

# Ways to Translation

Editors

**Łukasz Bogucki**

**Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski**

**Piotr Stalmaszczyk**



# **Ways to Translation**

# **Łódzkie Studia z Językoznawstwa Angielskiego i Ogólnego** **Łódź Studies in English and General Linguistics**

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## Preface

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Translating from one language into another is a mathematical task  
Wittgenstein, *Zettel* 698

Every translation is an act of creation. Translation creates new entities, linguistic and semiotic, which makes it a crucial communicative activity. Little wonder that contemporary translation studies have a very wide scope and interface with disciplines as varied as linguistics, literary and culture studies, semiotics, communication studies, information and computer science, and philosophy.

This volume investigates the various ways to translation and translation studies. **Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk** provides a comprehensive overview of meaning theories, and concentrates on the issues of equivalence and indeterminacy of translation (also within a historical perspective). The author considers translation in cognitivist terms, i.e. as re-conceptualization of a source language message in the totality of its contexts and situations, and puts forward a typology of equivalence at language levels. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk demonstrates that, similarly to the whole field of translation studies, the scope of equivalence is getting more and more extended at present times.

**Jacek Waliński** focuses on units of translation and translation procedures. He distinguishes direct translation procedures (such as borrowing, calque, and literal translation), and oblique procedures (transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation). Waliński concludes that a careful analysis of possible taxonomies of translation procedures encourages one to look beyond simple structural alterations between source language and target language, and to see the role of the translator as a creative intermediary between the original author and the target audience in the process of translation-mediated communication.

The next two chapters are devoted to barriers in translating. **Janusz Wróblewski** first discusses the linguistic barriers, next the cultural ones, noting



though, that it is not always possible to differentiate between the two. He comments on the difficulties involved in translating word play and puns, and analyses different strategies and procedures applied by translators when confronted with such barriers. Since translation involves more than just linguistic operations, translators often face cultural barriers. Wróblewski focuses on the ‘cultural turn’ in Translation Studies, he discusses different aspects of linguistic and cultural transfer, and provides an interesting classification of culture-specific words and phrases and appropriate translation procedures.

Various theoretical perspectives have been applied to analysing translation processes and procedures. One of the most successful approaches has been proposed within Cognitive Linguistics. **Mikołaj Deckert** provides in his chapter an overview of selected cognitive models of translation analysis. He first lists the major features characterizing Cognitive Linguistics, and next discusses the Cognitive Linguistics approach to poetics of translation, referring to issues such as perspective, salience, and metaphor. Also this chapter mentions reconceptualization and the complex processes in which the source language message is reconceptualised in a number of cycles before it is expressed in the target language.

Contemporary Translation Studies pay close attention not only to linguistic theories, but also different methodologies, finding corpus linguistic methodology very promising. **Łukasz Grabowski** presents the scope of possible applications of language corpora and corpus linguistics methodology in empirical research on translation. He explicates the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methods offered by corpus linguistics, and discusses the three basic types of corpora (parallel, comparable, and monolingual comparable) extensively used in descriptive Translation Studies.

Communication has its multimodal dimension, and hence **Łukasz Bogucki** devotes his chapter to multidimensional translation, especially in audiovisual contexts. He observes that audiovisual translation is a dynamic genre whose main feature is the coexistence of visual and verbal communication, where the visual element is a feature distinguishing audiovisual translation from translation in the traditional sense. Bogucki discusses various aspects of multimodality in translation research and methodological issues involved in this research (such as multimodal analysis and transcription). Additionally, this chapter shows the importance of terminological issues and adequate nomenclature in all domains of Translation Studies.

**Adam Bednarek** and **Joanna Drożdż** tackle the issue of translation in the digital age and within digital space. They focus on different aspects of machine translation (with some historical context), computer tools employed in the process of translation, and on the important issue of localization. Localization ac-

counts for socio-cultural, linguistic and technical distinctions within appropriate markets, it involves the adjustment of the product and creation of new terminology, and hence provides very interesting challenges for both practitioners and theoretically oriented researchers. The authors discuss current trends in localization (such as website, software, and video game localization), and parameters of assessment.

