perhaps – if research into ‘creative thinking’ technology allows it, and in view of the chance that man might not manage to survive his own development – even without it, in new ways connected with information preservation and transmission. Although some aspects of the traditional translating profession are in danger today and, improbable though possible as it is, it might theoretically even disappear in the long run, it is thought that translation, at least as the transfer of information from one semiotic system to another, is not. Translation is information exchange, and information is life. Life is conceivable even without humans. Translation *will* take care of itself.

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