Teaching Translation from Spanish to English

Beeby-Lonsdale, Allison

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CHAPTER 5
TRANSLATION (THEORY)

It is easy for teachers to get lost in the maze of literature on the subject of translation. Translation dates back almost as far as does writing itself, and translation has played an essential role in the spread of government, culture, and science. Bilingual inscriptions have been found in Mesopotamia that date from 3000 B.C. The bureaucratic apparatus of the Roman Empire could not have functioned without translators. The Toledo School of translators provided the basis for the development of science in the West by translating the Arabic versions of Greek scientific and philosophical classics. The influence of the King James Version of the Bible on the English language and culture cannot be measured.

FROM LAWS TO FUNCTIONS

From a very early date, translators began to think about what they were doing. Cicero was already concerned with maintaining a balance between “faithful” and “free” texts: “If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or the wording, I shall have seemed to have departed from the function of a translator” (Cicero, 1959: 43). He obviously felt that the function of the translator was to be faithful to the SL text.

King Alfred (871-899 A.D.), known as Alfred the Great, seems to have solved the problem by concentrating on the function of the translation. When he translated a Latin handbook for parish priests, the Cura Pastoralis, into English, his purpose was to help the English people recover from the havoc caused by the Danish invasions. Therefore, he was most concerned with getting the message of the SLT across to a group of simple parish priests who did not know Latin, in the hope that they would put into practice the suggestions for restoring law and order in their villages. In the preface to his translation, Brook (1955) claimed that Alfred had followed the teachings of his bishop and priests and had translated “whilm word be

6. A useful guide can be found in Delisle and Woodsworth (1995).
Alfred was pragmatic, a man of action as well as a scholar. However, most writers on the subject saw their task as laying down the law, making rules and regulations. Louis Kelly (1979), in a well-documented history of translation theory and practice in the West, divides the different theories into three categories.

1. **The prelinguistic theories**, which were concerned with the conflict between free and literal translations and the inherent impossibility but absolute necessity of translating.

2. **Linguistic theories** that take communication to be the main role of language. Eugene Nida, who dominates the literature in this field, has suggested a variety of strategies for approaching translation through linguistic analysis, but always within the context of communication theory. For Nida, whose main work has been based on translation of the Bible, "[translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. But this relatively simple statement requires careful evaluation of several seemingly contradictory elements]" (Nida and Taber, 1969: 13).

3. **Hermeneutic theories**, which allow the word (logos) its own creative entity. For George Steiner, "Language is the true and only verifiable a priori framework of cognition" (1975: 82). Steiner's main concern is whether justice is being done to the original text.

Kelly himself suggests a functional approach. Language use varies according to its function in a specific context, and translation is language use (communication) within a social context. Translation theorists who take discourse as the basis of analysis for translation studies are concerned with establishing the different functions of the SLT and the TLT within their different contexts (Delisle, 1980; Hatim and Mason, 1990). Recent studies concerned with constructing a theoretical framework to deal with practical translation problems have opted for a variational approach, based on the functions of the translation.\(^7\) This approach accounts for the complexity of the translation process and seems to be very productive.

This approach frees translation theory from the normative, prescriptive approach adopted by Alexander Fraser Tytler (1907 [1791]): "It is no exaggeration to say that the programme followed by most translation theorists in the English-speaking world at least (with a small number of exceptions; Nida and Catford in the

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\(^7\) See Hewson and Martin (1991), for teaching translation from French to English, and Patrick Zabaleasco (1993), for a theoretical basis for dubbing TV comedies from English to Catalan.
mid 1960s in particular), has been, and still is, dominated by the thinking put forward in an essay written two centuries ago in 1791" (Bell, 1991: 10).

Tytler began by defining a good translation, which provided the basis for his three main "laws" of translation: (1) that the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work (content); (2) that the style and manner of writing should be of the same character as that of the original (form); and (3) that the translation should have all the ease of original composition (receptor). Obviously, very few translations (if any) can follow all of these "laws," and this has led to sterile discussions about the impossibility of translating. Recently, interest has been concentrated on which law should have priority in which text, depending on the different functions of a SLT and the purpose (skopos) of the TLT. These are the parameters that oblige a translator to adopt a certain methodology. Thus, there are no laws that apply to all translations; rather, translators adopt a variational approach that is defined for each translation according to the functions of the SLT and the purpose of the TLT.

It is interesting to compare Tytler's laws with Katerina Reiss's first "text typology," which was also broken down into three main sections. She divided texts according to their main function, and these functions partially coincide with Tytler's laws. The first is Inhaltsbetonte Texte, in which the predominant function of the language is representative, to transmit the content of the text. The second is Formbetonte Texte, in which the predominant function of the language is expressive, to transmit the form of the text. The third is Appelbetonte Texte, in which the predominant function of the language is to provoke a reaction in the reader, or receptor (Reiss, 1971: 31).

