# Main issues of translation studies

## Key concepts

- The practice of translating is long established, but the discipline of translation studies is new.
- In academic circles, translation was previously relegated to just a language-learning activity.
- A split has persisted between translation practice and theory.
- The study of (usually literary) translation began through comparative literature, translation 'workshops' and contrastive analysis.
- James S. Holmes's 'The name and nature of translation studies' is considered to be the 'founding statement' of a new discipline.
- The present rapid expansion of the discipline is important.

## Key texts

**Holmes, J. S.** (1988b/2000) 'The name and nature of translation studies', in L. Venuti (ed.) (2000), pp. 172–85.

**Jakobson, R.** (1959/2000) 'On linguistic aspects of translation', in L. Venuti (ed.) (2000), pp. 113–18.

**Leuven-Zwart, K. van** and **T. Naaijkens** (eds) (1991) *Translation Studies: State of the Art*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

**Toury, G.** (1991) 'What are descriptive studies in translation likely to yield apart from isolated descriptions?', in K. van Leuven-Zwart and T. Naaijkens (eds) (1991), pp. 179–92.

### *1.1 The concept of translation*

The main aim of this book is to introduce the reader to major concepts and models of translation studies. Because of the rapid growth in the area, particularly over the last decade, difficult decisions have had to be taken regarding the selection of material. It has been decided, for reasons of space and consistency of approach, to focus on written translation rather than oral translation (the latter is commonly known as **interpreting** or **interpretation**).

The term **translation** itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as **translating**). The **process of translation** between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the **source text** or ST) in the original verbal language (the **source language** or SL) into a written text (the **target text** or TT) in a different verbal language (the **target language** or TL). This type corresponds to 'interlingual translation' and is one of the three categories of translation described by the Czech structuralist Roman Jakobson in his seminal paper 'On linguistic aspects of translation' (Jakobson 1959/2000: 114). Jakobson's categories are as follows:

1 **intralingual** translation, or 'rewording': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language';
2 **interlingual** translation, or 'translation proper': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language';
3 **intersemiotic** translation, or 'transmutation': 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems').

Intralingual translation would occur, for example, when we rephrase an expression or text in the same language to explain or clarify something we might have said or written. Intersemiotic translation would occur if a written text were translated, for example, into music, film or painting. It is interlingual translation which is the traditional, although by no means exclusive, focus of translation studies.

### *1.2 What is translation studies?*

Throughout history, written and spoken translations have played a crucial role in interhuman communication, not least in providing access to important texts for scholarship and religious purposes. Yet the study of translation as an academic subject has only really begun in the past fifty years. In the English-speaking world, this discipline is now generally known as 'translation studies', thanks to the Dutch-based US scholar James S. Holmes. In his key defining paper delivered in 1972, but not widely available until 1988 (Holmes 1988b/2000), Holmes describes the then nascent discipline as being concerned with 'the complex of problems clustered round the phenomenon of translating and translations' (Holmes 1988b/2000: 173). By 1988, Mary Snell-Hornby, in the first edition of her *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, was writing that 'the demand that translation studies should be viewed as an independent discipline . . . has come from several quarters in recent years' (Snell-Hornby 1988). By 1995, the time of the second, revised, edition of her work, Snell-Hornby is able to talk in the preface of 'the breathtaking development of translation studies as an independent discipline' and the 'prolific international discussion' on the subject. Mona Baker, in her introduction to *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation* (1997a), talks effusively of the richness of the 'exciting new discipline, perhaps *the* discipline of the 1990s', bringing together scholars from a wide variety of often

more traditional disciplines. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the discipline of translation studies continues to develop from strength to strength across the globe.

There are two very visible ways in which translation studies has become more prominent. First, there has been a proliferation of specialized translating and interpreting courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. In the UK, the first specialized university postgraduate courses in interpreting and translating were set up in the 1960s. In the academic year 1999/2000, there were at least twenty postgraduate translation courses in the UK and several designated 'Centres of Translation'. Caminade and Pym (1995) list at least 250 university-level bodies in over sixty countries offering four-year undergraduate degrees and/or postgraduate courses in translation. These courses, which attract thousands of students, are mainly oriented towards training future professional commercial translators and interpreters and serve as highly valued entry-level qualifications for the translating and interpreting professions.

Other courses, in smaller numbers, focus on the practice of literary translation. In the UK, these include major courses at Middlesex University and the University of East Anglia (Norwich), the latter of which also houses the British Centre for Literary Translation. In Europe, there is now a network of centres where literary translation is studied, practised and promoted. Apart from Norwich, these include Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Arles (France), Bratislava (Slovakia), Dublin (Ireland), Rhodes (Greece), Sineffe (Belgium), Strälen (Germany), Tarazona (Spain) and Visby (Sweden).

The 1990s also saw a proliferation of conferences, books and journals on translation in many languages. Long-standing international translation studies journals such as *Babel* (the Netherlands), *Meta* (Canada), *Parallèles* (Switzerland) and *Traduire* (France) have now been joined by, amongst others, *Across Languages and Cultures* (Hungary), *Cadernos de Tradução* (Brazil), *Literature in Translation* (UK), *Perspectives* (France), *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della Traduzione* (Italy), *Target* (Israel/Belgium), *The Translator* (UK), *Turjuman* (Morocco) and the Spanish *Hermeneus*, *Livius* and *Sendebar*, as well as a whole host of other single language, modern languages, applied linguistics, comparative literature and other journals whose primary focus may not be translation but where articles on translation are often published. The lists of European publishers such as John Benjamins, Multilingual Matters, Rodopi, Routledge and St Jerome now contain considerable numbers of books in the field of translation studies. In addition, there are various professional publications dedicated to the practice of translation (in the UK these include *The Linguist* of the Institute of Linguists, *The ITI Bulletin* of the Institute for Translating and Interpreting and *In Other Words*, the literary-oriented publication of the Translators' Association). Other smaller periodicals such as *TRANSST* (Israel) and *BET* (Spain), now disseminated through the internet, give details of forthcoming events, conferences and translation prizes. In the year 1999–2000, for instance, international translation conferences were held in a large number of countries and on a wide variety of key themes, including:





- translation and training translators (Bratislava, Slovakia);
- literary translation (Mons, Belgium);
- research models in translation studies (UMIST, Manchester, UK);
- gender and translation (Norwich, UK);
- translation as/at the crossroads of culture (Lisbon, Portugal);
- translation and globalization (Tangiers, Morocco);
- legal translation (Geneva, Switzerland);
- translation and meaning (Maastricht, the Netherlands and Lodz, Poland);
- the history of translation (Leon, Spain);
- transadaptation and pedagogical challenges (Turku, Finland);
- translation-focused comparative literature (Pretoria, South Africa and Salvador, Brazil).

In addition, various translation events were held in India, and an on-line translation symposium was organized by Anthony Pym from Spain in January 2000. The fact that such events are now attempting to narrow their focus is indicative of the richness and abundance of the activity being undertaken in the field as a whole. From being a little-established field a relatively short time ago, translation studies has now become one of the most active and dynamic new areas of research encompassing an exciting mix of approaches.

This chapter sets out to examine what exactly is understood by this fast-growing field and briefly describes the history of the development and aims of the discipline.

## 1.3 A brief history of the discipline

Writings on the subject of translating go far back in recorded history. The practice of translation was discussed by, for example, Cicero and Horace (first century BCE) and St Jerome (fourth century CE); as we shall see in chapter 2, their writings were to exert an important influence up until the twentieth century. In St Jerome's case, his approach to translating the Greek Septuagint Bible into Latin would affect later translations of the Scriptures. Indeed, the translation of the Bible was to be – for well over a thousand years and especially during the Reformation in the sixteenth century – the battleground of conflicting ideologies in western Europe.

However, although the practice of translating is long established, the study of the field developed into an academic discipline only in the second half of the twentieth century. Before that, translation had normally been merely an element of language learning in modern language courses. In fact, from the late eighteenth century to the 1960s, language learning in secondary schools in many countries had come to be dominated by what was known as the grammar-translation method. This method, which was applied to

classical Latin and Greek and then to modern foreign languages, centred on the rote study of the grammatical rules and structures of the foreign language. These rules were both practised and tested by the translation of a series of usually unconnected and artificially constructed sentences exemplifying the structure(s) being studied, an approach that persists even nowadays in certain countries and contexts. Typical of this is the following rather bizarre and decontextualized collection of sentences to translate into Spanish, for the practice of Spanish tense use. They appear in K. Mason's *Advanced Spanish Course*, still to be found on some secondary school courses in the UK:

1 The castle stood out against the cloudless sky.
2 The peasants enjoyed their weekly visits to the market.
3 She usually dusted the bedrooms after breakfast.
4 Mrs Evans taught French at the local grammar school.