Undoubtedly, it is literary translation which is considered as translation par excellence. **Jerzy Jarniewicz** observes that what makes literary translation different is, by definition, the kind of texts which it deals with, and that literary texts possess characteristic properties which determine the way they are read, disseminated, evaluated, interpreted and rendered into another language. Jarniewicz illustrates his discussion with examples of poetry translation, and shows the complexity of literary translation, also its possible multimodality and yet another dimension of the localization process (with translations considered an integral part of local literatures). Also this chapter stresses the creative aspect of translation and the author focuses on the open meaning of literary texts, which accounts, among other things, for the need of “new” translations of “old” texts.

The next two chapters are devoted to specialized translation. Within this field especially two areas require closer attention: legal translation and medical translation. Legal translation is often considered exceptionally challenging and demanding. **Łucja Biel** and **Stanisław Goźdz-Roszkowski** discuss the most important features of this genre, and point to such issues as legal effects of legal texts and discourse, questions of interpretation, and strict requirements on fidelity of translation. They also elucidate the concept of legal language, highlight the importance of legal terminology and phraseology, and stress that legal terms are unique to a legal system and do not easily transcend its boundaries. Further on, Biel and Goźdz-Roszkowski provide an overview of legal translation strategies and techniques; also this chapter includes discussion of equivalence, within the scope of specialized texts.

Medical translation, discussed by **Wioleta Karwacka**, brings its own challenges, connected with a very wide area of highly specialized knowledge. Additionally, medical texts include different genres, such as textbooks for medical students, popular texts on medicine, but also research papers, conference proceedings, case studies and case histories, reports and a variety of simple texts for patients (information leaflets, consent forms, brochures). Karwacka discusses properties of medical language (such as Latin and Greek terminology, frequent use of eponyms, acronyms and abbreviations), and briefly outlines the history of medical translation. She also mentions translation of medical texts for lay readers, where the criterion of user-friendliness adds yet another dimension to translation assessment (in both intralingual contexts and interlingual communication).

The chapter convincingly demonstrates that multi-disciplinary approach is most useful in medical translation practice and research.

Interpreting is the earliest form of translation, and still omnipresent. **Adam Bednarek** and **Paulina Pietrzak** provide a useful classification of interpreting types, divided according to the social context involved (such as community, conference, escort, media interpreting) and the manner of delivery (especially simultaneous, consecutive and whispered interpreting). Each type has its own important features, and poses interesting tasks for practice, teaching, and research. The authors also mention crucial differences between interpretation and “typical” translation, pointing to methodological consequences of these differences, and point to the necessary mental skills (such as concentration, mnemonic capacity) which contribute to a good performance by the professional interpreter.

**Paulina Pietrzak** investigates translation competence, stressing from the outset the elusiveness of the notion. The relevant components contributing to an appropriate level of competence include, among others, skills as complex and divergent as linguistic competence in the languages involved, cultural competence, factual competence in specialized fields and subfields, and technical competence. Pietrzak distinguishes process-oriented translation competence from product-oriented translator competence and discusses the consequences of this distinction for translator education.

**Jerzy Tomaszczyk** discusses borrowing from English and possible implications and challenges of the Anglicization of lexis for translators and translator training. He provides data illustrating the presence of English lexical items in new additions to Polish vocabulary as found in the Polish press, in different texts and in conversational Polish.

There exist numerous metaphors of translation (as diversified as, for instance bridge-building, border crossing, opening doors, changing clothes); in the opening quote Wittgenstein compares translating from one language into another to a mathematical task. This comparison points to the creative aspect of the process on the one hand, and to certain rigorous constraints on the other. Contributors to the present volume stress the creative aspect of translation, but also focus on different constraints, standards and challenges to translation practice.

Linguists from the Institute of English Studies at the University of Łódź contributed to a volume titled *Ways to Language* (Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, ed. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1988, new edition published as *New Ways to Language*, Łódź, 2010), a comprehensive introduction to contemporary linguistics and language studies. The current volume is inspired by this earlier handbook, both as far as the title is concerned, and also as a case of team work.