The parallels are quite clear: Tytler refers to ideas, Reiss to content; Tytler to style of writing, Reiss to form; Tytler to ease of original composition, Reiss to the effect on the reader or the receptor. Reiss later changed her terminology and called the three text types informative, expressive, and operative (Reiss, 1976).

However, in 1981, Reiss stressed the multifunctionality of most texts. The variational approach is needed even within a single translation, because different functions may be dominant at different times. Nevertheless, the definition of text types is one of the most useful directions in translation theory today, and it has direct implications on teaching methodology.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY, INTERDISCIPLINARY FIELD OF STUDY

Although the history of translation dates back almost as far as writing itself, the practice of translation and the demand for translations and translators have been far greater in the twentieth century than at any other time. In fact, the twentieth century has been called the "Age of Translation." The Nuremberg Trials were seen as the event that established the need for professionally trained translators and
interpreters in the twentieth century (Bowen, 1985). After the end of the Second World War, the number of translations increased as the number of international organizations, multinationals, and worldwide communication systems increased. Expanded translation activities and the creation by universities all over the world of centres to train translators and interpreters are two reasons for the growth in translation theory in the last twenty years.

The growth in translation theory is also due to developments in related disciplines. Any translator who tries to get up to date on the latest theories will be faced with a wide range of possibilities. There are three main reasons for this. First, the complexity of the translation process makes it very difficult to fit it into one theory. Second, this is an area in which there is considerable divergence in the ways the subject has developed in different countries. Third, translation theory is a multidisciplinary study and has itself been studied by many different disciplines from their own special points of view and with their own priorities.

There is a tendency among some translation theorists to make simplified claims of the type "Translation is comparative linguistics/ethnography/pragmatics/semiotics," and so on. Translation theory can learn from the multidisciplinary approach taken by discourse analysis, which was developed to try to deal with problems that could not be solved at the level of word or sentence. Most translation problems can be solved only at the level of discourse. Like discourse analysis, translation theory has drawn on work from many other disciplines. Going back in time, there is much to be learned from classical grammar, rhetoric, and logic. The painstaking research of the nineteenth-century philologists provided invaluable historical, geographical, and comparative data. Modern linguistics now seems to be moving toward functionalist text linguistics, which may be the most useful approach for translation theory, but there is also much to be learned from the structuralist, formalist approaches.

In fact, one of the most fascinating aspects of translation is that it is a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary activity, and many of the disciplines involved have been developing very rapidly in recent years. Multidisciplinary cognitive science emerged in the late 1970s, drawing on fields such as psychology (psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology), computer science (artificial intelligence), sociology (sociolinguistics and social psychology), and anthropology. This new integrated science provides valuable tools for the study of language, discourse, and translation as communicative modes of action.

Si algo hay de cierto en el panorama de los estudios lingüísticos de hoy en día es que constituyen un territorio en el que confluyen tradiciones académicas de muy diversa procedencia. Tanto la lingüística estrictamente considerada como la psicología, la lógica, la filosofía, las ciencias de la computación, las matemáticas o la sociología tienen cosas que decir sobre el lenguaje y van configurando cada vez más un dominio de saber que se nutre de todas ellas aunque al no especialista pueda parecerle que su naturaleza es híbrida. . . .
Pasó la época estructuralista en que nos esforzábamos por separar el lenguaje de cualquier otra institución. Hoy hemos vuelto a aprender que el lenguaje, más que un objeto científico, constituye un problema, uno de los problemas, sin duda, más apasionantes a los que cualquier persona curiosa puede enfrentarse. (Vide, Martí, and Serrano, 1992: 25)

There is increasing interest in interdisciplinary studies and in the search for a general science of man. Translation is a perfect field in which to study all these different disciplines in interaction.

The process of translation is a linguistic operation, and therefore our knowledge of it is as limited as our knowledge of language, its relation to thought, and how the human brain works. Studies of the human mind are being carried out on two levels: biological and cognitive, the study of the organism and the functions that depend on it. The debate over whether thought is possible without language has been a long one. Advances in neurosurgery and the cognitive sciences seem to have established that, in effect, the brain stores concepts and linguistic labels separately.

The cognitive sciences are in a state of rapid development, but, as Karl Nager said at the Ciber Foundation Conference on Consciousness in London in July of 1992, a new kind of theory is needed (interview, BBC Radio 4, 15 July 1992). The present situation can be compared to that of physics before the advent of Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. Certainly, when a theory is produced that establishes the links between brain and mind, it will inevitably be very complex. Perhaps chaos theory and complexity theory will also be able to contribute to translation theory.