(Mason 1969/74: 92)

The gearing of translation to language teaching and learning may partly explain why academia considered it to be of secondary status. Translation exercises were regarded as a means of learning a new language or of reading a foreign language text until one had the linguistic ability to read the original. Study of a work in translation was generally frowned upon once the student had acquired the necessary skills to read the original. However, the grammar-translation method fell into increasing disrepute, particularly in many English-language countries, with the rise of the direct method or communicative approach to English language teaching in the 1960s and 1970s. This approach places stress on students' natural capacity to learn language and attempts to replicate 'authentic' language learning conditions in the classroom. It often privileges spoken over written forms, at least initially, and tends to shun the use of the students' mother tongue. This focus led to the abandoning of translation in language learning. As far as teaching was concerned, translation then tended to become restricted to higher-level and university language courses and professional translator training, to the extent that present first-year undergraduates in the UK are unlikely to have had any real practice in the skill.

In the USA, translation – specifically literary translation – was promoted in universities in the 1960s by the **translation workshop** concept. Based on I. A. Richards's reading workshops and practical criticism approach that began in the 1920s and in other later creative writing workshops, these translation workshops were first established in the universities of Iowa and Princeton. They were intended as a platform for the introduction of new translations into the target culture and for the discussion of the finer principles of the translation process and of understanding a text (for further discussion of this background, see Gentzler 1993: 7–18). Running parallel to this approach was that of **comparative literature**, where literature is studied and compared transnationally and transculturally, necessitating the reading





of some literature in translation. This would later link into the growth of courses of the cultural studies type (these are described below).

Another area in which translation became the subject of research was **contrastive analysis**. This is the study of two languages in contrast in an attempt to identify general and specific differences between them. It developed into a systematic area of research in the USA from the 1930s onwards and came to the fore in the 1960s and 1970s. Translations and translated examples provided much of the data in these studies (e.g. Di Pietro 1971, James 1980). The contrastive approach heavily influenced other studies, such as Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958) and Catford's (1965), which overtly stated their aim of assisting translation research. Although useful, contrastive analysis does not, however, incorporate sociocultural and pragmatic factors, nor the role of translation as a communicative act. Nevertheless, the continued application of a linguistic approach in general, and specific linguistic models such as generative grammar or functional grammar (see chapters 3, 5 and 6), has demonstrated an inherent and gut link with translation. While, in some universities, translation continues to be studied as a module on applied linguistics courses, the evolving field of translation studies can point to its own systematic models that have incorporated other linguistic models and developed them for its own purposes. At the same time, the construction of the new discipline has involved moving away from considering translation as primarily connected to language teaching and learning. Instead, the new focus is the specific study of what happens in and around translating and translation.

The more systematic, and mostly linguistic-oriented, approach to the study of translation began to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s. There are a number of now classic examples:

- Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet produced their *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (1958), a contrastive approach that categorized what they saw happening in the practice of translation between French and English;
- Alfred Malblanc (1963) did the same for translation between French and German;
- Georges Mounin's *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (1963) examined linguistic issues of translation;
- Eugene Nida (1964a) incorporated elements of Chomsky's then fashionable generative grammar as a theoretical underpinning of his books, which were initially designed to be practical manuals for Bible translators.

This more systematic and 'scientific' approach in many ways began to mark out the territory of the academic investigation of translation. The word 'science' was used by Nida in the title of his 1964 book (*Toward a Science of Translating*, 1964a); the German equivalent, 'Übersetzungswissenschaft', was taken up by Wolfram Wilss in his teaching and research at the Universität des Saarlandes at Saarbrücken, by Koller in Heidelberg and by the Leipzig

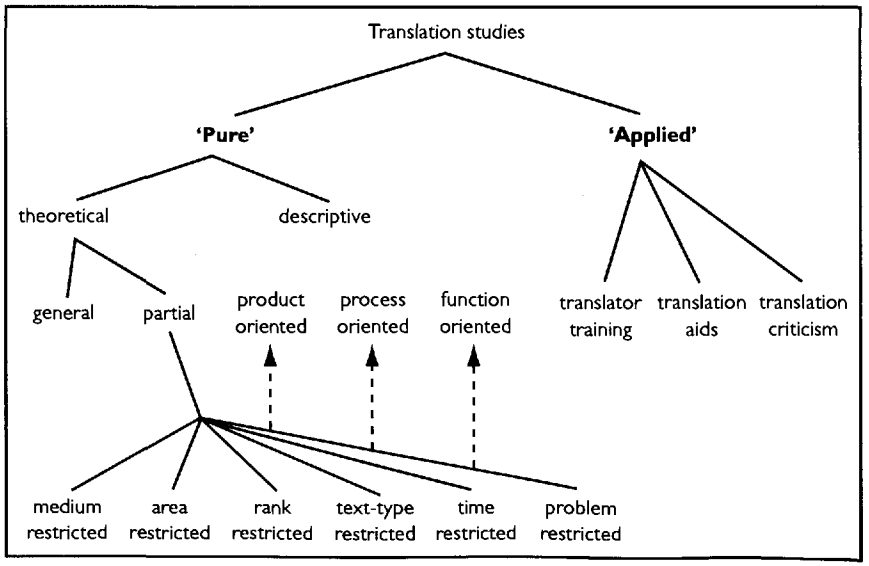
school, where scholars such as Kade and Neubert became active. At that time, even the name of the emerging discipline remained to be determined, with candidates such as 'translatology' in English – and its counterparts 'translatologie' in French and 'traductología' in Spanish – staking their claim.

## 1.4 The Holmes/Toury 'map'

A seminal paper in the development of the field as a distinct discipline was James S. Holmes's 'The name and nature of translation studies' (Holmes 1988b/2000). In his *Contemporary Translation Theories*, Gentzler (1993: 92) describes Holmes's paper as 'generally accepted as the founding statement for the field'. Interestingly, in view of our discussion above of how the field evolved from other disciplines, the published version was an expanded form of a paper Holmes originally gave in 1972 in the translation section of the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Copenhagen. Holmes draws attention to the limitations imposed at the time by the fact that translation research was dispersed across older disciplines. He also stresses the need to forge 'other communication channels, cutting across the traditional disciplines to reach all scholars working in the field, from whatever background' (1988b/2000: 173).

Crucially, Holmes puts forward an overall framework, describing what translation studies covers. This framework has subsequently been presented by the leading Israeli translation scholar Gideon Toury as in figure 1.1. In

**Figure 1.1**
Holmes's 'map' of translation studies (from Toury 1995: 10)








Holmes's explanations of this framework (Holmes 1988b/2000: 176–81), the objectives of the 'pure' areas of research are:

1 the description of the phenomena of translation (**descriptive translation theory**);
2 the establishment of general principles to explain and predict such phenomena (**translation theory**).

The 'theoretical' branch is divided into general and partial theories. By 'general', Holmes is referring to those writings that seek to describe or account for every type of translation and to make generalizations that will be relevant for translation as a whole. 'Partial' theoretical studies are restricted according to the parameters discussed below.

The other branch of 'pure' research in Holmes's map is descriptive. Descriptive translation studies (DTS) has three possible foci: examination of (1) the product, (2) the function and (3) the process:

1 **Product-oriented DTS** examines existing translations. This can involve the description or analysis of a single ST–TT pair or a comparative analysis of several TTs of the same ST (into one or more TLs). These smaller-scale studies can build up into a larger body of translation analysis looking at a specific period, language or text/discourse type. Larger-scale studies can be either diachronic (following development over time) or synchronic (at a single point or period in time) and, as Holmes (p. 177) foresees, 'one of the eventual goals of product-oriented DTS might possibly be a general history of translations – however ambitious such a goal might sound at this time'.
2 By **function-oriented DTS**, Holmes means the description of the 'function [of translations] in the recipient sociocultural situation: it is a study of contexts rather than texts' (p. 177). Issues that may be researched include which books were translated when and where, and what influences they exerted. This area, which Holmes terms 'socio-translation studies' – but which would nowadays probably be called cultural-studies-oriented translation – was less researched at the time of Holmes's paper but is more popular in current work on translation studies (see chapters 8 and 9).
3 **Process-oriented DTS** in Holmes's framework is concerned with the psychology of translation, i.e. it is concerned with trying to find out what happens in the mind of a translator. Despite some later work on think-aloud protocols (where recordings are made of translators' verbalization of the translation process as they translate), this is an area of research which has still not yet been systematically analyzed.

