

# On Retrieving the Baby<sup>1</sup>

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## RÉSUMÉ

Dans sa critique récente des théories contemporaines de traduction (TT), Singh (2005) argumente que (1) étant donné l'état actuel de la situation, TT n'est pas une théorie de traduction mais plutôt une exploration qui semble simplement supposer que les différentes utilisations qu'elles soient littérales et métaphoriques du mot 'traduction' et des techniques employées en traduction, délimite un domaine intéressant pour lequel on peut construire une théorie et (2) l'une des façons dans lesquelles la traduction et TT devraient être conceptualisées est de revisiter et renouveler des anciennes manières de les voir, quoique non sans différence. Ce travail donnera en effet un aperçu d'un itinéraire possible pour un tel retour. Autrement dit, le présent travail vise à résumer la critique en question et à présenter une esquisse du contenu qu'on considère crucial pour un programme de traduction qui pourrait constituer les premières étapes proactives à fin de récupérer le bébé TT contemporain qui semble avoir été jeté avec son eau de bain d'équivalence structuraliste. Ces cours ont été mis à l'épreuve et le sont actuellement au programme de troisième cycle de traduction à l'Université de Peradeniya au Sri Lanka.

## ABSTRACT

In his recent critique of contemporary Translation Theory (TT), Singh (2005) argues that (1) as things stand, contemporary TT is not really a theory of translation but an exploration that seems to simply assume that the various uses, literal and metaphorical, of the word 'translation' and of the techniques employed in what languages normally refer to as translation delimit an interesting domain of which one can construct a theory and (2) one of the new ways in which translation and TT need to be conceptualized is to revisit and renew the old ways in which they used to be seen, albeit with a difference. This paper will, in effect, sketch out a possible itinerary for such a revisit. The purpose of this paper is, in other words, to summarize that critique and to sketch out the content of what we view as crucial courses for a programme in translation that could constitute the first proactive steps for recovering the baby contemporary TT seems to have thrown out with the bath water of structuralist 'equivalence'. These courses have been and are being tried at the newly instituted graduate programme in translation at the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka.

## MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

translation, translation theory, cultural turn, linguistics

## 0. Introduction

Arguments on behalf of Translation Studies (TS) and Translation Theory (TT) provide a new window on the constant tension between the centrifugal and centripetal forces within the Academy. The consensus view of the matter would seem to be that a discipline is just a tentative carving out of a hopefully permanent space from what is generally understood to be philosophy, set up to explore a set of putatively well-defined questions those proposing such a carving out hope to be able to provide answers to from well within the theory of what they say should be construed as a novel

discipline. The crucial requirement in this view would seem to be that fields of inquiry constitute themselves on the basis of clearly defined metatheoretical principles and allowing the achievement of the highest level of adequacy, explanatory adequacy. Even if the traditional autonomy of the sort our remarks above attempt to spell out turns out to be indefensible, the problem with TS, TT in particular, remains because most, if not all, of the questions it now considers as its theoretical questions seem to lie entirely outside of what translators do and what translation is. It ends up, in a somewhat unusual twist to Quine's famous dichotomy, peripheralizing its centre and seeing its periphery as its centre. It cannot really be otherwise, espousal of texts rather than languages notwithstanding. The problem, in other words, seems to be that whereas translation has to do with texts and the languages which these texts have to follow the norms of, TT has increasingly taken on questions that deal only with the institutional matrices the product of translation has its genesis in and finds its way into. It is one thing to talk about uses and functions of translation but quite another to provide a principled and theoretical account of translation. Such accounts, we shall argue, cannot be provided without the revisit Singh's (2005) critique of contemporary TT invites us to undertake.

This paper is organized as follows: section 1 presents a revised and abridged version of Singh (2005), section 2 a detailed descriptions of courses we deem necessary for a meaningful translation programme at the (post-) graduate level, and section 3 some general conclusions.

## **1. Contemporary Translation Theory: A Critique<sup>2</sup>**

Singh (2005) argues that TS is perhaps the only field in the human and social sciences that seems NOT to focus on theoretical questions of its own. Whereas the now relatively old contemporary linguistic theory, at least in its North-American *avatar*, established itself on the grounds of a maximalist insistence on its autonomy from other cognitive domains, Translation Theory (TT) seems to want to establish itself on grounds that can be said to be maximally non-autonomist, as the very title of Sarukkai (2002), for example, suggests.

Perhaps the point can be illustrated with a clearer case. Most Anglo-American universities have a department of Teaching English as a Second Language. As was argued in Singh (1999), it is understandably difficult or even impossible to see TESOL as an academic field rather than as a loose collection of academics inquiring about different sorts of things, though under one administrative umbrella provided for clearly politico-economic reasons. It is possible to construe language acquisition or second language learning as a field, but it is, Singh argued, impossible to construe TESOL or the learning or teaching of Arabic, French, German, or Swahili as a second language as a field of inquiry. The reason is very simple: there are no questions in these putative fields that can be answered without substantial appeals to already established domains of inquiry. Notice that we are not arguing against setting up departments of TESOL in universities, only against seeing TESOL as a field of inquiry. Such ventures create intermediate exploratory spaces that thrive on their intermediacy, ruling out depth almost by definition.

It is, in other words, still an empirical question about the legitimacy of disciplines, and it is still not clear to us why TESOL, rather than Language Teaching, can be the name of a discipline or why TS as it seems to be constituted at present is a legitimate discipline. The very charitable thought that particular practitioners of it may turn out to be more or less pointed, more or less effective exemplars of the ideal type, assuming, of course, that a worthwhile ideal type can be extracted from the way TS seems presently constituted, seems to us to lack rigour. This follows straightforwardly from the consensus view of the matter, according to which a discipline is just a tentative carving out of a hopefully permanent space from what is generally understood to be philosophy, set up to explore a set of putatively well-defined questions those proposing such a carving out hope to be able to provide answers to from well within the theory of what they say should be construed as a novel discipline. The crucial requirement in this traditional view would seem to be that fields of inquiry constitute themselves on the basis of clearly defined metatheoretical principles which put their studies on a principled basis, allowing the achievement of the highest level of adequacy, explanatory adequacy. Although 'once a discipline, always a discipline' seems to be the rule in the Academy, it is in principle possible to define a discipline out of existence (cf. the fate of philology, particularly in North-America, where Area Studies have met a similar fate).