It is to be hoped that future translation theorists will have a more solid basis to work on, but in the meantime, translation teachers cannot ignore the advances that have been made. Roger Bell (1991) makes a valiant attempt to bring all of these developments together in a model that he hopes will be of service to translators, linguists, and translation theory. He makes use of what is known as the computational metaphor, in which the structure of the human mind, the cognitive architecture built on the physical foundations of brain and nervous system, is described in terms of a powerful computer, in the sense that both minds and computers process information (Vide et al., 1992). Bell believes that, despite all the advances in the disciplines related to translation, there is a fundamental misunderstanding by both translation theorists and linguists of what is involved in translation and that “the co-occurrence of exciting advances in cognitive science, artificial intelligence and

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8. The rich variety and extension of Routledge's Interface series, edited by Ronald Carter, is a sign of this trend: “The aim of the Interface series is to build bridges between the traditionally divided disciplines of language and literary studies.” It is hardly surprising that Routledge has also recently published *Redefining Translation*, by Lance Henson and Jacky Martin (1991), and *Thinking Translation*, by Sándor Hervey and Ian Higgins (1992).
text linguistics with the emergence of a genuinely socially and semantically based functional theory of linguistics—systemic linguistics—makes this an ideal moment to attempt to resolve the paradox and develop an adequate theory of translation” (Bell, 1991: 16). Bell’s purpose is to stimulate translation theorists and linguists to work together, drawing on each other’s fields. However, translation theory still has not found its Einstein, and when an “adequate theory of translation” does emerge, it will have to account for innumerable variations and new forms of translation that emerge as technology develops (for example, TV dubbing).

Some translation theorists feel that the task of developing an adequate theory of translation is so far beyond our grasp that translation theory would be better occupied dealing with concrete problems. This is Peter Newmark’s position, which is completely opposed to Bell’s:

From the point of view of the translator, any scientific investigation, both statistical and diagrammatic (some linguists and translation theorists make a fetish of diagrams, schemas and models), of what goes on in the brain (mind? nerves? cells?) during the process of translation is remote and at present speculative. Translation theory broadly consists of, and can be defined as, a large number of generalisations of translation problems. (Newmark, 1988: 21)

Newmark is always thought-provoking, he is an excellent teacher, and his books are full of useful suggestions and insights. For a long time, he was the only well-known scholar in Britain writing about translation. Nevertheless, he mistrusts attempts to make a “science” of translation. The debate over whether translation is a science, an art, or a craft is an old one. In fact, translation is a hybrid, and there is an element of “science” involved. A model can help us to gain an over-all view of the subject. The process of developing a translation theory is like the process of analyzing discourse. It should be a two-way process, with bottom-up ↔ top-down, microstructural ↔ macrostructural interaction.

The intellectual isolation that affected the United Kingdom and the United States (and Spain) at the beginning of the twentieth century and the anti-theoretical approach to literary criticism also affected translation theory (Bassnet-McGuire, 1980: 60). In the last four or five years, the trend has changed dramatically, as can be seen in the Routledge Interface series and in Longman’s Applied Linguistics and Language Study series.

The main interest in translation theory in this book is to define a methodology to help students to learn a skill: translating. However, translating is not like riding a bike, in which it makes no difference whether the cyclist knows how the appropriate muscles function (although perhaps Miguel Indurain needed to know quite a bit about physiology and psychology to win the Tour de France five years in

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9. This series was established in the 1970s, but it has only recently turned its attention to translation studies.
succession). Translating is such a complex skill that if translators know more about the process, they will perform better. How much they need to know about the process depends on a number of factors. Translation teachers have to define how much translation theory their students need. Bell uses the term “threshold of termination” to describe how much time should be spent at each point of the translation process. It is “the point at which the writer feels that the text is adequate to achieve the goal set for it or where the reader has got enough out of the text and/or feels in cost-benefit terms, there is little point in continuing” (Bell, 1991: 213). Here, “threshold of termination” is used to describe just how much translation theory trainee translators need to be taught as a framework to improve their translation skills without transforming the translation class into a translation theory class.

There has been considerable fragmentation in translation studies, and this can be a problem in translation faculties in which many languages are taught. Many of the teachers will have been trained within different national schools of theory: the Slav, the German, the French, the Oriental, the English, the American, the Spanish, the Catalan, and so on. This means that students may have to cope with three or four different theoretical models, which can be an enriching, but confusing, experience.

