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Article abstract

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THE APPLICATION OF THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS FROM A NUMBER OF DISCIPLINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING IN INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING

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RÉSUMÉ

Après avoir présenté brièvement l'interprétation et la traduction en tant qu'activités langagières, on examine l'importance des domaines extra-linguistiques dans la structure explicative pour l'exécution de travaux d'interprétation et de traduction. On analyse la contribution de différentes branches de la linguistique à l'interprétation et à la traduction. Une exploration des possibilités de développement des approches pédagogiques et un relevé des orientations futures dans ce secteur sont proposés.

INTRODUCTION

I would like to begin by thanking the Key Centre for Asian Languages and Studies for organizing this first Workshop on research in Interpreting and Translation; The educators group (the Interpreter and Translator Educators Association of Australia) has been meeting for twelve years and has made a number of attempts to tackle the question of research but without administrative backup and clear directions these have not proved successful.

It is really this last point that has prompted me to attempt to formalise some of the reasons I think there has been a lack of direction.

I believe it has taken such a long time to get to this point for two main reasons: the first being the involvement in teaching in this field mainly of people with a language and/or language teaching background; the second reason is the general ignorance about interpreting and translating not only in the community at large but especially in areas crucial to the profession.

Where does this leave us with research and teaching?

As in many other areas of endeavour, there has been considerable conflict between those who consider interpreting and translating innate skills and thus shun all notions of training or theoretical considerations and those, like the writer, who believe that practice which is not informed by a theoretical framework, suffers from the idiosyncrasies of practitioners, reduces the teaching of the skills to a regurgitation of recipes and the practice to a concern for the personal qualities and authority of the practitioner.

The existence of a theoretical framework for interpreting and translating may be claimed by some but I believe that there is a collection of fragments which are waiting for some serious research effort to be brought together for two main applications: teaching and practice.

The aim of this paper is to present some of these fragments and hopefully stimulate some discussion on the possibilities of drawing some of the information together for the

benefit of most of us who are teaching in this field. This presentation cannot claim to be exhaustive and should be considered as an exploration.

Much work needs to be done to refine the theoretical framework and in some instances, to discover other perspectives or new applications of old perspectives.

After a brief examination of interpreting and translating as language activities the paper will consider the contribution of areas outside linguistics to an explanatory framework for the performance of interpreting and translating tasks; it will then discuss the contribution of different branches of linguistics to some aspects of interpreting and translating and finally it will explore possibilities for the development of teaching methodologies and point to some future directions in this area.

INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING AS LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

It may seem trite to state that interpreting and translating are language activities, yet it is this very fact that clouds the issues when language competence and performance are confused with interpreting and/or translating ability. It goes without saying that competence in the two languages in question is a *sine qua non* for interpreting and/or translating just as competence in mathematics is a prerequisite for physics.

The above statements require some elaboration:

Interpreting and translating are activities which involve communication, as such they can be defined as the transfer of a MESSAGE from one linguistic code to another. Unlike messages transferred between speakers of the same language, interpreting and translation involve language mediation. A popular model of communication includes a sender who encodes a message in a code that the receiver will understand (usually their common language or sign system) and a corresponding operation of decoding on the part of the receiver of the message so that whatever the sender intended to communicate is that which the receiver decodes. Of course this system is imperfect. The interpreter or translator is interposed between the sender and receiver and has to act both as the receiver of the original message and the sender of the same message in a different code to achieve the objective of the original sender.

It is important that the above distinction between language transfer (or transposition) and message tranfer is clearly maintained in any discussion of theoretical frameworks. The use of translation as a language teaching methodology has given rise to a great deal of confusion about the nature of translation because at the level of the single lexical item the distinction between message and language transfer is not always easily made.

Taken from the point of view of each of the clients of an interpreter or translator, the activities of interpreting and translating can be considered as "normal" language activities and therefore could be approached and studied as such. In other words the communicative function of language without reference to another language could be considered, as indeed it has been by a large number of scholars. It seems that at the macro level, taking interpreting as an example, we have three phases of a process: firstly the communication function of the speaker vis-a-vis the interpreter, secondly what the interpreter does to process the message and thirdly the communication function of the interpreter vis-a-vis the intended receiver of the message.

Any theoretical framework would need to account for the above process; the first and third phases have been well covered by work in linguistics over decades; what needs further attention is a) whether phases one and three are different to a single language communication situation, b) how can the research already carried out be applied to an interpreted situation and c) what actually happens during phase two of the process. Some work in each of these areas has already been done (Seleskovich 1978, Lederer 1973, Larson 1984, Newmark 1988, Nida 1964, etc.) but a unified and coherent approach to

these questions is yet to emerge. For instance the work of Seleskovich has emphasised, among other things, the importance of the consideration of the message and its impact, while Larson has looked at the process of translation from a more didactic and no less useful perspective, providing a wealth of insights about the ephemeral nature of lexical items and the importance of "skewing" between the surface structure and the meaning of text. Newmark's contribution is his healthy skepticism about translation theory and the invaluable observations about the way languages and translators "behave".