The results of DTS research can be fed into the theoretical branch to evolve either a general theory of translation or, more likely, partial theories of translation 'restricted' according to the subdivisions in figure 1.1 above.

- **Medium-restricted theories** subdivide according to translation by machine and humans, with further subdivisions according to whether the machine/computer is working alone or as an aid to the human translator, to whether the human translation is written or spoken and to whether spoken translation (interpreting) is consecutive or simultaneous.
- **Area-restricted theories** are restricted to specific languages or groups of languages and/or cultures. Holmes notes that language-restricted theories are closely related to work in contrastive linguistics and stylistics.
- **Rank-restricted theories** are linguistic theories that have been restricted to a specific level of (normally) the word or sentence. At the time Holmes was writing, there was already a trend towards text linguistics, i.e. text-rank analysis, which has since become far more popular (see chapters 5 and 6 of this book).
- **Text-type restricted theories** look at specific discourse types or genres; e.g. literary, business and technical translation. Text-type approaches came to prominence with the work of Reiss and Vermeer, amongst others, in the 1970s (see chapter 5).
- The term **time-restricted** is self-explanatory, referring to theories and translations limited according to specific time frames and periods. The history of translation falls into this category.
- **Problem-restricted theories** can refer to specific problems such as equivalence – a key issue of the 1960s and 1970s – or to a wider question of whether universals of translated language exist.

Despite this categorization, Holmes himself is at pains to point out that several different restrictions can apply at any one time. Thus, the study of the translation of novels by the contemporary Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, analyzed in chapter 11, would be area restricted (translation from Colombian Spanish into English and other languages, and between the Colombian culture and the TL cultures), text-type restricted (novels and short stories) and time restricted (1960s to 1990s).

The 'applied' branch of Holmes's framework concerns:

- **translator training**: teaching methods, testing techniques, curriculum design;
- **translation aids**: such as dictionaries, grammars and information technology;
- **translation criticism**: the evaluation of translations, including the marking of student translations and the reviews of published translations.

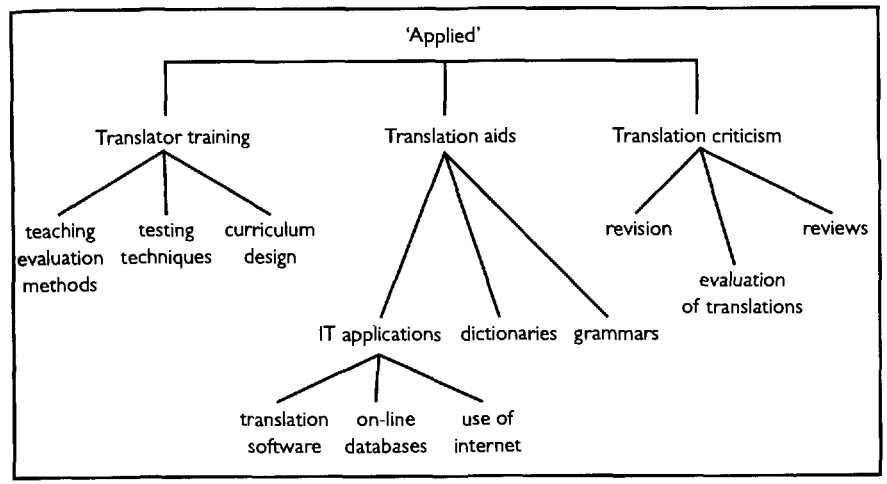
Another area Holmes mentions is **translation policy**, where he sees the translation scholar advising on the place of translation in society, including what place, if any, it should occupy in the language teaching and learning curriculum.

If these aspects of the applied branch are developed, the right-hand side of figure 1.1 would look something like figure 1.2. The divisions in the 'map' as





**Figure 1.2**
The applied branch of translation studies




a whole are in many ways artificial, and Holmes himself is concerned to point out (1988b/2000: 78) that the theoretical, descriptive and applied areas do influence one another. The main merit of the divisions, however, is – as Toury states (1991: 180, 1995: 9) – that they allow a clarification and a division of labour between the various areas of translation studies which, in the past, have often been confused. The division is nevertheless flexible enough to incorporate developments such as the technological advances of recent years, although these advances still require considerable further investigation.

The crucial role played by Holmes's paper is the delineation of the potential of translation studies. The map is still often employed as a point of departure, even if subsequent theoretical discussions (e.g. Snell-Hornby 1991, Pym 1998) have attempted to rewrite parts of it; also, present-day research has progressed considerably since 1972. The fact that Holmes devoted two-thirds of his attention to the 'pure' aspects of theory and description surely indicates his research interests rather than a lack of possibilities for the applied side. 'Translation policy' would nowadays far more likely be related to the ideology that determines translation than was the case in Holmes's description. The different restrictions, which Toury identifies as relating to the descriptive as well as the purely theoretical branch (the discontinuous vertical lines in figure 1.1), might well include a discourse-type as well as a text-type restriction. Inclusion of interpreting as a sub-category of human translation would also be disputed by some scholars. In view of the very different requirements and activities associated with interpreting, it would probably be best to consider interpreting as a parallel field, maybe

under the title of 'interpreting studies'. Additionally, as Pym points out (1998: 4), Holmes's map omits any mention of the individuality of the style, decision-making processes and working practices of human translators involved in the translation process.

## 1.5 Developments since the 1970s

The surge in translation studies since the 1970s has seen different areas of Holmes's map come to the fore. Contrastive analysis has fallen by the wayside. The linguistic-oriented 'science' of translation has continued strongly in Germany, but the concept of equivalence associated with it has declined. Germany has seen the rise of theories centred around text types (Reiss; see chapter 5) and text purpose (the skopos theory of Reiss and Vermeer; see chapter 5), while the Hallidayan influence of discourse analysis and systemic functional grammar, which views language as a communicative act in a sociocultural context, has been prominent over the past decades, especially in Australia and the UK, and has been applied to translation in a series of works by scholars such as Bell (1991), Baker (1992) and Hatim and Mason (1990, 1997). The late 1970s and the 1980s also saw the rise of a descriptive approach that had its origins in comparative literature and Russian Formalism. A pioneering centre has been Tel Aviv, where Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury have pursued the idea of the literary polysystem in which, amongst other things, different literatures and genres, including translated and non-translated works, compete for dominance. The polysystemists have worked with a Belgium-based group including José Lambert and the late André Lefevere (who subsequently moved to the University of Austin, Texas), and with the UK-based scholars Susan Bassnett and Theo Hermans. A key volume was the collection of essays edited by Hermans, *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation* (Hermans 1985a), which gave rise to the name of the 'Manipulation School'. This dynamic, culturally oriented approach held sway for much of the following decade, and linguistics looked very staid.

The 1990s saw the incorporation of new schools and concepts, with Canadian-based translation and gender research led by Sherry Simon, the Brazilian cannibalist school promoted by Else Vieira, postcolonial translation theory, with the prominent figures of the Bengali scholars Tejaswini Niranjana and Gayatri Spivak and, in the USA, the cultural-studies-oriented analysis of Lawrence Venuti, who champions the cause of the translator.

For years, the practice of translation was considered to be derivative and secondary, an attitude that inevitably devalued any academic study of the activity. Now, after much neglect and repression, translation studies has become well established. It is making swift advances worldwide, although not without a hint of trepidation. Translation and translation studies often continue to take place within the context of modern language departments, and the practice of translation is still often denied parity with other academic research. For example, the research assessment exercise in the UK (a formal external audit and evaluation of individuals' and departments' research output) still values academic articles higher than translations, even translations of whole books, notwithstanding the fact that the practice of translation must be an essential experience for the translation theorist and trainer.





It was precisely this split between theory and practice that Holmes, himself both a literary translator and a researcher, sought to overcome. The early manifestations and effects of such a split are clearly expressed by Kitty van Leuven-Zwart (1991: 6). She describes translation teachers' fear that theory would take over from practical training, and literary translators' views that translation was an art that could not be theorized. On the other hand, academic researchers were 'very sceptical' about translation research or felt that translation already had its place in the modern languages curriculum. Van Leuven-Zwart's paper is contained in the proceedings of the First James S. Holmes Symposium on Translation Studies, held at the Department of Translation Studies of the University of Amsterdam in December 1990 in memory of Holmes's contribution to the subject. The breadth of contributions to the proceedings emphasizes the richness of linguistic, literary and historical approaches encompassed by the field.