The choice of a model is in part simplified by the constraints of teaching translation into the foreign language. Before a translator begins to translate any text, he or she has to ask the basic question: Who wrote the text, when, why, where, how, for whom, and who is going to read the translation, when, why, where, how? Translation teachers have to ask the same questions about their class—that is, put their teaching into context before deciding which theoretical approach to use. In the introduction, a defence was made of the educational and professional utility of teaching translation into English to Spanish and Catalan students. Obviously, these students will not be translating “sacred” texts, texts where the form, or Reiss’s expressive function, is dominant; they will not be translating Clarín or Borges into English.

A COMMUNICATIVE MODEL FOR TEACHING PROSE TRANSLATION

Newmark (1981) makes an interesting distinction between semantic and communicative translation. He defines communicative translation as an attempt to produce the same effect on the reader of the translation as that made on the reader of the original (Tytler’s third law). Semantic translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original, within the limits allowed by the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language (Tytler’s first law).

A semantic translation may require more effort on the part of the reader. It tends to overtranslate, rather than simplify. Newmark claims that the increasing assumption that all translation problems are communication problems is dangerous: Semantic translation is essential to preserve the quality of literature for certain
Table 5.1
Semantic Translation vs. Communicative Translation

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<td>SOURCE-LANGUAGE BIAS</td>
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<td>SEMANTIC</td>
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types of readers. Newmark’s point is worth making, and he is supported by writers such as Vladimir Nabokov and Milan Kundera, both of whom have complained about the liberties taken by translators with a strong target-language bias.

This is why Newmark is critical of Seleskovitch and the research group at l’École supérieure d’interprètes et traducteurs (Sorbonne nouvelle, Paris III), although he recognizes the valuable and stimulating contribution they have made. He believes that their approach leads to undertranslation and loss of meaning. Seleskovitch’s interpretive theory of translation is based on the sense behind the words. For the Paris School, translation, being a part of a general theory of discourse, has to start with discourse.10

Widdowson has defined discourse as "the communicative use of sentences in the performing of social actions" (1973: 69). Therefore, for Widdowson the study of discourse is the study of pragmatics—the purpose for which a sentence is used—of the real-world conditions under which a sentence may appropriately be used as an utterance. The distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning is behind the theory of speech acts originally developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969).

For the purposes of teaching translation into a foreign language, the communicative theories are the most useful. Jean Delisle, who studied with Seleskovitch and teaches translation at the University of Ottawa, led the field in applying theories related to discourse analysis to the teaching of translation:

Pour être vraiment opératoire, toute stratégie pédagogique appliquée à l’enseignement pratique de la traduction doit reposer sur des fondements théoriques valables. Sans un ensemble cohérent de principes fondamentaux et de règles soumises à l’épreuve de l’expérience, le pédagogue aura du mal à organiser son enseignement. Ne disposant pas d’un cadre général de référence, il risque d’adopter une attitude trop normative ou excessivement laxiste. Pour enseigner à traduire, la connaissance des faits de traduction ne suffit pas. (Delisle, 1981: 135)

10. The Paris School uses the word “discourse” to include all of the elements that make up an act of communication, not, as it is sometimes used, to refer to the cohesive elements of a paragraph or text.
The methodology proposed by Delisle (1980, 1993) has proved fruitful for teaching translation from Spanish to English for Spanish students for three main reasons. First, Delisle restricts his method to what he calls pragmatic texts, which excludes texts in which Reiss's expressive function is predominant. Professionally, these students will always be translating texts in which the pragmatic function dominates. Second, Delisle's translation unit is the entire text seen as discourse. In the *inversa* class the students are complete beginners, and their main problem is to get beyond the lexical level. They have to be trained to understand the text as a whole and reach the sense behind the words. Third, the approach is based on communicative theories, and therefore leads to communicative situations in the classroom that encourage motivation.

Delisle is useful because he is concerned primarily with teaching translation, not linguistics; the translation theory is often implicit, rather than explicit; and the learning is inductive rather than deductive. Furthermore, developments in related disciplines in recent years seem to reinforce the idea that translation problems are communication problems.

**EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF A COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION**

It has been assumed that communicative translations will always be colloquial and easy to read. They have been associated with the image of actors in jeans playing Shakespeare and the idea that depth, quality, and poetry should be sacrificed to "information." However, "information"—facts—makes up a relatively small percentage of all communication. Gutt reinforces the communicative position in translation by expanding the concept of a communicative translation: "The main contribution of this book is a reductionist one on the theoretical level—issues of translation are shown to be at heart issues of communication"(1991: 188).