Piotr Stalmaszczyk

# Equivalence

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**Abstract:** The chapter is an extensive survey of main topics, concepts and definitions in the field of translational equivalence. The first sections present issues reflecting the relationship between linguistic theories of meaning and equivalence in terms of a comparison between formal, behavioural and cognitive approaches to meaning and translation. Touching upon the concept of *indeterminacy* in translation and the cognitive notion of language *commensurability* and translation units, the chapter presents a *theory of reconceptualization* as a theory of translation (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2010). Further sections discuss different types of equivalent structures in languages and the chapter concludes with a presentation of a classification of qualitative and quantitative equivalence types drawn from authentic language corpus data.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Linguistics, commensurability, conceptualization, construal, equivalence, frames, frequency of use, Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs), intertextuality, language corpora, mental spaces, re-conceptualization, semantic prosody, semantics, sociolect, speech acts, *tertium comparationis*, translation strategies, universals

## 1. Translation and Equivalence

Translation is broadly defined as the *rendering of a message or information* from one language (Source Language) into another language (Target Language). In other words, it is the establishing of the semantic – or meaning – equivalence between a *SL text*, or more precisely, *discourse*, and a *TL discourse*. Translation is *not* the substitution of one TL word/phrase/sentence for one SL word/phrase/sentence. It is the *re-creation of a whole SL discourse* in a (similar or comparable) TL context, and uttered/written with a *similar function* and a *similar communicative intention*. Translation, as any other communicative content, invariably involves the *re-conceptualization* of the original SL information into the TL context- and addressee-mediated message.

The concept of *equivalence* depends to a large extent on the definitions of *semantics* and *meaning* within a given model of language. The equivalence *practice* depends on the *type of text* translated (e.g., translation of a media or legal text requires a different approach than the translation of a poetic text) and *the function* of the message (e.g. film translation requires fulfilling a number of technical conditions and constraints, absent in the translation of fiction). Interpreting too, with all its specificity, permits, in some contexts e.g. community interpreting, more relaxed strategies with respect to the SL constraints and can get closer to what can be considered a more liberal form of rendition – a *paraphrase* – in which a SL text is a source of inspiration for the translator rather than a strictly constraining point of reference.

### 1.1. Meaning theories and equivalence

There are basically two approaches to linguistic meaning<sup>1</sup>. One says that the relation between man and reality is objective, i.e., human beings perform mental categorization of objectively existing things and phenomena within their contexts, which leads directly to the hypothesis of the *stability* of linguistic meaning and its *universality*.

An alternative semantic approach sees the origin of linguistic meaning in the human subject. Linguistic senses are rooted in the human mind and mediated by cognitive processes shared by all mankind. They are, however, *shaped by culture specific social conditions*, which make *semantic structures language-bound* and *not universal patterns*.

And yet, for translation to be possible, semantic approaches require a certain stable universal entity which can be regarded as a point of reference – *tertium comparationis* – between a SL and a TL utterance (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1999). The first, *objectivist*, approach to meaning, perceives the text as a stable pattern with one optimal (“best”) semantic interpretation. In the latter approach – cognitively oriented – the text is considered dynamic and less stable, lending itself to diverse numerous interpretations. In the first approach thus, a privileged position is occupied by the notion of the context-free *best translation*. The second philosophy assumes that the text is constantly subject to creative interpretation through listening, reading and, indeed, translation. Therefore, the concept of the *best translation* loses much of its sense, while what requires a more stable

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<sup>1</sup> The present chapter is based on Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2010, 2012, 2013. Cf. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2004 for a thorough study of the relationship between semantics and translation.

value are rather human cognitive abilities and mental operations of universal character. Most of the contemporary theories of meaning, particularly those cognitively based, address the question of SL – TL equivalence from this perspective.