## 1.6 Aim of this book and a guide to chapters

Translation studies covers an extremely wide field, in which a considerable number of scholars and practitioners are active. Many translators have entered the area from the starting point of more traditional disciplines. This book covers major areas of the now established discipline of translation studies, with particular reference to systematic translation theories and models of contemporary importance. It aims to bring together and clearly summarize the major strands of translation studies that have previously been dispersed, in order to help readers acquire an understanding of the discipline and the necessary background and tools to begin to carry out their own research on translation. It also aims to provide a theoretical framework into which professional translators and trainee translators can place their own practical experience. The book is organized as follows.

Chapter 2 describes some of the major issues that are discussed in writings about translation up to the middle of the twentieth century. This huge range of over two thousand years, beginning with Cicero in the first century BCE, focuses on the 'literal vs. free' translation debate, an imprecise and circular debate from which theorists have emerged only in the last fifty years. The chapter describes some of the classic writings on translation over the years, making a selection of the most well-known and readily available sources. It aims to initiate discussion on some of the key issues.

Chapter 3 deals with the concepts of meaning, equivalence and 'equivalent effect'. Translation theory in the 1960s under Eugene Nida shifted the emphasis to the receiver of the message. This chapter encompasses Nida's

generative-influenced model of translation transfer and his concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Newmark's similarly influential categories of semantic translation and communicative translation are also discussed, as is Koller's analysis of equivalence.

Chapter 4 details attempts that have been made to provide a taxonomy of the linguistic changes or 'shifts' which occur in translation. The main model described here is Vinay and Darbelnet's classic taxonomy, but reference is also made to Catford's linguistic model and van Leuven-Zwart's translation shift approach from the 1980s.

Chapter 5 covers Reiss and Vermeer's text-type and skopos theory of the 1970s and 1980s and Nord's text-linguistic approach. In this chapter, translation is analyzed according to text type and function in the TL culture, and prevailing concepts of text analysis – such as word order, information structure and thematic progression – are employed.

Linked closely to the previous chapter, chapter 6 moves on to consider House's register analysis model and the development of discourse-oriented approaches in the 1990s by Baker and Hatim and Mason, who make use of Hallidayan linguistics to examine translation as communication within a sociocultural context.

Chapter 7 investigates systems theories and the field of target-oriented 'descriptive' translation studies, following Even-Zohar, Toury and the work of the Manipulation School.

Chapter 8 examines varieties of cultural studies approaches in translation studies. These start with Lefevere's work of the 1980s and early 1990s – which itself arose out of a comparative literature and Manipulation School background – and move on to more recent developments in gender studies and translation (in Canada) and to postcolonial translation theories (in India, Brazil and Ireland). The chapter then focuses on a case study of translation from Asia.

Chapter 9 follows Berman and Venuti in examining the foreign element in translation and the 'invisibility' of the translator. The idea is explored that the practice of translation, especially in the English-speaking world, is considered to be a derivative and second-rate activity, and that the prevailing method of translation is 'naturalizing'. The role of literary translators and publishers is also described.

Chapter 10 investigates a selection of philosophical issues of language and translation, ranging from Steiner's 'hermeneutic motion', Pound's use of archaisms, Walter Benjamin's 'pure' language, and Derrida and the deconstruction movement.

Chapter 11 sets out an interdisciplinary approach to translation studies. It discusses Snell-Hornby's 'integrated approach' and looks at recent studies that have combined linguistic and cultural analysis. The future of translation studies and the role of modern technologies, including the internet, are also discussed.





### *Summary of the present chapter*

Translation studies is a relatively new academic research area that has expanded explosively in recent years. While translation was formerly studied as a language-learning methodology or as part of comparative literature, translation 'workshops' and contrastive linguistics courses, the new discipline owes much to the work of James S. Holmes, whose 'The name and nature of translation studies' proposed both a name and a structure for the field. The interrelated branches of theoretical, descriptive and applied translation studies have structured much recent research and have assisted in bridging the gulf that had grown between the theory and practice of translation.

## Discussion and research points

1. How is the practice of translation (and interpreting) structured in your own country? How many universities offer first degrees in the subject? How many postgraduate courses are there? How do they differ? Is a postgraduate qualification a prerequisite for working as a professional translator?
2. Find out how research-based translation studies fits into the university system in your country. How many universities offer 'translation studies' (or similar) courses? In what ways do they differ from or resemble each other? In which university departments are they housed? What do you conclude is the status of translation studies in your country?
3. What specific research in translation studies is being carried out in your country? How do you find out? Is the work being carried out by isolated researchers or by larger and co-ordinated groups? How, if at all, would it fit in with Holmes's 'map' of translation studies?
4. Trace the history of translation and translation studies in your own country. Has the focus been mainly on the theory or on the practice of translation? Why do you think this is so?

# 2 Translation theory before the twentieth century

### Key concepts

- The 'word-for-word' ('literal') vs. 'sense-for-sense' ('free') debate.
- The vitalization of the vernacular: Luther and the German Bible.
- Key notions of 'fidelity', 'spirit' and 'truth'.
- The influence of Dryden and the triad of metaphrase, paraphrase, imitation.
- Attempts at a more systematic prescriptive approach from Dolet and Tytler.
- Schleiermacher: a separate language of translation and respect for the foreign.
- The vagueness of the terms used to describe translation.

### Key texts

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## 2.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is not to attempt a comprehensive history of translation or translators through the ages; this would be beyond the scope of the book. Instead, the main focus is the central recurring theme of 'word-for-word' and 'sense-for-sense' translation, a debate that has dominated much of translation theory in what Newmark (1981: 4) calls the 'pre-linguistics period of translation'. It is a theme which Susan Bassnett, in 'The history of translation theory' section of her book *Translation Studies* (1991), sees as 'emerging again and again with different degrees of emphasis in accordance with differing concepts of language and communication' (1991: 42). In this chapter, we focus on a select few of the influential and readily available writings from the history of translation; namely Cicero, St Jerome, Dolet, Luther, Dryden, Tytler and Schleiermacher. The reason for choosing these particular writings is the influence they have exerted on the history of translation theory and research.

Of course, this is a restricted selection and the list of further reading will note others that have a justifiable claim for inclusion. There has also historically been a very strong tendency to concentrate on western European writing on translation, starting with the Roman tradition; the rich traditions of non-Western cultures – such as China, India and the Arab world – have been neglected, although more recent works in English such as Delisle and Woodsworth's *Translators Through History* (1995) and Baker's *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1997a) have now begun to address the wider geographic framework. This chapter also includes some of these newer findings, and readers are again encouraged to consider the issues as they relate to the history and translation traditions of their own countries and languages.

## 2.1 'Word-for-word' or 'sense-for-sense'?

Up until the second half of the twentieth century, translation theory seemed locked in what George Steiner (1998: 319) calls a 'sterile' debate over the 'triad' of '**literal**', '**free**' and '**faithful**' translation. The distinction between '**word-for-word**' (i.e. 'literal') and '**sense-for-sense**' (i.e. 'free') translation goes back to Cicero (first century BCE) and St Jerome (late fourth century CE) and forms the basis of key writings on translation in centuries nearer to our own.

Cicero outlined his approach to translation in *De optimo genere oratorum* (46 BCE/1960 CE), introducing his own translation of the speeches of the Attic orators Aeschines and Demosthenes:

> And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and 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.[1]
>
> (Cicero 46 BCE/1960 CE: 364)

The 'interpreter' of the first line is the literal ('word-for-word') translator, while the 'orator' tried to produce a speech that moved the listeners. In Roman times, 'word-for-word' translation was exactly what it said: the replacement of each individual word of the ST (invariably Greek) with its closest grammatical equivalent in Latin. This was because the Romans would read the TTs side by side with the Greek STs.