Gutt is not just a linguist writing about translation in a vacuum. He is a translator who taught translation at the University of Addis Ababa. His book is full of translation examples; it is not the uninterrupted theorizing to which Newmark understandably objects. He did his doctorate with Deirdre Wilson at University College in London, and his dissertation was on the application of Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory to translation theory. The relevance-theory concept of communication that he applies to translation is much wider than that allowed by Newmark, who equates communication with generalization and simplification:

> Meaning is complicated, many levelled, a “network of relations” as devious as the channels of thought in the brain. The more communication, the more generalisation; the more simplification, the less meaning. I am writing against the increasing assumption that all translation is [nothing but] communicating, where the less effort expected of the reader, the better. (Newmark, 1991: 11)
However, on the same page, Newmark also claims that “there is no reason why a basically semantic translation should not also be strongly communicative.” This is obviously true if the translation is consistent with the skopos\textsuperscript{11} of the text—that is, why it is being translated and for whom. Gutt gives an excellent example of how a translation that would have been categorized as “direct versus indirect” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958), “formal versus dynamic” (Nida, 1964), “literal versus free” (Catford, 1965), or “semantic versus communicative” (Newmark, 1991) was, in fact, more successful communicatively than one that was ostensibly indirect, dynamic, free, communicative.

In 1982, a draft translation of the New Testament into Guaraní was sent to different Guaraní churches in Brazil to be tested. The draft was communicative in Newmark’s sense of the word—that is, generalizing, simplifying, and explicative. After a year’s testing, the church decided that virtually everything had to be translated again:

From the Guaraní point of view, the rationale behind the changes in translation style was that the scriptures in Guaraní should be clearly seen as a faithful translation of the high-prestige Portuguese version. . . . What the Guaranís expect is that the meaning in their translation correspond, in a fairly self-evident way, with what they find in the Portuguese. . . . Much implicit information that had been made explicit in the text was relegated to a footnote, a picture, the glossary or eliminated altogether. (Gutt, 1991: 184)

There was an obvious discrepancy between what the translator thought the Guaraní should have and what they themselves wanted:

Whereas the translator assumed that a kind of indirect translation would be appropriate, that is, a translation that would communicate implicatures with ease to Guaranís with little knowledge of the original background, the Guaranís themselves seemed to have looked for a translation more along the lines of direct translation, possibly accompanied by resemblances in linguistic properties as well. This mismatch in expectations led to a breakdown in communication. (Gutt, 1991: 184)

A few years ago, I had a similar experience translating a paper for a Spanish academic. I am often asked to translate papers written by Spanish scientists to be read at international conferences. I have always considered that the main purpose of translating these scientific papers is for the scientists to transmit the information related to their research as clearly as possible to an international audience, for the greater glory of science, the advancement of their own careers, and the prestige of their home institutions. As a result, when translating these papers, I follow the discourse model of English-language scientific papers as published in most prestigious international journals. One of the rules of style that Spanish students are taught is

\textsuperscript{11} On skopos, see Vermeer, 1983; Reiss and Vermeer, 1984; Nord, 1988.
not to repeat any word in a single paragraph. Therefore, in a Spanish scientific article one may find as many as five synonyms for "test tube" in one paragraph. In the English translation, I shorten sentences and clear up references (for example, doing away with synonyms for "test tube"), bearing in mind that the mode of the TLT is "written to be read aloud" by someone whose English may not be fluent, to an audience composed of native and non-native speakers of English. On the whole, my clients are satisfied. However, when I produced this kind of translation for a social scientist, he was most annoyed. Apparently, in his particular branch of this discipline, there are a group of academics in Spain, France, and Italy who defend the style of the Romance languages against the imperialism of English, even though they are obliged to present their papers in English if they want international recognition. I had to translate the text again, this time making it as literal as possible.

Now, having read the story of the Guaraní New Testament, I feel that my second translation was communicative because it communicated the client's purpose (the author of the SLT was the client). One of his main requirements for the TLT was that it should hold its own against American cultural imperialism, a sort of academic version of breaking the windows of the McDonald's at the top of the Ramblas. This was, perhaps, as important to him as the content of his research.

Gutt explains the Guaranís' objection to the first-draft translation in terms of their familiarity with the high-prestige Portuguese version. There may be another reason. The Portuguese version of the Bible, like the King James Version, is highly poetic. Relevance theory provides a very satisfying explanation of the peculiar strength of poetic language, as opposed to prose: it is often due to what is implied rather than what is explicit. "According to relevance theory, poetic effects arise essentially when the audience is induced and given freedom to open up and consider a wide range of implicatures, none of which are very strongly implicated, but which taken together create an 'impression' rather than communicate a 'message'" (Gutt, 1991: 155).

One of the aims of the first draft of the Guaraní New Testament was to make explicit implicatures that would have been clear to Jews living in the Middle East in the first century A.D., but not to Indians in Brazil in the twentieth century, thereby reducing rather than extending the range of possible interpretations. This reduction of poetic effect can be seen in the Good News Bible and Dios habla al hombre. In the preface to the Spanish version, the emphasis on message rather than form is made plain: "Los traductores han querido ajustarse al ejemplo de los autores del Nuevo Testamento, cuyo interés principal fue el de narrar los acontecimientos en forma clara y sencilla, dando más importancia al mensaje contenido que a las formas literarias en que el mensaje había de ser expresado."