The preservation of the original SL meaning in the TL is implemented in terms of achieving the *optimal resemblance* (comparability) between the SL and TL texts. As meaning is portrayed not only in the semantic content of the message but also resides in its *form*, cases where it is not semantic *content* but the *way* the message is expressed is given priority include instances of the ‘phonemic translation’ of poetry (Lefevere 1975). In such cases it is the sound, syntax, rhythm, melody or rhymes of the verse that are taken to be components of its ‘literal meaning’ rather than the semantic representation. This can be observed in the translation of children’s poetry e.g., the title *The Cat in the Hat* by Dr Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel), is translated by Stanisław Barańczak to retain the rhythm and rhyme as Polish. *Kot Prot*. Equally important, particularly in children’s literature, are *paratextual elements* in translation (visual form of the text, typographic details, illustrations, see Oittinen 2000).

Faithfulness in semantic representation may also be disregarded in favour of other factors such as constraints resulting from rhymes, puns or other play on words (Gutt 1991:131).

Cognitively based approaches to language assume a *holistic* approach to meaning, represented in terms of *Idealized Cognitive Models* (ICMs) (Fillmore 1982, Lakoff 1987), which include the representation of linguistic senses in the context of cognitive knowledge frames (e.g., the word *cauliflower* is considered a flower in the *BOTANY* knowledge frame and a vegetable in terms of *CUISINE*.) The approach to meaning proposed by the linguistic theory of *Relevance* (Sperber and Wilson 1986) on the other hand and its application to translation theory (Gutt 1991, Bogucki 2004), assumes that it is not only the semantic content and the way a message is represented that is of importance but also a (similar) degree of *mental processing effort* related to the message that is considered a parameter in establishing the closest possible equivalents across the languages.

Most of the contemporary approaches to meaning permit to incorporate not only a strictly semantic layer of meaning but also what is conventionally assumed to be the *pragmatic* realm of language, i.e., the speaker/author-intended meaning in their frameworks, vital for the interpretation of the original text and its translation into receptor language.

## 2. Historical approaches to equivalence

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the first scholarly attempts at capturing the nature of translation. In the thirties the outlook on translation was inspired by German *field-theories* (Trier 1931) and later in the sixties – by Chomsky's Transformational-Generative (TG) theory of language (Chomsky 1964). They were formal approaches, based mainly on a system of *necessary and sufficient conditions* of word meanings such as e.g., a feature matrix for the word *boy* is proposed to include the components (+animate, +human, +male, +young).

Eugene Nida (1964) adopted a part of the formal theory dealing with the TG deep and surface structures and extended a formal, linguistic concept of *equivalence* towards the functioning of linguistic signs in the socio-cultural context in terms of what he labels the “functional definition of meaning” and “functional equivalence” between SL and TL texts. The concepts of formal correspondences and literal meaning, characteristic of traditional investigation thus gave way to the notions of *dynamic meaning* and *dynamic equivalence*. For example, besides the literal equivalents between Polish and English as in: A: *proszę* B: *dziękuję* and their *literal* English counterparts (?)A: *please*. B: *thank you*, a functionally more adequate dynamically equivalent exchange should be proposed: A: *here you are* B: *thank you* A: *you're welcome*.

Early seventies bring a new interest in Translation Studies (TS) treated as an independent empirical discipline which developed in the literary circles partly as a reaction to the universalist tendencies in the rigorously formalised TG trend. TS scholars are interested more in translation as a process than translation as a product. The older semantic queries concerning equivalence, identity, reference, and the like, are replaced by questions of the relationship between the SL and TL in the framework of the inventory of meaning conventions characteristic of SL and TL cultures.

With the rise of Speech-Act (SAT)-based theories of meaning (Searle 1979), there appear new trends in translation theory, this time – based on speech acts. The SL speech-act, with its locution, illocutionary force, and intended *perlocutionary effects*, is performed under certain social and interactional conditions. The translated speech act is rarely strictly identical to the original SL speech act. The task of the translator is to fill the gap to the extent possible in the TL. In the SL oriented translation the locutions in the TL may be similar or even identical to those of the SL, so most of the original message form has a chance to be preserved in the translation, but the illocutionary force and thus, perlocutionary effects may be entirely or partly different. The translation then may not reach the