Even if the traditional autonomy of the sort our remarks above attempt to spell out turns out to be indefensible, the problem with TS, TT in particular, remains, because most, if not all, of the questions it now considers as its theoretical questions seem to lie entirely outside of what translators do and what translation is. It is interesting to note that, as Baker's (1992, reprinted 2001) excellent book makes clear, despite the cultural turn, most good books on the practice of translation have, apparently without a license from TT, appropriated and enlarged Contrastive Linguistics in a big way. Even the talk about "localization" (in the sense of "cross-cultural text adaptation" (cf. Pym 2004) and NOT in the restricted sense of software adaptation) is only a paraphrase of what linguists for a long time have referred to as "communicative competence"<sup>3</sup>. They rely, as they must, very heavily indeed on linguistics, something TT claims to have dissociated itself from. It cannot really be otherwise, espousal of texts rather than languages notwithstanding. The problem, in other words, seems to be that whereas translation has to do with texts and the languages which these texts have to follow the norms of, TT has increasingly taken on questions that deal only with the institutional matrices the product of translation has its genesis in and finds its way into. It is one thing to quarrel with Catford and Nida – one should, and we would too – but quite another to ignore the heart of the matter. Although some theorizing is still done about it, the focus has clearly shifted to applying theories from literary and cultural criticism to the socio-political origins of texts and the aims and fate of their real and possible translations, and, of course, to presenting those applications as TT, as an autonomous theory to boot.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that Venuti (2003) does not contain any contributions dealing with what we are calling the heart of the matter. Minimally, in its fascination with post-modernism, TS seems to ignore the questions that could potentially constitute a site for its possible autonomy. The unlikelihood that TT can establish itself as the ultimate, over-arching unifying theory does not help matters either.

TT seems to have thrown its very own baby with the bath-water. In linguistics, the blowing up of the traditional bridges with other aspects of the study of language – literature, anthropology, aesthetics, for example – was undertaken to facilitate the building of new bridges, bridges that connect the study of language with the study of psychology, biology, and neurobiology. We feel that it was indeed necessary to build these new bridges but that it wasn't necessary to destroy the old ones. The same is true, in our view, of TT. Perhaps matters are worse, for the new ones in TS are a bit shakier than their counterparts in linguistics, or so it seems. A theory only of contexts is no more a theory of translation than a theory only of texts is a theory of language.

What has happened, to continue with the metaphor of bridges, is simply that the new ones have been built IN PLACE OF the old ones. It is time in our view to rebuild the ones that have in the process been destroyed. And if we do undertake such a rebuilding of the old bridges that were there, then we will find that the study of translation and the study of language are so intimately related that they must in fact go together. Understandably frustrated with the break that occurred in the study of language half a century ago, TT dissociated itself, slowly, but very systematically, from its own heart, the study of language. TS, and TT in particular, seems to have decided to plug themselves into a theoretical discourse of a slightly larger and radically different kind. Perhaps it is time to take a RE-TURN to the study of language and renew the connection between translation studies and the study of language for the benefit of both. We take the position that TT dissociates itself from linguistics at its own peril.

Let us illustrate the problem with an example from sociolinguistics, a subfield we have some interest in. We would argue that linguists should not take up many of the matters they do under this heading unless they learn to make a distinction between politico-economic institutions that support speakers of this or that language and what actually happens to these languages when the support in question is augmented or withdrawn. Unless they learn to draw upon what is known about such matters from other fields in which they have been explored, their explorations are bound to remain somewhat superficial. Whereas a sociolinguist can certainly study with a sense of authority the changes Modern Hindi has gone through as a result of contact with Persian and English, she makes a mistake when she abridges the political and economic interventions made by a declining Moghul Empire or an ascending British Empire into a somewhat superficial sociolinguistic chapter on the replacement of one official language with another.

Similar questions arise in the context of TT, which seems to us to be replete with fairly analogous examples. Consider, for example, Behl's (2002) commentary on and analysis of

Emperor Akabar's brilliant management strategy of setting up a Translation Office to attempt to bridge the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims of the India he is known to have unified in ways not seen on that sub-continent since Ashoka. Wonderful indeed, and certainly something we can all benefit from in an increasingly multi-ethnic world, but we must, we are afraid, ask again: "Is this the sort of thing TT should be about?"

Let us take a couple more examples: (1) the politics of what gets translated from where and (2) the functions, nourishing or otherwise, of translation. A lot has been written about both in TS, and is, apparently, seen as a contribution to TT. As for the former, we are afraid we ARE entitled to ask the question if the fact that most translators from, let us say, Xanadu, translate FROM English is primarily a fact about translation or about political-economy (of cultural products) under present conditions. We would argue that it actually belongs to the politics and economics of cultural production in the post-capitalist stage we are at. If we treat this as a question of TT, we will have to allow the questions that arise from the patenting of *margum margosa* by American pharmaceuticals as questions of Theoretical Biology! We have no quarrel with the study of such phenomena – they constitute very valuable indices of what late capitalism is up to – but we regret we cannot place the answers in the baskets where some would like them placed. The problem is not that these questions are explored in what are seen as contributions to TT, but that these explorations generally do NOT draw upon what is available in other fields, thus missing the possibility of providing some depth, and that when that depth is added, these explorations may well appear to have been conducted in an artificially created autonomist space, ironic indeed. As for the latter, it should be obvious that it is one thing to talk about uses and functions of translation but quite another to provide a principled and theoretical account of what is charmingly characterized as "looser forms of translation". We wonder what sense it makes to set up a theory of physics that deals with the functions and uses of physics, wonderful as they are. Ordinary English would characterize such an activity as "journalism".