The disparagement of word-for-word translation by Cicero, and indeed by

Horace, who, in a short but famous passage from his *Ars Poetica* (20 BCE?),[2] underlines the goal of producing an aesthetically pleasing and creative text in the TL, had great influence on the succeeding centuries. Thus, St Jerome, the most famous of all translators, cites the authority of Cicero's approach to justify his own Latin translation of the Greek Septuagint Old Testament. Jerome's translation strategy is formulated in *De optimo genere interpretandi*, a letter addressed to the senator Pammachius in 395 CE.[3] In perhaps the most famous statement ever on the translation process, St Jerome, defending himself against criticisms of 'incorrect' translation, describes his strategy in the following terms:

> 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.[4]
>
> (St Jerome 395 CE/1997: 25)

Although some scholars (e.g. Lambert 1991: 7) argue that these terms have been misinterpreted,[5] Jerome's statement is now usually taken to refer to what came to be known as 'literal' (word-for-word') and 'free' (sense-for-sense) translation. Jerome disparaged the word-for-word approach because, by following so closely the form of the ST, it produced an absurd translation, cloaking the sense of the original. The sense-for-sense approach, on the other hand, allowed the sense or content of the ST to be translated. In these poles can be seen the origin of both the 'literal vs. free' and 'form vs. content' debate that has continued until modern times. To illustrate the concept of the TL taking over the sense of the ST, Jerome uses the military image of the original text being marched into the TL like a prisoner by its conqueror (Robinson 1997b: 26). Interestingly, however, as part of his defence St Jerome stresses the special mystery of both the meaning and syntax of the Bible, for to be seen to be altering the sense was liable to bring a charge of heresy.

Although St Jerome's statement is usually taken to be the clearest expression of the 'literal' and 'free' poles in translation, the same type of concern seems to have occurred in other rich and ancient translation traditions such as in China and the Arab world. For instance, Hung and Pollard use similar terms when discussing the history of Chinese translation of Buddhist sutras from Sanskrit (see box 2.1). Although the vocabulary of this description (such as the gloss on '*yiyi*') shows the influence of modern western translation terminology, the general thrust of the argument is still similar to the Cicero/St Jerome poles described above. Aesthetic and stylistic considerations are again noted, and there appear to be the first steps towards a rudimentary differentiation of text types, with non-literary STs being treated differently from literary TTs.

The 'literal' and 'free' poles surface once again in the rich translation tradition of the Arab world, which created the great centre of translation in Baghdad. There was intense translation activity in the Abbasid period





**Box 2.1**

> Sutra translation provided a fertile ground for the practice and discussion of different translation approaches. Generally speaking, translations produced in the first phase [eastern Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms Period (c.148–265)] were word-for-word renderings adhering closely to source-language syntax. This was probably due not only to the lack of bilingual ability amongst the [translation] forum participants, but also to a belief that the sacred words of the enlightened should not be tampered with. In addition to contorted target-language syntax, transliteration was used very liberally, with the result that the translations were fairly incomprehensible to anyone without a theological grounding. The second phase [Jin Dynasty and the Northern and Southern Dynasties (c.265–589)] saw an obvious swing towards what many contemporary Chinese scholars call *yiyi* (free translation, for lack of a better term). Syntactic inversions were smoothed out according to target language usage, and the drafts were polished to give them a high literary quality. Kumarajiva was credited as a pioneer of this approach. In extreme cases, the polishing might have gone too far, and there are extant discussions of how this affected the original message. During the third phase [Sui Dynasty, Tang Dynasty and Northern Song Dynasty (c.589–1100)], the approach to translation was to a great extent dominated by Xuan Zang, who had an excellent command of both Sanskrit and Chinese, and who advocated that attention should be paid to the style of the original text: literary polishing was not to be applied to simple and plain source texts. He also set down rules governing the use of transliteration, and these were adopted by many of his successors.
>
> (Hung and Pollard 1997: 368)

(750–1250), centred on the translation into Arabic of Greek scientific and philosophical material, often with Syriac as an intermediary language (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 112). The Egyptian-born translation scholar Baker (1997a: 320–1), following Rosenthal (1965/94), describes the two translation methods that were adopted during that period:

> The first [method], associated with Yuḥanna Ibn al-Batrīq and Ibn Nāʿima al-Ḥimsi, was highly literal and consisted of translating each Greek word with an equivalent Arabic word and, where none existed, borrowing the Greek word into Arabic.
>
> (Baker 1997a: 320–1)

This word-for-word method proved to be unsuccessful and had to be revised using the second, sense-for-sense method:

> The second method, associated with Ibn Isḥāq and al-Jawahari, consisted of translating sense-for-sense, creating fluent target texts which conveyed the meaning of the original without distorting the target language.
>
> (Baker 1997a: 321)

Once again, the terminology of this description is strongly influenced by the classical western European discourse on translation; yet, this does not negate the visibility in the Arab culture of the two poles of translation which

were identified by Cicero and St Jerome. Of course, there are also other ways of considering the question. Salama-Carr (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 112–15) concentrates more on the way translation approaches 'helped establish a new system of thought that was to become the foundation of Arabic–Islamic culture – both on the conceptual and terminological levels' with, over the years, the increased use of Arab neologisms rather than transliteration. Arab translators also became very creative in supplying instructive and explanatory commentaries and notes.

## 2.2 Martin Luther

Within Western society, issues of free and literal translation were for over a thousand years after St Jerome bound up with the translation of the Bible and other religious and philosophical texts. The preoccupation of the Roman Catholic Church was for the 'correct' established meaning of the Bible to be transmitted. Any translation diverging from the accepted interpretation was likely to be deemed heretical and to be censured or banned. An even worse fate lay in store for some of the translators. The most famous example is that of the French humanist Etienne Dolet. He was burned at the stake having been condemned by the theological faculty of Sorbonne University in 1546, apparently for adding, in his translation of one of Plato's dialogues, the phrase *rien du tout* ('nothing at all') in a passage about what existed after death. The addition led to the charge of blasphemy, the assertion being that Dolet did not believe in immortality. For such a translation 'error' he was executed.

Non-literal or non-accepted translation came to be seen and used as a weapon against the Church. The most famous example of this is Martin Luther's crucially influential translation into East Middle German of the New Testament (1522) and later the Old Testament (1534). Luther played a pivotal role in the Reformation while, linguistically, his use of a regional yet socially broad dialect went a long way to reinforcing that form of the German language as standard. In response to accusations that he had altered the Holy Scriptures in his translations, Luther defended himself in his famous *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* ('Circular Letter on Translation') of 1530 (Luther 1530/1963).[6] One particularly famous criticism levelled at Luther echoes that of Dolet. It centres around Luther's translation of Paul's words in Romans 3:28:

> Arbitramus hominem iustificari ex fide absque operibus.
> Wir halten, daß der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werk, allein durch den Glauben.[7]
> [We hold, that man becomes rectified without the work of the law, only through belief.]

Luther had been heavily criticized by the Church for the addition of the word *allein* ('alone/only'), because there was no equivalent Latin word (e.g. *sola*) in the ST. The charge was that the German implies that the individual's belief is sufficient for a good life, making 'the work of the law' (i.e. religious law) redundant. Luther counters by saying that he was translating into 'pure, clear German',[8] where *allein* would be used for emphasis.

Luther follows St Jerome in rejecting a word-for-word translation strategy since it would be unable to convey the same meaning as the ST and would sometimes be incomprehensible. An example he gives is from Matthew 12:34:

> Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.

The English King James version translates this literally as:

> Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Luther translates this with a common German proverb:

> Wes der Herz voll ist, des geht der mund über.[9]

This idiom means 'to speak straight from the heart'.

While Luther's treatment of the free and literal debate does not show any real advance on what St Jerome had written eleven hundred years before, his infusion of the Bible with the language of ordinary people and his consideration of translation in terms focusing on the TL and the TT reader were crucial. Typical of this is his famous quote extolling the language of the people:

> You must ask the mother at home, the children in the street, the ordinary man in the market [sic] and look at their mouths, how they speak, and translate that way; *then* they'll understand and see that you're speaking to them in German.[10]

From that time onwards, the language of the ordinary German speaks clear and strong, thanks to Luther's translation.

## 2.3 Faithfulness, spirit and truth

Flora Amos, in her *Early Theories of Translation*, sees the history of the theory of translation as 'by no means a record of easily distinguishable, orderly progression' (Amos 1920/73: x). Theory was generally unconnected; it amounted to an albeit broad series of prefaces and comments by practitioners who often ignored, or were ignorant of, most of what had been written before. One explanation for this is the following:

> This lack of consecutiveness in criticism is probably partially accountable for the slowness with which translators attained the power to put into words, clearly and unmistakably, their aims and methods.
>
> (Amos, 1920/73: x)

For instance, Amos notes (p. xi) that early translators often differed considerably in the meaning they gave to terms such as 'faithfulness', 'accuracy' and even the word 'translation' itself.

