

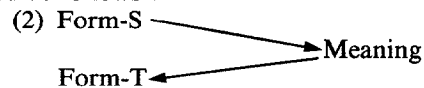
TO TRANSLATE OR NOT TO TRANSLATE ?

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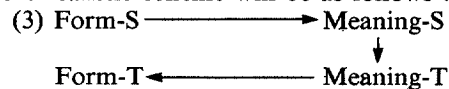
TRANSLATION IN PERSPECTIVE

Competence in the use of language is communicative competence and so distinguished from formal competence (for example, the capacity to judge whether a sentence is grammatical or not). Communicative competence comprises reception, production, and reproduction, the last partaking a little of the other two. Competent reproduction implies competent reception of the original or model leading on to competent production of a replica. Like the other two skills, reproduction may operate either at the level of the signant (*signifiant*) or at the level of the signate (*signifié*). Just as reception may be either bare listening (or reading) or the same with comprehension, reproduction may be either bare repetition (*i.e.* re-rendition confined to the level of auditory or visual signals) or reexpression (*i.e.* re-formulation at the level of form and meaning as well). Paraphrase from formal to colloquial, for example, is reformulation within the same language. Translation, on the other hand, if reformulation across languages, at least across dialects of the same language. It can therefore be defined as the reformulation of a text in some linguistic code (the *source text* in the *source* language or dialect) into a *replica text* in another linguistic code (*target* language or dialect).

The involvement in this kind of reproduction of two languages or dialects — two linguistic codes — creates a complication. So long as we are not aware of this complication we think of translation simply as removal of one set of clothes and putting on another set of clothes to cover the same meaning — French *cheval* goes to English *horse* but *chien* goes to *dog*, or vice versa. This simple (and simple-minded) scheme can be presented as follows :



Here the symbols S and T are shorthand for "in the Source text" and "in the Target text (replica)" respectively. Now, while such a scheme may do some justice to intra-language reformulation (*e.g.* paraphrase), it hardly does any justice to inter-language reformulation, *i.e.* translation. To realize this is to realize that translation is a difficult job full of compromises and thus say despairingly with Italians, Translators are traitors ! Rather than giving up translation as an impossibility, we should give up our too simple scheme. A more realistic scheme will be as follows :



In translating we are not merely matching forms in the two languages in respect of meanings ; we are also matching meanings as well in the two languages. What are distinct meanings in one language often turn up as a single merged meaning in another — we *drink* water, *eat* bread, and *smoke* cigarettes in English, in Bangla all three verbs