Perhaps TS advocates are using THEIR maximalist strategies as bargaining chips in a turf-war, and would settle for much less, something they might legitimately call their own. It is interesting to note that Holmes, the chief cartographer of TS in the Anglo-American world, seems to forget that there is not only the sociology of knowledge but also sociology. In the meanwhile, we must evaluate the claims and counter-claims as best as we can. But perhaps scholars in TS can help us by applying the techniques of deconstruction they are happy to use to the very enterprise they are actively involved in constructing! The lack of articles on the politics of the establishment of TS by the followers of Derrida and other deconstructionists and post-modernists provides some empirical evidence for the admittedly uncharitable thought that anticipatory or preemptive deconstruction, or self-reflection as some traditions call it, is, apparently not a part of TS.<sup>5</sup>

Even a moment's self-reflection should make it clear that even within an autonomist context, there are questions that would seem to be far more central than the ones that get routinely taken up. In doing what it does, TT ignores questions that it can examine with some sense of non-borrowed authority. Why do perfect bilinguals find it very difficult to translate from one of their languages to the other, for example? Or, why convergence seems, as was first suggested for the Indian context by the eminent Indian linguist Bh. Krishnamurti, to lead to better interlingual translatability? Or, to stick to the ground more familiar in contemporary TT, what is it that makes translation from first (target) to second (source) language tick in places like India (cf. Mukherjee 2001)?

The result of the focus on questions TT scholars seem interested in but are perhaps not particularly well-equipped to handle and the side-lining of questions they could and should in our view concentrate on creates, we are afraid, a situation that can only be described as sad. Imagine a school of medicine in which the theoreticians teach courses on and write about the delivery of medicine in various parts of the world and project their activity as the theory of medicine and the non-theoreticians simply learn how to dispense drugs. We are afraid that is the sort of situation we have. We have nothing against finding the colour of science and the gender of theory, but we are not sure if either activity should be pursued in a thousand different places, each called "The Theory of...". The fact that during the imperial period the periphery was asked to collect data against which the scientists in the center could test their theories is an important fact, but it is a fact ABOUT science and not OF science, and most scholars treat it in what is called history of science. We are

NOT defending science, which is mostly technology promoted as science, only the distinction ABOUT vs. OF.

Far more certain than we are of the status of 'Women's Studies' and 'Cultural Studies', which seem to some to point "to the breakdown of an older sense of 'discipline'", some may wonder what we would do with the former, for example, and if we are not relying too heavily on sciences. In as much as the study of Woman takes us into encounters with all kinds of things which are well studied in a whole range of fields, such a putative field faces some of the same risks. But if the metatheoretical bases of the study be clearly, coherently and consistently articulated in a manner that help them define a self-contained field, it could meet the requirements. Once that is done, it could, actually should, draw on what has been "discovered" in some other field, and then proceed to fit it into the field in question. If that is not done, Women's Studies is also likely to remain just an ad hoc construction with nothing to stand on, almost like the Area Studies of the 60's, now dismantled in favour of new political needs of the "new" world order. Given the recent establishment of departments of Home Security in some U.S. universities, it is important to remember that we are talking about disciplines and NOT departments. The existence of the latter merely creates, to coin a phrase, the counter-ideal illusion of a discipline.

Engineering is an applied field. And so is TS. Once the allegedly autonomous questions and answers of TT are assigned their proper place, its true nature reveals itself clearly: it is applied linguistics par excellence. Lest we should be accused of invoking some mysterious definition of applied linguistics, let us make it clear that we use the term in the straightforward sense of a study of language mediated by practical concerns. We should also underline the fact that we do NOT use it in the sense in which advocates of this or that kind of linguistics use it. For them, it is the application of their favorite kind of linguistics to this or that practical concern, most commonly language teaching.

We are NOT arguing that teachers of translation should become linguists, but we ARE arguing that the teachers of translation and TS scholars who argue against linguistics seem quite unfamiliar with what they are talking about. And we are certainly NOT defending linguistics as she is, any more than Bohm or Penrose is defending physics as she is. What we find vulgar is NOT thoughtful vulgarizations like Baker but the thoughtless theoretical postures of vulgarizers like Delisle. Not too many facts OF translation can be described or presented without using some meta-language furnished by some linguistics. Needless to add that despite contemporary TT's dissatisfaction with equivalence and the contemporary translation-student's apathy to and ignorance of linguistics, it is equivalence (or lack thereof) and linguistics all the way down (or up)!

Not to accept the connection we have just outlined is to endorse the total disconnect between the theory, practice, and teaching of translation that actually seems to exist<sup>6</sup>. The TS complaint that contemporary linguistics is too abstract strikes us as too uninformed. Even if the linguistics that IS abstract were the only kind of linguistics there was, the complaint wouldn't make any more sense than the complaint that physics is too abstract. In using the part of physics that one needs to use, one uses it without launching an attack on the abstractness of physics or of mathematics, its meta-language.

Contemporary TT seems to us not to be a theory of translation but, as Singh,(2005) puts it, to be an exploration that seems to assume that the various uses – literal and metaphorical – of the word 'translation', and of the techniques employed in what ordinary English normally refers to as translation, delimit an interesting domain of which one can construct a theory. Although there is no need to deny the joy such an exploration may bring or to reject the random insights it may be studded with, there IS reason to contest the interpretation of such an amorphous exploration as a domain of inquiry which one can construct a theory of. And it should be obvious that deconstruction and unanchored construction do not amount to unification. It is perhaps a final irony that a maximalist enterprise devoted to non-autonomy ends up constructing something that seems maximally non-autonomist! In pleading that one of the new ways in which translation and TT need to be conceptualized is to revisit and renew the old ways in which they used to be seen, we also hope to rebuild the bridges that should have been repaired and NOT destroyed.