Such concepts are investigated by Louis Kelly in *The True Interpreter* (1979). Kelly looks in detail at the history of translation theory, starting with the teachings of the writers of Antiquity and tracing the history of what he calls (p. 205) the 'inextricably tangled' terms 'fidelity', 'spirit' and 'truth'. The concept of **fidelity** (or at least the translator who was *fidus interpres*, i.e. the 'faithful interpreter') had initially been dismissed as literal word-for-word translation by Horace. Indeed, it was not until the end of the seventeenth century that fidelity really came to be identified with faithfulness to the meaning rather than the words of the author. Kelly (1979: 206) describes **spirit** as similarly having two meanings: the Latin word *spiritus* denotes creative energy or inspiration, proper to literature, but St Augustine used it to mean the Holy Spirit, and his contemporary St Jerome employed it in both senses. For St Augustine, spirit and **truth** (*veritas*) were intertwined, with truth having the sense of 'content'; for St Jerome, truth meant the authentic Hebrew text to which he returned in his Vulgate translation. Kelly considers that it was not until the twelfth century that truth was fully equated with 'content'.

It is easy to see how, in the translation of sacred texts, where 'the Word of God' is paramount, there has been such an interconnection of fidelity (to both the words and the perceived sense), spirit (the energy of the words and the Holy Spirit) and truth (the 'content'). However, by the seventeenth century, fidelity had come to be generally regarded as more than just fidelity to words, and spirit lost the religious sense it originally possessed and was thenceforth used solely in the sense of the creative energy of a text or language.

## 2.4 *Early attempts at systematic translation theory: Dryden, Dolet and Tytler*

For Amos (1920/73: 137), the England of the seventeenth century – with Denham, Cowley and Dryden – marked an important step forward in translation theory with 'deliberate, reasoned statements, unmistakable in their purpose and meaning'. At that time, translation into English was almost exclusively confined to verse renderings of Greek and Latin classics, some of which were extremely free. Cowley, for instance, in his preface to *Pindaric Odes* (1640), attacks poetry that is 'converted faithfully and word for word into French or Italian prose' (Cowley 1640, cited in Amos 1920/73: 149). His approach is also to counter the inevitable loss of beauty in translation by using 'our wit or invention' to create new beauty. In doing this, Cowley admits he has 'taken, left out and added what I please' to the Odes (Amos, p. 150). Cowley even proposes the term *imitation* for this very free method of translating (Amos, p. 151). The idea was not, as in the Roman period, that such a free method would enable the translator to surpass the original; rather that this was the method that permitted the 'spirit' of the ST to be best reproduced (Amos, p. 157).

Such a very free approach to translation produced a reaction, notably from another English poet and translator, John Dryden, whose description of





the translation process would have enormous impact on subsequent translation theory and practice. In the preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles* in 1680, Dryden (1680/1992: 17) reduces all translation to three categories:

1 '**metaphrase**': 'word by word and line by line' translation, which corresponds to literal translation;
2 '**paraphrase**': 'translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense'; this involves changing whole phrases and more or less corresponds to faithful or sense-for-sense translation;
3 '**imitation**': 'forsaking' both words and sense; this corresponds to Cowley's very free translation and is more or less adaptation.

Dryden criticizes translators such as Ben Johnson, who adopts metaphrase, as being a 'verbal copier' (Dryden 1680/1992: 18). Such 'servile, literal' translation is dismissed with a now famous simile: ''Tis much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs – a foolish task.' Similarly, Dryden rejects imitation, where the translator uses the ST 'as a pattern to write as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age and in our country' (p. 19). Imitation, in Dryden's view, allows the translator to become more visible, but does 'the greatest wrong . . . to the memory and reputation of the dead' (p. 20). Dryden thus prefers paraphrase, advising that metaphrase and imitation be avoided.

This triadic model proposed by Dryden was to exert considerable influence on later writings on translation. Yet it is also true that Dryden himself changes his stance, with the dedication in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1697) showing a shift to a point between paraphrase and literal translation:

> I thought fit to steer betwixt the two extremes of paraphrase and literal translation; to keep as near my author as I could, without losing all his graces, the most eminent of which are in the beauty of his words.
>
> (Dryden 1697/1992: 26).

The description of his own translation approach then bears resemblance to his definition of imitation above: 'I may presume to say . . . I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age' (Dryden 1697/1992: p. 26).

In general, therefore, Dryden and others writing on translation at the time are very prescriptive, setting out what has to be done in order for successful translation to take place. However, despite its importance for translation theory, Dryden's writing remains full of the language of his time: the 'genius' of the ST author, the 'force' and 'spirit' of the original, the need to 'perfectly comprehend' the sense of the original, and the 'art' of translation.

Other writers on translation also began to state their 'principles' in a

similarly prescriptive fashion. One of the first had been Etienne Dolet, whose sad fate was noted above, in his 1540 manuscript *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* ('The way of translating well from one language into another'; Dolet 1540/1997). Dolet set out five principles in order of importance as follows:[11]

1 The translator must perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author, although he [sic] should feel free to clarify obscurities.
2 The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL, so as not to lessen the majesty of the language.
3 The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings.
4 The translator should avoid Latinate and unusual forms.
5 The translator should assemble and liaise words eloquently to avoid clumsiness.

Here again, the concern is to reproduce the sense and to avoid word-for-word translation, but the stress on eloquent and natural TL form was rooted in a desire to reinforce the structure and independence of the new vernacular French language.

In English, perhaps the first systematic study of translation after Dryden is Alexander Fraser Tytler's 'Essay on the principles of translation' (1797). Rather than Dryden's author-oriented description ('write as the original author would have written had he known the target language'), Tytler defines a 'good translation' in TL-reader-oriented terms to be:

> That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.
>
> (Tytler 1797: 14)

And, where Dolet has five 'principles', Tytler (1797: 15) has three general 'laws' or 'rules':

1 The translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2 The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
3 The translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

Tytler's first law ties in with Dolet's first two principles in that it refers to the translator having a 'perfect knowledge' of the original (Tytler 1797: 17), being competent in the subject and giving 'a faithful transfusion of the sense and meaning' of the author. Tytler's second law, like Dolet's fifth principle, deals with the style of the author and involves the translator both identifying 'the true character' (p. 113) of this style and having the ability and 'correct taste' to recreate it in the TL. The third law (pp. 199–200) talks of having 'all the ease of composition' of the ST. Tytler regards this as the most difficult task and likens it, in a traditional metaphor, to an artist producing a copy of a painting. Thus, 'scrupulous imitation' should be avoided, since it loses the 'ease and spirit of the original'. Tytler's solution (p. 203) is for the translator to 'adopt the very soul of his author'.





Tytler himself recognizes that the first two laws represent the two widely different opinions about translation. They can be seen as the poles of faithfulness of content and faithfulness of form, or even reformulations of the sense-for-sense and word-for-word diad of Cicero and St Jerome. Importantly, however, just as Dolet had done with his principles, Tytler ranks his three laws in order of comparative importance. Such hierarchical categorizing gains in importance in more modern translation theory; for instance, the discussion of translation 'loss' and 'gain' is in some ways presaged by Tytler's suggestion that the rank order of the laws should be a means of determining decisions when a 'sacrifice' has to be made (p. 215). Thus, ease of composition would be sacrificed if necessary for manner, and a departure would be made from manner in the interests of sense.

## 2.5 Schleiermacher and the valorization of the foreign

While the seventeenth century had been about imitation and the eighteenth century about the translator's duty to recreate the spirit of the ST for the reader of the time, the Romanticism of the early nineteenth century discussed the issues of translatability or untranslatability. In 1813, the German theologian and translator Friedrich Schleiermacher wrote a highly influential treatise on translation, *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens* ('On the different methods of translating').[12] Schleiermacher is recognized as the founder of modern Protestant theology and of modern hermeneutics, a Romantic approach to interpretation based not on absolute truth but on the individual's inner feeling and understanding.

Distinct from other translation theory we have discussed so far in this chapter, Schleiermacher first distinguishes two different types of translator working on two different types of text; these are:

1 the '**Dolmetscher**', who translates commercial texts;
2 the '**Übersetzer**', who works on scholarly and artistic texts.