In prose, the interpretation of the utterance follows the syntactic organization of the utterance. The semantic relations between the different constituents of the sentence are defined by syntax. The precision of the syntactic structure in these two versions allows very little freedom to explore a range of comparatively weak inter-
interpretations. Some of the differences can be seen in a brief comparison with two older versions—the King James Version (1611) and the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos (1965). The passage is 1 Corinthians 13:1-2.

**KING JAMES (1611)**

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have no charity, I become a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

**GOOD NEWS BIBLE (1976)**

I may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clashing bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching, I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains—but if I have no love, I am nothing.

**BIBLIOTECA DE AUTORES CRISTIANOS (1965)**

Si hablando lenguas de hombres y de ángeles no tengo caridad, soy como bronce que suena o címbalo que retiñe. Y si teniendo el don de la profecía y conociendo todos los misterios y toda la ciencia, y tanta fe que trasladase los montes si no tengo caridad, no soy nada.

**DIOS HABLA AL HOMBRE (1976)**

Si yo hablo en lenguas de hombres y de angeles, pero no tengo amor, no soy más que un tambor que resuena o un platillo que hace ruido. Si comunico mensajes recibidos de Dios, y conozco todas las cosas secretas, y tengo toda clase de conocimientos, y tengo toda la fe necesaria para quitar los montes de su lugar, pero no tengo amor, no soy nada.

The most obvious, immediate difference is the length of the four versions. The 1976 versions are more explicit syntactically and lexically. They both make the contrasting second part of each conditional more definite by adding "but"/"pero." The newer English version makes "Though I speak" more explicit by using the auxiliary verb *may*: "I may be able to speak." The Spanish version changes the more vague gerund "Si hablando" for "Si yo hablo." The "yo" is redundant here, so its function is to emphasize reference.

The change from "charity"/"caridad" to "love"/"amor" does not affect the argument. It is a necessary lexical change due to the historical development of the meaning (above all connotative) of "charity"/"caridad." However, there are other lexical changes arising from the translator's search for clarity. "The gift of prophecy" becomes "the gift of inspired preaching," which eliminates some of the possible meanings of prophecy—perhaps, the more awe-inspiring meaning of "predicting the future." "El don de la profecía" becomes "Si comunico mensajes recibidos de Dios," which includes more elements of meaning than the English but sounds
incredibly prosaic, as if everyone received two or three letters a day from God. “Mysteries”/“misterios,” which are by their nature beyond our understanding, become “secrets”/“secretos,” which can be discovered by listening at the door.

Gutt also shows how rhyme and rhythm contribute to the poetic effect by imposing phonological patterns that are independent of syntactic structure and often cut right across it: “These patterns tend to enrich the Interpretation, not only because they give rise to additional groupings, but also because, in contrast to syntactic relations, the relations they suggest are unspecified and so allow greater freedom in Interpretation” (Gutt, 1991: 157).

Translating poetry is not the subject of this book, but Gutt’s application of relevance theory to translation is interesting for translation theory as a whole because it takes into account the concern with preserving meaning, content, and style and expands the concept of communicative translation. Although the inversa class will be concerned mainly with translating Delisle’s “pragmatic” texts, nearly all texts are multifunctional, and even the most pragmatic texts may have “poetic” elements. Whatever their view of translation, translators are communicators addressing the TL audience.

Gutt’s theory is less useful when he discusses “translation where all is change” (1991, ch. 3). Relevance theory divides language use as communication into two categories: descriptive use and interpretive use. Gutt categorizes all translations in which the SLT is incidental, rather than crucial, as descriptive uses of language, and comes to the conclusion that they are not really translations and therefore do not need to be taken into consideration in any theory of translation. All “real” translations are examples of interpretive use of language.

Gutt uses an example from Hans Hönig and Paul Kussmaul’s Strategie der Übersetzung to illustrate translations in which the SLT is incidental rather than crucial. Hönig and Kussmaul discuss an advertisement for Viyella House from the point of view of the skopos of two possible translations. The first is a translation of the advertisement for the purpose of students studying the marketing strategy of Viyella House, so it must be strongly oriented to the SLT, in both form and content. The second is the creation of a corresponding advertisement for Germany. Gutt maintains that the second is not a translation.