## **2. The Courses**

Keeping the considerations sketched out above in mind, we would now like to turn our attention to the sort of courses a meaningful (post-) graduate programme in translation that can increase the yield of real potatoes must offer. The nature and structure of these courses, it should be obvious, draw heavily on the critique offered above— they are solidly grounded in linguistics and the study of language, the back-bone, as we have argued, of translation (and NOT in some general, cultural theory that ignores the distinction between translation and the institutions that may support or hinder it). We believe these courses must constitute the core of a meaningful programme in translation that can increase the yield of real potatoes without throwing the baby out with the bath water, as the cultural turn in TS has been encouraging us to do. These courses in fact make a deliberate effort to bring the baby back from the wilderness in which the cultural turn in TT has placed it.

We would, however, like to make it clear that these descriptions are primarily meant for teachers. Given the unorthodox nature of the conceptualization we were and are working with, it was and is necessary to set the descriptions down in ways that help the teachers grow into its rationale and its dynamics and internalize them. Our Peradeniya experience shows that it was indeed very useful to have provided these to the teachers involved in the programme. We are happy to add that although the programme in question focusses on the heart of the matter, it drew and continues to draw its teachers from the Peradeniya departments of English, Comparative Literature, Sinhala, and Tamil. Their willingness to restrain what to many would seem to be their first impulses in favour of the possibility of a truly responsible TS programme is something of an argument for such a programme. We should also add (1) that each course description below is followed by a reading-list for the teaching staff, who, we assume, will assign to students readings selected from among and within the items listed as they consider appropriate and (2) that the reading-lists reflect the linguistic context of Sri Lanka –slightly different but very comparable reading-lists are easy to prepare for other contexts.

### **TR1 Translation Theory**

The course will attempt to develop an overarching framework of general theoretical perspectives and principles through which students may arrive at an understanding of the nature of translation, of the issues that define its study as a discipline, and of the key questions and problems its practical pursuit as an activity raises. The last-mentioned of these will involve the identification and exploration of the sources of the questions and problems and a characterisation of the choices they might define for students and practitioners of translation and the kinds of responses they might point to. The framework will provide a basis for the formulation and organisation of the entire programme, since it will be by reference to it that the other courses in the programme will have their rationale, content and aims determined.

The course will pursue its ends through a direct engagement with the notion of "equivalence" that is so centrally assumed in translation, drawing for the purpose on a comparative, and also non-comparative, consideration of some of the different approaches to translation that have variously been pursued. Attention will be drawn to and explanations sought for both the problematic asymmetries and non-equivalences across the languages, cultures and cognitive modes involved which complicate or even frustrate the task of translation, as well as the linguistic, cultural and cognitive resources (including commonalities and shared or universal features) which promote a sense of the possibility of translation and render it the feasible activity that it is recognised to be.

A range of factors, both specifically linguistic and non-linguistic, which appear to be salient to an understanding of such matters will be introduced in general terms, both contrastively and with an eye on shared and/or universal features, and placed relative to each other. (Many of these will be more fully elaborated on in the other courses in the programme.) In addition, the issue of criteria

and norms for the evaluation of translations, defined partly by the operation of such factors, will be addressed.

The non-linguistic factors explored will be those that may be seen as institutionally framing the activity of translation. They will include such issues as: the nature of the (source and target) texts entailed, conceived of as finished products as well as in terms of the processes that have entered into them; the relations between the texts and their larger social, historical, cultural, political and such-like contexts, including the immediate situations of their existence and use; the intended audiences and their concerns; the functions and intended effects of the texts; the reasons, perhaps even the necessity, for undertaking the translation of specific texts; the types into which, on the basis of such matters, texts may be classified, and the kinds of demands each type makes; and so on. Among the specific questions such factors would be seen as raising for practitioners would be those relating to where the focus of the translation should fall - the source text and the original author's concerns and meanings, or the target text and its intended audience's or even the translator's own concerns and meanings. Related questions would involve such matters as the kind of translation to be aimed at - item-by-item, literal, idiomatic, paraphrasal, adaptational, free; notions of faithfulness, authenticity, accuracy, economy, readability and naturalness; the degree to which the translator intervenes in the texts and their contexts, and with what motivations and effects; and so on.

The other set of factors mentioned will involve the nature, features and workings of the language systems or codes which are brought into contact with each other by translation. These will be seen as defining the essential site at which the actual activity of producing "equivalent" texts occurs, the place wherein it is grounded and from where, ultimately, the translator must deliver. Students will be led to an understanding of the crucial significance for translation of such matters as: phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and semantic patternings and organisations of the codes involved; formal and other features (for instance, reference and anaphora, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and connectivity, and so on) salient to coherence and cohesion in texts; the arrangement and organisation of information within and among the clausal units of texts; issues of style and register as manifested in texts; and so on.

The former, institutional set of factors will be seen to feed into the linguistic realm defined by this second set of factors, through their crucial role in determining the ways in which the notion of equivalence may be differently understood in various circumstances. Each such understanding, deriving from choices and decisions made in the institutional realm, will be seen to direct the translator to the central challenge/problem involved in the creation of the equivalent text, namely that of probing the linguistic resources available, identifying the code-based problems and possibilities (including the possibility of liberating the code at hand from its constraints or extending it) involved, and making the code-based choices and decisions that would enable the resulting text to achieve the goal associated with that understanding.

Actual translation materials, both specific small-scale examples and larger texts, will be plentifully used in introducing, illustrating and exploring the various matters mentioned.