It is this second type that Schleiermacher sees as being on a higher creative plane, breathing new life into the language (1813/1992: 38). Although it may seem impossible to translate scholarly and artistic texts – since the ST meaning is couched in language that is very culture-bound and to which the TL can never fully correspond – the real question, according to Schleiermacher, is how to bring the ST writer and the TT reader together. He moves beyond the issues of word-for-word and sense-for-sense, literal, faithful and free translation, and considers there to be only two paths open for the 'true' translator:

> Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he [sic] leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader.[13]
>
> (Schleiermacher 1813/1992: 41–2)

Schleiermacher's preferred strategy is the first, moving the reader towards the writer. This entails not writing as the author would have done had he written in German but rather 'giving the reader the same impression that he as a German would receive reading the work in the original language' (1813/1992: 43).[14] To achieve this, the translator must adopt an 'alienating' (as opposed to 'naturalizing') method of translation, orienting himself or herself by the language and content of the ST. He or she must valorize the foreign and transfer that into the TL.

There are several consequences of this approach, including;

1 if the translator is to seek to communicate the same impression which he or she received from the ST, this impression will also depend on the level of education and understanding among the TT readership, and this is likely to differ from the translator's own understanding;
2 a special language of translation may be necessary, for example compensating in one place with an imaginative word where elsewhere the translator has to make do with a hackneyed expression that cannot convey the impression of the foreign (Schleiermacher 1813/1992: 45).

Schleiermacher's influence has been enormous. Indeed, Kittel and Polterman (1997: 424) claim that 'practically every modern translation theory – at least in the German-language area – responds, in one way or another, to Schleiermacher's hypotheses. There appear to have been no fundamentally new approaches.' Schleiermacher's consideration of different text types becomes more prominent in Reiss's text typology (see chapter 5 of this volume). The 'alienating' and 'naturalizing' opposites are taken up by Venuti as 'foreignization' and 'domestication' (see chapter 9). Additionally, the vision of a 'language of translation' is pursued by Walter Benjamin and the description of the hermeneutics of translation is apparent in George Steiner's 'hermeneutic motion' (see chapter 10).

## 2.6 *Translation theory of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain*

In Britain, the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century focused on the status of the ST and the form of the TL. Typical of this is the polemic between Francis Newman and Matthew Arnold over the translation of Homer (see Venuti 1995: 118–41; see also Robinson 1997b: 250–8). Newman emphasized the foreignness of the work by a deliberately archaic translation and yet saw himself as reaching out to a wide audience. This was violently opposed by Matthew Arnold in his lecture *On Translating Homer* (1861/1978), which advocated a transparent translation method. Importantly,





Arnold, whose argument won the day, advises his audience to put their faith in scholars, who, he suggests, are the only ones who are qualified to compare the effect of the TT to the ST. As Bassnett (1991: 69–70) points out, such an élitist attitude led both to the devaluation of translation (because it was felt that a TT could never reach the heights of an ST and it was always preferable to read the work in the original language) and to the marginalization of translation (translations were to be produced for only a select élite). This attitude may even be said to be prevalent in Britain up to the present day. For example:

- Pre-university and even university students of languages are often dissuaded from turning to translations for help.
- Very little popular literature is translated into English.
- Relatively few subtitled foreign films are screened in mainstream cinemas and on the major BBC1 and ITV television channels in the UK.

## 2.7 *Towards contemporary translation theory*

George Steiner, in his detailed, idiosyncratic classification of the early history of translation theory, lists a small number of fourteen writers who represent 'very nearly the sum total of those who have said anything fundamental or new about translation' (Steiner 1998: 283). This list includes St Jerome, Luther, Dryden and Schleiermacher and also takes us into the twentieth century with Ezra Pound and Walter Benjamin, amongst others. Steiner (p. 283) in fact describes as 'very small' the range of theoretical ideas covered in this period:

> We have seen how much of the theory of translation – if there is one as distinct from idealized recipes – pivots monotonously around undefined alternatives: 'letter' or 'spirit', 'word' or 'sense'. The dichotomy is assumed to have analysable meaning. This is the central epistemological weakness and sleight of hand.
>
> (Steiner 1998: 290)

Other modern theoreticians concur that the main problem with the writings on translation in this period was that the criteria for judgements were vague and subjective (Bassnett 1991: 134) and the judgements themselves were highly normative (Wilss 1996: 128). As a reaction against such vagueness and contradictions, translation theory in the second half of the twentieth century made various attempts to redefine the concepts 'literal' and 'free' in operational terms, to describe 'meaning' in scientific terms, and to put together systematic taxonomies of translation phenomena. These approaches form the core of the following chapters in this book.

### *Case studies*

The following case studies look briefly at two areas where the vocabulary of the 'literal vs. free' debate continues to be used in contemporary writing on

translation. Case study 1 examines two examples of criteria for assessing translations. Case study 2 looks at a modern translator's preface, from the 1981 and 1992 revised English translations of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.[15] In both cases the aim is to identify how far the ideas and vocabulary of early theory held sway in later writing on translation.

### Case study 1: Assessment criteria

The area of assessment criteria is one where a more expert writer (a marker of a translation examination or a reviser of a professional translation) addresses a less expert reader (usually a candidate for an examination or a junior professional translator). It is interesting to see how far the vocabulary used is the rather vague vocabulary of early translation theory.

The Institute of Linguists' (IoL) Diploma in Translation is the most widely known initial qualification for translators in the UK. In the IoL's *Notes for Candidates*,[16] the criteria for assessing the translations are given:

1 accuracy: the correct transfer of information and evidence of complete comprehension;
2 the appropriate choice of vocabulary, idiom, terminology and register;
3 cohesion, coherence and organization;
4 accuracy in technical aspects of punctuation, etc.[17]

The question of 'accuracy' appears twice (criteria 1 and 4). 'Accuracy' is in some ways the modern linguistic equivalent of 'faithfulness', 'spirit' and 'truth'; in the IoL text, there is an attempt at closer definition of accuracy, comprising 'correct transfer of information' and 'complete comprehension'. As we discuss in chapter 3, these terms are influenced by terminology suggested by Nida in the 1960s. Criterion 2's 'appropriate choice of vocabulary, etc.' suggests a more TL approach, while criterion 3 (cohesion and coherence) leads us into the area of discourse analysis (see chapter 6).

Thus, these criteria make an attempt at formalizing clear rules for translation. However, examiners' reports on the candidates' performances, although containing detailed examples of errors and of good translations, tend to be sprinkled with the vaguer and controversial vocabulary of early translation theory. A typical IoL examiners' report (French into English, paper 1, November 1997) explains many student errors in considerable detail, but still stresses the criterion of TL fluency. Thus, 'awkwardness' is a criticism levelled at four translations, and candidates are praised for altering sentence structure 'to give a more natural result in English'. Perhaps the most interesting point is the use of the term 'literal translation'. 'Literal' is used four times – and always as a criticism – concerning, for example, literal translations of false friends. Interestingly enough, however, 'literal' is used as a relative term. For example, '*too* literal a style of translating' (my emphasis) produced TT expressions such as '*transmitting* the budget to the Chamber' (rather than '*delivering* the budget'), and a '*totally* literal translation' (my emphasis) of *déjeuner-débat* 'produced very unnatural English'; presumably, the 'totally literal' translation was something like 'lunch-debate' rather than 'lunchtime talk'. However, the qualification of the adjective 'literal' by the adverbs 'too' and 'totally' suggests that 'literal' alone is not now being viewed as the extreme. Rather, as was suggested in section 2.1 above, 'literal' is being used to mean a close lexical translation; only when this strategy is taken to an extreme (when it is 'too' or 'totally' literal) is the 'naturalness' of the TL infringed.





Similar criteria are repeated in Unesco's *Guidelines for Translators*.[18] 'Accuracy' is again 'the very first requirement'. The description of the aim of translation is that, after reaching an understanding of what the ST writer 'was trying to say', the translator should put this meaning into (in this case) English 'which will, so far as possible, produce the same impression on the English-language reader as the original would have done on the appropriate foreign-language reader'. This bears quite close resemblance to the wording of Schleiermacher's recipe for moving the reader towards the author. Yet the method Unesco suggests as appropriate for achieving this is not to follow an 'alienating' strategy but to find an intermediate way between something that 'sounds' like a translation and something which is so 'aggressively characteristic' of the translator's idiolect that it strikes the reader as 'unusual'.