There is some truth in what Gutt says, but when discussing translation everywhere else he is very careful to avoid diametrically opposed categories. It is impossible to find a text or translation in which only one function is important. Text categories are always referred to within a spectrum, in which functions are stronger or weaker. Gutt is probably right that the second Viyella House translation was a job for an advertising agency rather than a translation agency, and yet translators are asked to translate texts in which the actual words of the SLT are incidental.

Nord develops a theoretical model intended to cover all kinds of translation situations. Like Reiss and Vermeer, she gives priority to the skopos of the translation
and subordinates the demand for fidelity to the skopos rule. If the skopos demands a change of function, the required function of the translation will not be fidelity to the SLT but adequacy with regard to the skopos: “The function of the target text is not arrived at automatically from an analysis of the source text, but is pragmatically defined by the purpose of the intercultural communication” (Nord, 1991: 9). Examples of skopos may be very varied: a Spanish physicist asks for a translation of an American scientific paper to find out about the latest development in his field; an English businessman wants to open delicate negotiations with a Mexican company; a British publisher aims to publish a Spanish novel as a best-seller; a language teacher wants to find out if his students can tell the difference between the past perfect and the past simple. Nord goes so far as to say, “Functional equivalence between source and target text is not the ‘normal’ skopos of a translation, but an exceptional case in which the factor ‘change of function’ is assigned zero” (1991: 23). This is, perhaps, an exaggeration if all institutional and instructional translations are taken into account. However, professional translators do have to provide more than the layperson imagines by a translation. Gutt’s quotation from a translation-agency ad, found on the back cover of Language Monthly (Aug. 1987) was meant to support his position, but in fact it gives strength to the opposite claim.

More than a translation service . . .

Your translation requirement needs to be managed like any other aspect of your business; it has to dovetail into your overall marketing and publishing plans. We understand your environment and we offer very much more than a translation service.

This is an interesting example: whether the agency offers much more than a translation service is questionable. A professional asked to translate a handbook advertising the master’s degree in public administration offered by the politics department of the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona needs to know that the department’s marketing strategy is to send a glossy publication to the most prestigious universities in the United States in the hope of exchanging students, staff, research, and support. The translator needs to understand the environments of the Catalan and American universities. Discussing these factors with the co-ordinator of the program before starting work on the translation is providing a translation service. This is one of the lessons that a trainee translator must learn.

The Semiotic Dimension

If translation is recognized as a communicative act, perhaps translation theory, like discourse analysis, should be defined within a general theory of communication. Semiotics, too, is best defined within a general theory of communication, and the semiotic notion of intertextuality can be usefully applied to translation theory. The individual sign attains its value in relation to other signs. What applies to the individual sign applies all the more to the text in the semiotic, structuralist sense of
"a system of signs." The value of a text is attained in relation to other texts—that is, to its intertextuality.

The idea that translation is semiotics is not a new one. In 1980, Bassnett-McGuire suggested that translation can best be explained using semiotics: "The first step towards an examination of the processes of translation must be to accept that although translation has a central core of linguistic activity, it belongs most properly to semiotics, the science that studies sign systems or structures, sign processes and sign functions" (1980: 13). Hatim and Mason describe the translation process in terms of three dimensions:

1. The Communicative Dimension is an aspect of Context (i.e., the extra-contextual environment which exerts a determining influence on the language used) which includes all the variables related to Register (Field, Mode, and Tenor).
2. The Pragmatic Dimension is an aspect of Context which regulates Intentionality (i.e., the feature which determines the appropriateness of a linguistic form to the achievement of a communicative goal).
3. The Semiotic Dimension is an aspect of Context which regulates the relation of texts to each other as Signs. (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 237)

Hatim and Mason’s book is based firmly on the assumption that translating is a communicative process that takes place within a social context. While they present convincing evidence of the highly diverse nature of translation, they stress the need for an over-all model of the translation process based on a functional approach as suggested by Kelly: "It is only by recognising a typology of function that a theory of translation will do justice to both Bible and bilingual cereal packet" (1979: 226).

Translators make lexical and syntactic choices that are conditioned by the pragmatic action of a discourse, the purposes of utterances, and real-world conditions. They also have to be aware of the semiotic dimension that controls the interaction between discourse elements as signs within texts, between texts, and between the author of the SLT, the skopos of the translation, and the readers of the TLT. Hatim and Mason discuss genre, discourse, and intertextuality within the framework of semiotics and ideology.