## **Readings**

- BAKER, M. (1992): *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, London, Routledge.
- DASGUPTA, P. ( ): "Outgrowing Quine: Towards Substantivism in the Theory of Translation", *International Journal of Translation* 1-2, p. 13-41.
- NAIR, R.B. (ed.) (2002): *Translation, Text and Theory*, New Delhi, Sage.
- NEWMARK, P. (1988): *A Textbook of Translation*, New York, Prentice Hall.
- SINGH, R. (2005): "Unsafe at any Speed? Some Unfinished Reflections on the 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies", In St.Pierre, P. and P.C.Karr (eds.), *In Translation*, New Delhi, Pencraft International, p. 57-70.
- VENUTI, L. (2000): *The Translation Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge.

## **TR2 The Practice of Translation: Principles and Techniques**

This course will be taught against the background of a widely-shared view that Translation is primarily, if not near-exclusively, a practical "problem-solving activity". In close tandem with TR1, it aims to lead students to an understanding of the practice of translation as a focussed activity directed towards the achievement of clearly defined goals through considered choices which derive their rationale from well-founded principles that account for them. In the process, they will come to recognise the activity as something that defies reduction to simply mechanical or routine applications of pre-determined packages of self-sufficient, ad hoc skills, techniques and methods to whatever challenges and problems are raised by the attempt to produce equivalent texts across source and target languages.

Skills, techniques and methods, indisputably crucial to effective practice, will be seen instead to emerge out of the understandings of these challenges and problems generated by the descriptions and explanations provided on the basis of the general theoretical principles and perspectives articulated in TR1.

Such understandings would involve, among other things, clear recognition of the nature of the specific factors that enter interactively into the constitution of the challenges and problems of translation, as these factors have been outlined and described in TR1. As indicated there, choices and decisions made in the institutional realm, themselves by no means straightforward, will be seen to carry for their implementation and realisation into the very heart of the translation activity, the linguistic realm where the "equivalent" target text is actually constructed out of the features and elements of the relevant code. This will be seen to centrally entail an understanding of the code-based challenges and problems of the task, based on a contrastive appraisal, against the background of the institutional choices and decisions, of the relevant features of the two codes involved, with a view to identifying their much-spoken of asymmetries (almost invariably involving cultural and semiotic differences too). It will be seen to equally and simultaneously entail also the identification of the choices and possibilities the target code offers for meeting the challenges and resolving the problems. These choices and possibilities will be seen to be offered on the basis of features of the target code, including those it shares with the source code, of the capacity of the target code to extend itself, if necessary, beyond its normal governing constraints (though, yet, in rule-governed ways), and of universals.

Intuitively known though they might be by good and competent translators, the skills, techniques and methods applied in the practice of translation will in fact be seen to emerge from these interacting sets of choices and decisions, deriving their specific nature, shape, focus, means of operation and so on from them - which means that there can be no fixed, uniform, predetermined sets of skills, methods and techniques. Different sets of cohering and, generally, internally consistent choices and decisions will be seen to point towards different models of practice, each specifically defined in terms of particular kinds of skills, techniques and methods that deploy the resources of the code in ways that are fitted to the attainment of the particular aims and goals that drove those particular choices and decisions.

### **Readings**

- BAKER, M. (1992): *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*, London, Routledge.  
NAIR, R.B. (ed.) (2002): *Translation, Text and Theory*, New Delhi, Sage.  
NEWMARK, L. (1988): *A Textbook of Translation*, New York, Prentice Hall.  
VENUTI, L. (2000): *The Translation Studies Reader*, London and New York, Routledge.

## **TR3 The Structure of Language**

Recognising the crucial role of language structure in the pursuit of what might be considered a central challenge of translation, namely the challenge of finding "equivalence(s)" (however that term is conceived) across the languages involved, the course aims to lead students to an understanding of language(s) as, of its/their very nature, (a) structured object(s). All languages will be seen to use



structure to organise the otherwise largely fluid or amorphous phenomena or "reality" within and around their users, on the basis of certain underlying general principles of categorisation, arrangement, combination, patterning and so on, which define what is possible and what is not possible in language(s). Simultaneously, each individual language, while working within the limits of these principles, will be seen to instantiate or realise them in terms of its own specific system of rules, operations, relations and so on, the knowledge of which is internalised in the minds of its users. The forms and structures produced by these means in any language will be governed by norms which, shared by its users, enable them to judge their well-formedness or acceptability and, also, to interpret them. But, in their specificities, they will be seen often to differ from language to language, causing the well-known structural difficulties of translation, the possibility of overcoming which is nevertheless secured by the common basis of the differences in the underlying general principles.

Students will be led to this understanding of language structure through brief analyses of selected structural phenomena in the languages of their translation activity. Selected on the basis of their general significance, these phenomena will be considered both in their own right, that is, relative to the systems of the individual languages they belong to and, also, comparatively, across the languages involved. Among the phenomena will be number, gender, tense, aspect, voice, mood and modality, polarity, co-reference and anaphora, modification, complementation, subordination and co-ordination and the structuring of information. They will be dealt with, as appropriate, at the levels of structure where the judgements of well-formedness are relatively easier to make, namely phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis. In phonology, the attention will fall on the units of sound involved in the perception and production of the language concerned and the rules and constraints governing their combination. In morphology, the focus will be on word formation processes, and the role of these processes in signalling such matters as case, number, tense and so on and in categorising words, and, also, in the creation of new vocabulary as such, through such operations as derivation, re-duplication, compounding, identity maintaining transference across categories, and phrasal verb formation.

Under syntax, the concern will be with the principles by which structural units are combined and related to each other in terms of constituency, and their ordering and hierarchical arrangement relative to each other. Under lexis, attention will be paid to both to the qualitative distinctions facilitated by the contrastive choices of words available at any particular point in the structure, and to their collocational possibilities and constraints.

### **Readings**

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### **TR4 Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics**

The aim of the course is to lead students to a broad understanding of meaning (its nature and properties, the analytical issues it raises, how they may be addressed, and so on) such as would facilitate their pursuit of one of the major tasks of translation, namely that of transferring meaning(s) across languages. It will pursue this aim under two headings, semantics and pragmatics, associated with two separate but complementary approaches to the study of meaning that its workings appear to call for.