There are several additional points of particular interest concerning the Unesco criteria:

- First, the balance between the two poles ('sounding like a translation' and being 'aggressively characteristic') is described using an image ('a perpetual feat of tight-rope walking') which is very close to Dryden's famous simile of the clumsy literal translator as 'dancing on ropes with fettered legs'.
- Second, the Unesco document makes allowance for the TT readers, who are sometimes non-native speakers of the TL.
- Third, the suggested solution varies according to text type: the style of articles translated for periodicals should be 'readable', while politically sensitive speeches require a 'very close translation' to avoid being misinterpreted.

The first of these points indicates the extent to which old metaphors of translation persist even in contemporary writings. The second point touches on a more reader-oriented approach, although the document rejects the existence of a 'special' language of translation. The third point shows an awareness that different approaches may be valid for different texts, a point that Schleiermacher noted in his division of categories into business and philosophical texts but which, as we discuss in chapter 5, has far more to do with the text-type approach of Reiss.

### Case study 2 the translator's preface

Translators' prefaces are a source of extensive information on the translation approach adopted in earlier centuries. However, they are far more of a rarity in current publications and are now sometimes restricted to a justification for producing a new translation of a classic work. This is the case with the revised English language translation of Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.[19] Originally translated from French into English by the celebrated C. K. Scott Moncrieff in the 1920s, the English was revised in 1981 by Terence Kilmartin and in 1992 by D. J. Enright.

In the introduction of the 1981 translation (p. x), the reasons given by Kilmartin for the revision were that there had been later publications of revised and corrected editions of the French original, and that there was a need to correct 'mistakes and misinterpretations' in the translation. The 1981 translation also contained a four page 'Note on the translation' by Kilmartin. One of the most interesting points about Kilmartin's comments is the vocabulary he uses to describe the revisions he has carried out:

> I have refrained from officious tinkering [with the translation] for its own sake, but a translator's loyalty is to the original author, and in trying to be faithful to Proust's meaning and tone of voice I have been obliged, here and there, to make extensive alterations.
>
> (p. ix)

The concept of 'loyalty' to the author and being 'faithful' to the meaning could almost have come straight from the writings of the seventeenth century. The division between 'meaning' and 'tone of voice' could also be taken to originate in the debate on form vs. content. The use of general terms such as 'tone' in the commentary also echoes the imprecision of earlier writing.

The perceived 'literal' translation of the ST is criticized. Kilmartin (p. x), referring to the translation of the 1920s, describes Scott Moncrieff's 'tendency to translate French idioms and turns of phrase literally', which makes them 'sound weirder', and his 'sticking too closely' to the original syntax especially in long sentences packed with subordinate clauses which seem 'unEnglish' in the TT: 'a whiff of Gallicism clings to some of the longer periods, obscuring the sense and falsifying the tone', claims Kilmartin (p. x). The negative connotation of 'whiff of Gallicism' seems quite surprising in this context. Kilmartin is criticizing the apparent foreignness of the structure of the translation of one of the great French writers and has a preference for a totally 'naturalizing' (to use Schleiermacher's term) English style in the translation.

### Discussion of case studies

These two brief case studies indicate that the vocabulary of early translation theory persists widely to the present day. 'Literal', 'free', 'loyalty', 'faithfulness', 'accuracy', 'meaning', 'style' and 'tone' are words that reappear again and again, even in areas (such as assessment criteria) which draw on a more systematic theoretical background. The tendency in most of the comments noted above is for a privileging of a 'natural' TT, one which reads as if it were originally written in the TL. In this case, one can say that 'literal' translation has lost out, and that the élitist Victorian-style translations proposed by Matthew Arnold are no longer acceptable. The 'alienating' strategy promoted by Schleiermacher has not been followed. What remains is the 'natural', almost 'everyday' speech style proposed by Luther. Yet the premodifications of the term 'literal' in the IoL texts indicate the shift in use of this term over the centuries. 'Literal' now means 'sticking very closely to the original'. Translators who go further than this leave themselves open to criticism. The 'imaginative' and 'idiomatic' translation is still preferred. However, the texts examined in the case studies were written mainly for the general reader or novice translator. As we shall see in the next chapter, the direction of translation theory in the second half of the twentieth century was generally towards a systematization of different elements of the translation process.





## Summary

Much of translation theory from Cicero to the twentieth century centred on the recurring and sterile debate as to whether translations should be literal (word-for-word) or free (sense-for-sense), a diad that is famously discussed by St Jerome in his translation of the Bible into Latin. Controversy over the translation of the Bible and other religious texts was central to translation theory for over a thousand years. Early theorists tended to be translators who presented a justification for their approach in a preface to the translation, often paying little attention to (or not having access to) what others before them had said. Dryden's proposed triad of the late seventeenth century marked the beginning of a more systematic and precise definition of translation, while Schleiermacher's respect for the foreign text was to have considerable influence over scholars in modern times.

## Further reading

There are a considerable number of collections and histories of translation. In addition to those works included in the list of key texts at the beginning of this chapter, the following are of special interest: Amos (1920/73), Delisle and Woodsworth (1995), Kelly (1979), G. Steiner (1975/98), T. Steiner (1975), and the source writings in the collections by Robinson (1997b), Schulte and Biguenet (1992), Lefevere (1992b) and Störig (1963). Readers are recommended to follow their specific interests regarding country, period, cultures and languages. Delisle and Woodsworth (1995) and Baker (ed.) (1997a) are of particular use in giving the background to translation in a wider range of

cultures. Kelly (1979) is especially strong on the Latin tradition. Pym (1998) may also be useful as a presentation of investigative methods in translation history.

## Discussion and research points

1 Find recent reviews of translations in the press in your own languages. What kinds of comments are made about the translation itself? How far is the vocabulary used similar to that described in this chapter?
2 Modern translation theory tends to criticize the simplicity of the 'literal vs. free' debate. Why, then, do you think that the vocabulary of that earlier period often continues to be used in reviews of translation, in comments by teachers and examiners, and in writings by literary translators themselves?
3 Investigate what writing was produced on translation in your own languages and cultures before the twentieth century. How closely does it resemble the writings discussed in this chapter? Are there significant differences in early translation theory written in different languages?
4 The Italian axiom *traduttore, traditore* ('the translator is a traitor') has become a cliché. What elements discussed in this chapter may help to explain its origin?
5 How useful do you consider Dolet's principles and Tytler's laws to be for guiding a translator?
6 'I have endeavoured to make Virgil speak such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age', wrote Dryden in 1697 in his preface to his translation of the *Aeneid*. How do you imagine he would have set about doing this? What issues does it raise for the literary translator?
7 Do translators' prefaces frequently appear in translations in your own country? Why do you think this is? If they do, what function do they serve, and what kind of language do they use to describe the translation?

# 3 Equivalence and equivalent effect

### Key concepts

- The problem of equivalence in meaning, discussed by Jakobson (1959) and central to translation studies for two decades.
- Nida's adaptation of transformational grammar model, and 'scientific' methods to analyze meaning in his work on Bible translating.
- Nida's concepts of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence and the principle of equivalent effect: focus on the receptor.
- Newmark's semantic translation and communicative translation.
- Development of *Übersetzungswissenschaft* ('science of translating') in the Germanies of the 1970s and 1980s.
- Theoretical criticisms of equivalence and the *tertium comparationis*.

## Key texts

**Bassnett, S.** (1980, revised edition 1991) *Translation Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, chapter 1.
**Jakobson, R.** (1959/2000) 'On linguistic aspects of translation', in L. Venuti (ed.) (2000) pp. 113–18.
**Koller, W.** (1979a) *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*, Heidelberg-Wiesbaden: Quelle und Meyer.
**Koller, W.** (1979b/89) 'Equivalence in translation theory', translated by A. Chesterman, in A. Chesterman (ed.) (1989), pp. 99–104.
**Newmark, P.** (1981) *Approaches to Translation*, Oxford and New York: Pergamon.
**Newmark, P.** (1988) *A Textbook of Translation*, New York and London: Prentice-Hall.
**Nida, E.** (1964a) *Toward a Science of Translating*, Leiden: E. J. Brill.
**Nida, E.** (1964b/2000) 'Principles of Correspondence', in L. Venuti (ed.), pp. 126–40.
**Nida, E.** and **C. Taber** (1969) *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden: E. J. Brill.

### *3.0 Introduction*

After the centuries of circular debates around literal and free translation (see chapter 2), theoreticians in the 1950s and 1960s began to attempt more systematic analyzes of translation. The new debate revolved around certain key linguistic issues. The most prominent of these issues were those of