Hatim is particularly interested in this dimension because of the vast ideological differences between the Arab and the Western worlds. The differences between Spain and Britain are not so great, and these differences have diminished over the last twenty years, due to economic, political, and cultural changes in Spain and the fact that both countries belong to the European Community. However, recent changes related to the end of the Cold War make it increasingly difficult to capture the ideological position of text producers and to predict their intentions. The old stereotypes are gone: "Nos encontramos así, fuera del confort intelectual de las viejas normas, y tenemos que vivir a la intemperie política, tratando de levantar, poco a poco, los nuevos refugios, practicando el manejo de lo imprevisible" (Fernandez Ordoñez, 1992: 13).
De Saussure assumed that "linguistics would be taken as a model semiotic system and that its basic concepts would be applied to other spheres of social and cultural life" (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 107). However, as later authors (Gumperz, 1982; Stubbs, 1983) have pointed out, semiotics transcends the study of language. Charles Pierce's (1931-58) semiotic analysis started with nonlinguistic signs and then identified the status of language in semiotic systems. This is why Hatim and Mason suggest an approach to the semiotic dimension of translation based on Pierce's categories. This is not a book about semiotics, and his categories have been simplified for pedagogical reasons. Pierce breaks the sign down into three parts: (1) whatever initiates identification of the sign; (2) the object of the sign; (3) the interpretant or the effect the sign is meant to relay.

To illustrate these parts of the sign, we could consider a nonlinguistic sign. In David Lodge's novel *Nice Work*, the characters Robyn Penrose and Vic Wilcox discuss a Silk Cut cigarette advertisement: "A photographic depiction of a rippling expanse of purple silk in which there was a single slit, as if the material had been slashed with a razor. There were no words on the advertisement, except for the Government Health Warning about smoking" (Lodge, 1988: 220). If we analyze this sign in terms of Pierce's three categories, the results could be: (1) The photograph of the slashed purple silk initiates the identification of the sign. (2) The object of the sign is the product being advertised—a packet of cigarettes. (3) The interpretant is the effect the sign is meant to relay, or, in general, the meaning of the sign. According to Robyn Penrose, the brand name "Silk Cut" originally signified a type or "cut" of tobacco that was the opposite of rough and would not give the smoker a sore throat. However, in the Silk Cut advertisement being analyzed, the sign has assumed wider meanings and connotations. These connotations are sexual: "The shimmering silk with its voluptuous curves and sensuous texture, obviously symbolised the female body, and the elliptical slit, foregrounded by a lighter colour showing through, was more obviously a vagina. The advert thus appealed to both sensual and sadistic impulses, the desire to mutilate as well as to penetrate the human body" (Lodge, 1988: 221). The sign, as understood by Pierce and others (Barthes, 1957; Eco, 1973), has an endless capacity to transform and take on other meanings and connotations.

The sign achieves significance through intertextuality. Texts are processed not by empty brains, but by minds already stocked with set ideas, a priori categories, prototypes, and, perhaps most importantly, agenda. In other words, text processing is usually ideologically determined. Each individual brain has its own set of categories, determined by interaction between the dominant discourse of a society and the different systems that make up a culture. Intertextual elements identify a given text as belonging to a particular cultural system. This brings us to Barthes's ideas about signs as generators of myths that may be short-lived, or may span centuries and help to define the value systems of entire cultures.

If translation is seen as transmitting the meaning of different signs from one culture to another, and if part of this meaning is achieved through the interaction
between different textual elements, the translator has to be able to recognize and identify the intertextuality in the SLT and transmit it in the TLT. Therefore, the translator has to identify, first, the form of an intertextual reference and, second, its function. Third, the translator has to determine the semiotic status of the reference in order to decide whether to give priority to form or to function. Usually, intentionality takes priority over information content (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 135).

In *Nice Work*, Vic Wilcox finds that some of Robyn’s theoretical explanations help him to understand the world around him. Trainee translators can also profit from such explanations. The prose class provides the appropriate conditions in which to consider the semiotic dimension of the text and the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of the sign. The SLT is in the students’ native language, and emphasis can be put on the first stage in the translation process: developing strategies to improve comprehension of the SLT. The students will also be more aware of the intertextuality, ideologies, and assumptions behind the SLT, and therefore will more easily recognize the semiotic dimension. It is a natural contextual situation in which to expand extralinguistic knowledge, an important part of training translators.

**Conclusion**

I have discussed briefly some translation-theory models and recent developments in related fields that can be of use in teaching translation. However, we may also do well to recognize the limitations of theory. As de Beaugrande warns, “It is inappropriate to expect that a theoretical model of translation should solve all the problems a translator encounters. Instead, it should formulate a set of strategies for approaching problems and for coordinating the different aspects entailed” (1978: 135).

Furthermore, the more idealized the theory and the data, the farther away they are from the real world and its “fuzzy” outlines. Translation is an activity anchored in the real world. Teaching translation is a euphemism for helping students learn how to translate, and translation teachers have to integrate insights from the different schools of translation theory. Perhaps Hewson and Martin (1991) are right: rather than one theory, we need a variational approach based on the practice and process of translating. The next section deals with this.