Under the first of these headings, the course will focus on the nature of the internal systems of semantic resources which languages have developed for themselves and given realisation to through their codes. These are the systems which competent users of these languages invariably need to draw on in making and interpreting meaning, on the basis of their intuitive knowledge of them. The systems will be characterised in terms of formal code-embedded patternings of postulated abstract criterial features, components, categories, units and so on, patternings which involve certain characteristic relationships (including, particularly, contrastive relationships), distributions and operations and which define the conditions that the forms and expressions (words, sentences and so on) of languages must meet to be well formed in terms of meaning. The characterisation will take place through a decoding of the forms and expressions of languages, carried out entirely independently of their contexts of use, so that, for instance, all notions which link them to these contexts, such as reference or affectivity or connotation will, while their existence is recognised, be excluded from consideration. The semantics section of the course will, therefore, deal mainly with what forms and expressions mean on the basis of their code-embedded patternings, namely sense (or "conceptual meaning") and sense relations such as ambiguity, homonymy, synonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, and antonymy. Its treatment of conceptual meaning in both individual expressions and larger propositions will be in terms of logical relations such as entailment, contradiction, inconsistency, anomaly, tautology, and presupposition, all approached in terms of truth values and conditions.

An enquiry into definiteness and deixis will then move the course into its pragmatics section. This will lead students towards an explanation of the fact that the messages actually communicated by utterances in their contexts of use have meanings and interpretations which carry beyond those assigned in the purely code-embedded semantics section to the linguistic forms and expressions of which these utterances are composed. The retrieval of these additional dimensions of meaning and interpretation will be seen to depend on processes of inference from the correlation between the linguistic forms and expressions used and factors of the contexts of their utterance which lie outside of the linguistic code. These processes will be seen to facilitate an understanding of how and why competent users have chosen to use their code-based forms and expressions as they have done in these contexts, on the basis not of whether these forms and expressions satisfy the well-formedness conditions of the code, but on the basis of whether they satisfy conditions of appropriacy of use (sometimes called "happiness conditions"). As such, they will lead in turn to an identification not just of the code-embedded meaning of what is said but, also, of its import (that is, what it implies or what is intended by it). A brief introduction will be provided to speech act theory and/or the co-operative principle, both of which exemplify this approach to the study of meaning. In the former case, attention will be paid to what utterances do in contexts, different kinds of such acts of speech, their various forces and the conditions for their successful implementation. In the latter case, attention will be paid to the clarification of the co-operative principle, the notion of conversational implicature based on it and the maxims by means of which implicatures are computed.

In both the semantics and pragmatics components of the course, the issues dealt with will be treated in terms of general principles, sets of features, mechanisms and schemata which are assumed to apply to all languages. Thus, in semantics, it will be assumed that there is a shared conceptual structure for languages, which may be characterised in terms of a universal set of semantic components or features and certain common kinds of logical relations. Similarly, in pragmatics, the operative contextual factors will be dealt with not by means of exhaustive encyclopaedic cataloguings of their myriad ethnographic and other details but in terms of general principles of communicative behaviour in language which provide a means of turning the myriad details to controlled account in making and interpreting meaning. These principles will be assumed to be shared by all languages by virtue of their basis in shared human attributes of rationality, co-operation and so on. The differences in the area of meaning that languages show will then be accounted for by the assumption that the universal principles and so on will be differently drawn on and instantiated by these languages in response to ethnographic and other factors of the contexts in which they are used.

It is intended that the understandings of meaning that the course will lead students to along these lines will enable informed and purposive responses by them to the challenges of translation

raised by differences among languages in the area of meaning. This they would do not only by allowing them to "place" these differences against a background of resources and possibilities shared by the languages concerned, but also by raising their awareness of the means by which they could creatively liberate themselves from the constraints imposed on these languages by the specificities of both their codes and their contexts of use and innovate as the challenges require.

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### **TR5 Discourse and Text**

This course is based on two initial recognitions: one, that the intended outcomes of the Translator's pursuit of equivalence across languages are texts in the target language that are "equivalent" to those of the source language; and, two, that texts, large or (even very) small, are the most overarching of the linguistic units in terms of which the Translator operates. Drawing on notions introduced in the Pragmatics component of TR 4, it will carry the study of Translation beyond the linguistic code per se (that is, the structural units and forms of a language, and their distributions, arrangements and so on) to the level at which the notion of text becomes salient, namely the level of discourse. Discourse will be understood in broad terms as referring to language in use in contexts, that is, to the spoken or written instances of the linguistic code as they are used in the verbal process(es) through which the linguistic activity and behaviour of participants in particular communicative situations are realised. Text, then, will be seen as the central means by which discourse is organised, which warrants its treatment as the basic unit of the analysis of discourse.

Texts themselves may be characterised at surface level in terms of the structural units, forms and so on of the particular language (code) which serves as the medium of the linguistic activity/behaviour of participants in specific communicative situations. However, they will be seen in the course not simply as static code-derived objects but as dynamic entities, centrally induced by the communicative (and, therefore, social) intentions of the participants, and, concomitantly, constituted by the active operation of mechanisms directed towards the achievement of these intentions. That is, these mechanisms operate to ensure that the selection and deployment of features of the code by texts enable the construction of the meanings that are appropriate to the communicative functions which the participants' intentions require them to discharge in the discursive situations involved.

By helping adapt linguistic form to communicative function, they ensure that the texts they thereby constitute discharge their communicative roles effectively and, also, efficiently.

The mechanisms, seen thus as resources on which participants draw during communication, will be presented in the course from two different perspectives. Under one, more formally-oriented, perspective, they will be seen in terms of their roles in internally structuring texts themselves as a means, in turn, of structuring information for communication, something which in fact involves matters which extend beyond the forms, structures and internal organisational features of the code as such. These matters, which secure the interpretability of texts, will be dealt with primarily in terms of two phenomena, cohesion and coherence. Cohesion will involve the structuring of the relations/connections among the various code-based forms and elements selected in any given

communicative situation, a structuring which ensures that the text they form holds together as a unit of discourse. Coherence will deal with the ways in which interpretations of a text are constructed through relations/connections among its component utterances which are established on the basis of the participants' real world knowledge and experience, and which thus involve matters that lie outside the text itself and its linguistic forms and structures.

Under the second perspective mentioned above, texts will be seen as communicative events, within which form will come/be brought into phase with function. This will be accomplished through an organisation of the correlations between the multi-varied features of situations which the participants' communicative intentions render salient on the one hand, and the actual code-based forms and so on selected for the realisation of those intentions on the other. The former will be seen to involve material as well as cultural dimensions of the situations, including the nature and roles of the participants, their social relations and interactions and their attitudes towards each other, the mode of communication selected, the goals of the exchange, and so on. Such organisation will be characterised in terms of general principles, rules and constraints, which, forming part of the mechanisms with which discourse operates, determine appropriate selection and use of features of the code in the situations involved. Based on the nature of the correlations between contextual factors and form that these principles and so on help characterise, texts may be classified in terms of styles, registers, types and genres, which together define the discursive repertoires available to communities.

The course will also lead to the recognition, important to translators, that specific differences in the relevant material and cultural factors among different anthropological, especially ethnographic, groups/communities are associated with different applications and realisations of the general principles, rules and other mechanisms of discourse, leading to different kinds of texts and different kinds of associated meanings, as well as different evaluations of appropriacy, among these groups/communities. Going along with this will be the further recognition that within each community, the principles and so on will, in the specific form they have assumed therein, have normative force - membership of the community is contingent on shared acceptance (generally implicit) of them. Nevertheless, they will be seen to define not constricting "fixed scripts" for discourse but, rather, the rule-governed potential for the innovative creation of appropriate communicative texts and their meanings through interactive negotiation among participants. On the basis of the recognition that the interpretations of texts themselves often involve meanings that go beyond the actual words and forms used and range considerably in degrees of explicitness and decidability, the negotiation will be seen to involve also processes of inferencing by participants. These processes enable the retrieval and construction of meanings not just directly from those words and forms but by inferring them from shared background knowledge, inter-textual connections and so on. These processes of inferencing will be taken as defining further mechanisms with which discourse operates.

The notions of shared commitment to the mechanisms and, consequently, of their normative force within the community will themselves be subjected to interrogation on the basis of the recognition that, in the face of the inevitable differences among participants in any context of discourse, they often carry disempowering hegemonic potential. This derives from inequality of access to the communicative resources which the various mechanisms define (associated with, among other things, unequal distributions of material resources, unequal opportunities and unequal social relations), the operation of political and ideological forces, unequal positionings of participants relative to each other, and so on. Discourse and texts, therefore, will be seen to assume instrumentality, as they come to be ideologically and politically inflected in terms of such phenomena as ethnicity, gender, class, economic disparity and levels of education. The course will aim at developing critical awareness of all such matters, by treating discourse and texts dialectically, as sites not only of negotiation and mutual stroking based on shared knowledge and involving such principles as co-operation, charity and politeness, but also, simultaneously, of hegemonic imposition, ideological and political manoeuvring, resistance, contestation and counter-affirmation.

Given that the problems of translation derive considerably from disparities and asymmetries of these various kinds in the cultural, material, ideological, political and suchlike specificities of the larger contexts in which discourse and texts are embedded, the course will clarify the general characterisation of discourse provided above partly on the basis of a contrastive treatment of the

issues, principles and so on mentioned (these will be collectively referred to as "principles" below) as they are differently manifested in the languages involved. Differentiating discursual features of the languages involved (most obviously, such matters as terms of address, personal pronoun use, kinship terms, phatic expressions, politeness and deference, imperative forms, "deletion", connecting devices, scales of impositiveness, choice of pragmatic as distinct from syntactised modes, agency, volition and causativity, taboos, formality levels and preferences, idiomatic usage and metaphor) will selectively be dealt with in terms of their own context-bound specifics. At the same time, they will be treated contrastively across the languages involved, by reference to general discursual principles against which they will be "placed". The expectation is that this will facilitate an understanding both of the specific phenomena as well as of the general principles by reference to which both they and their problematic aspects may be properly understood. These principles, by virtue of their applicability and replicability across the languages and, consequently, their presumed "universality", may be considered to define the very nature of linguistic communication itself, and in doing so, render possible the activity of translation across languages.

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### TR 6 Specialised Translation

The course aims to expound and clarify a major practical dimension of the challenges of translation which derives from homologous sets of specific instantiations of a general principle introduced in the theory and practice courses. The principle concerns the necessary and integral link between the texts which are the basic units of the translation activity and their contexts. The sets of instantiations referred to involve the specialised variants/"sub-varieties" (styles, registers, genres) that languages develop in various specialised contexts (domains, fields) of life, thought and activity, in response to the very specific and particularistic demands of meaning making and communication that are made on them in those contexts. The course will endeavour to lead students to a recognition and understanding of the specialised aspect or nature which texts assume in these contexts as a consequence of that fact, and of the particular kinds of specialised demands they therefore make of their translators.

The focus of the course will fall on texts of the kind developed in specialised academic, professional and administrative fields. These will range from the more "technical" and "objective" areas of specialisation at one end (mathematics, the physical sciences, engineering, among others)

through the biological sciences and, then, management, administration, law, the social sciences and the like to the more discursive or "subjective" specialisations (for example, the humanities, literature and literary study) at the other. The different specialised linguistic styles, registers and genres involved will be characterised in terms of the different formal code related as well as discursive features, conventions, patterns and practices which define them. These will in turn be explained by reference to such aspects of the domain or field in question as: the subject matter or content involved; its nature and goals; the issues and questions which enter pertinently or permissibly into determining and projecting the particular view(s) of its objects of contemplation/study that it considers to be salient for its purposes; the nature of the relationship among the communicants; the ends of the communication; and so on. All of these will be seen as together constituting the specialised domain or field, entering into the construction of what legitimately constitutes "knowledge" within it and pointing to the kinds of understanding and praxis that such knowledge implicitly entails in the "real" world.

As in the other courses, the description and characterisation of the various features and elements which enter into the constitution of the specialised linguistic variants or sub-varieties, as well as, for that matter, the various taxonomies, classificatory schemes, patternings and so on which also participate in the process, will be done in terms not of static inventories of isolates but of general properties, principles and processes. These will enable the features and so on involved to be seen as organised in terms of complex interrelated networks, by means of which the relevant conceptual and associated semantic fields are dynamically constructed. In the area of vocabulary, for instance, the particular kinds of choices among lexical items and the specific collocational possibilities defined for them by such networks will be seen to assign to them the precise meanings and qualities which the specialisation requires. The very relevant issues of technical terms in specialisations (involving such matters as coinages, neologisms, borrowings, calques, and so on), as well as the associated problem of glossaries, will be treated along the same lines. Similarly, in syntax, the varied ways in which such devices of the grammatical networks as nominalisation, passivisation, different kinds of clause structure and so on are drawn upon will be seen to help in projecting exactly the view of the matters under consideration that the specialisation needs.

Each sub-variety that is so characterised on the basis of the general properties and principles will be seen to define a unifying metalanguage for the area of specialisation, shared competence in and use of which procures membership for users of the language in the community of specialists whose domain it is.

In doing all this, the general properties, principles and processes, and their workings, will provide an encompassing framework against which the specificities of each specialisation, its differentiating characteristics as well as the distinct kinds of demands that its texts make of the translator, may be placed and understood. In addition, they will also throw light on the differentiated nature of the constraints on language use and interpretation in different specialisations, and the different degrees of openness or closure the latter value. Those at the more "technical" end of the range, with their preoccupation with "objectivity", certainty and decidability will be seen to permit less flexibility than those at the other, where interpretation and style assume self-validating significance. It will be considered whether this may legitimately be taken to define a kind of "order of difficulty" for translation, with the degrees of closure and constraint in a text corresponding inversely with the degrees of difficulty in translating it.

The course will introduce students to these various matters on the basis of a study of a limited number of sub-varieties, differently selected each term on the basis of such considerations as their representativeness, their professional or practical significance, and the interests of the students.

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### 3. Conclusion

A careful study of the course-descriptions and the reading-lists provided in section 2 will, we are confident, reveal that is indeed not only possible but also necessary to design an advance level TS programme with linguistics as the back-bone. Without it, such programmes are likely to degenerate into mere assembly-plants for (technological) gadgets or into grounds where the scholars of tomorrow are trained to ignore hard questions and produce charming but largely irrelevant discourses. TS, TT in particular, must be held responsible for the core questions of translation, and it can discharge that responsibility only by NOT ignoring the critique offered in section 1 and by accepting, at least on a trial basis, the sort of revitalization of the link between linguistics and translation the courses summarized in section 2 offer.

### NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference organized to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Meta*, April 8, 2005. We are grateful to Probal Dasgupta, K.N.O.Dharmadasa, Kushyantha Herath, Otto Ikome, M.H.F.Goonetilleke, Udaya Meddegama, M.A.Nuhman, Paul St. Pierre, Vasuki Walker, Carmen Wickramagamage, Piyaseeli Wijemanne, Sumathy Sivamohan, and the graduates of the first two batches of the translation programme at the University of Peradaniya for patiently listening to us and for joyfully working with us to implement a multi-lingual programme that required more than anyone had bargained for. We shall always remember the experience, and are grateful to the staff of The Sri Lanka Foundation, Colombo, Joe Bolger and Bimali Amarsekera of GISP, Colombo, Saku Srighanthan, formerly of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa, and the administration of the University of Peradaniya, and the staff of its Department of English for allowing a couple of swallows to make two real summers.

2. This section of the paper is essentially a revised and abridged version of Singh (2005), which spells out more fully the arguments merely summarized here. It is included in St. Pierre and Kar (2005). We are particularly grateful to the first editor of that volume for including a text that takes a position very different from his own in a volume co-edited by him.

3. In as much as 'communicative competence' may already be a somewhat abridged version of Wittgenstein's 'form of life', TT's 'localization', again in the relevant sense, may in fact not be much to write home about.

4. That this is not just an impression but an empirical fact is easy to show. The second number of the fifth volume of Translation Studies Abstracts (2002), for example, contains entries on only half a dozen studies, out of a total of 32 in the section called 'Translation Theory', that can be said to have taken up the heart of the matter. The five studies that get entries in the section called "Process oriented studies" don't substantially change the picture.

5. Not to say anything about the fact that TT seems willing to include talk about the semantics of 'contract' and setting up of translation-shops, as long as it is done with a Greek title, or about what can be called "the neo-colonial subversion of post-coloniality by post-structuralism and post-modernism", something not that hard to

see or document. Although we take the post-modernist critiques of post-Enlightenment abridgement of reason quite seriously, we find the lack of self-reflection in the relatively newly constructed TS saddening.

6. The diversion of attention to skills/techniques/methods etc. from thinking and theorization, often promoted under the heading "practice of translation" is generally accompanied with other modes of easification, is, it is easy to see, a part of a large over-arching strategy of capitalistic globalization which is designed to prevent complex and critically self-aware thinking. Although we take the view that translation should increasingly begin to be promoted as representing one of the most valuable means of preventing the kind of intellectual and ideological homogenisation that academia is now playing a major role in promoting, we believe that it cannot be done by constructing TT the way some have constructed it.

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