THE CONTRIBUTION OF AREAS OUTSIDE LINGUISTICS

As indicated above, the essential element in the activities of interpreting and translating is the transfer of a message; this by itself implies that there is an extralinguistic component inherent to the activities. It is here that other areas contribute to the understanding of the interpreting and translating process; at this point, distinctions between interpreting and translating must be made.

As you all know, interpreting is usually used to refer to the transfer of oral messages, either consecutively or simultaneously, and translating to the transfer of written messages. (American usage employs 'translation' for both activities). There are, however, areas of activity which are a little difficult to categorize as either interpreting or translating, viz. "sight translation/traduc-a vue".

The following discussion applies to both interpreting and translating but to different degrees.

The first area outside the scope of linguistics is that of memory; the interest here is the study of the role of memory in interpreting and translating tasks. This role may be very obvious in the case of consecutive interpretation but the question of memory becomes extremely complicated when one is dealing with simultaneous interpreting, even though some writers deny the role of memory in this mode of interpretation. The study of these phenomena is usually but not always, placed in the realm of psychology.

The question of memory "training" within interpreting and translating courses is something quite controversial. We do not know how to isolate so-called errors of memory; the relationship between cognitive content of utterances, their comprehension and transfer in another code is not well understood; there are problems with establishing cause and effect; it is difficult to attribute the cause of inaccurate interpretation, for example, to lapses in memory (even though this is what is adduced by many students). The whole physiological and biochemical dimensions of memory are being investigated but, to my knowledge, without any particular focus on the aspects which interest interpreters, and increasingly, translators. I note, *en passant*, the increasing role of memory in translation when it is done by utilising a computer as a word processor.

The relationship between the visual presentation of a message in a set of notes for consecutive interpretation is another area of interest which has only been cursorily explored by interpreters themselves (Rozan 1952, Henderson 1976 for example) and which belongs perhaps to the field of semiotics about which I shall comment later. This whole aspect poses one of the more difficult pedagogic problems in that the idea of notes is at once idiosyncratic and requires the presentation of a number of guiding principles which maximize the quality of the interpretation. The teaching methodology utilised around the world relies simply on practice. I think this is unsatisfactory because the teaching of note-taking could, in fact, encapsulate many of the other fundamental aspects of interpreting. The difficulty lies in separating the teaching of a system from the task of interpretation.

The fields of proxemics and kinesics are useful for discussions of spatial arrangements in an interpreting situation. Voice production and stress management are two other essential elements in interpreting which lie outside the scope of linguistics.

The field of anthropology, in a broad sense, has a role to play in understanding the interpreting and translating process in that it provides a basis for culturally appropriate "interpretations" of utterances. It is this area which appears as the "cultural" component in NAATI's guidelines. There are dilemmas and question marks in this area as well. There is the claim that some cultural knowledge is not "teachable" and that one must absorb it through the pores of one's skin and the counter claim that it is not necessary for an interpreter or translator to belong to a certain cultural group in order to be able to perform adequately. This argument seems futile, yet time and again, it is the sort of intuitive knowledge about what is appropriate in that particular situation that differentiates a satisfactory interpretation or translation from a poor one. Can teaching make any difference in this area? Should we adopt the European/American model of large doses of institutions-oriented studies such as economics, politics and in some case for us, education, health etc.?

Finally philosophy can provide some insights into the ethical and moral dilemmas inherent to the activities of interpreting and translating. This fact may be perplexing to our European colleagues but is all too real in our situation where we interpret for different groups within the one country.

The above considerations may lead the reader to deduce a certain net separation between each contributing discipline: this is only a function of exposition and does not imply that each area is so circumscribed as to be independent from the others, for example voice production draws on phonetics, anatomy, physics etc.

Semiotics is a difficult area to classify for different reasons. I do not wish to enter into the debate over semiology and semiotics; from my point of view, semiotics is the study of signs and therefore it subsumes linguistics which studies particular "signs". I shall therefore, without necessarily implying a deep theoretical conviction on the place of semiotics vis-a-vis linguistics, discuss the role of semiotics in this section. The main areas where semiotics can contribute to the understanding of the interpreting and translating process are in the considerations of the interaction between reader and text and in the whole question of non-verbal communication.

The first of these areas refers to what I have defined as the first and third phases of the process (see above). It is predicated upon a dynamic model of the interaction between the reader and the text, sometimes referred to as "action theory" (Arcaini 1982). Essentially this approach sees the reader as a creator of a text particular to him, influenced not only by what the author has written or said, but also by the contribution made by the reader or hearer in his or her own microcosm. Some semioticians have presented this in general terms, for example Umberto Eco (1979), others have applied it to the question of translation (Petofi 1981, Arcaini 1982, Mel'čuk 1978). The implications for translation include questions of the subjectivity of a translation task (and hence, for the teacher, of its evaluation), the consideration of the limits of the text e.g. what constitutes a text and how it is circumscribed (this point has also been taken up by text linguistics (DeBeaugrande & Dressler 1981), and the whole question of interpretation of the text in terms of "explication" or exegesis (from whose point of view should a text to be translated be analysed? How do we cater for different "readings"? (Uspensky 1973)

The area of non-verbal communication is applicable more to interpreting, of course, and raises such issues for the interpreter as the amount of conversion the interpreter has to do from non-verbal to verbal communication. The communication of attitude, emphasis and emotion, especially in some cultures, is achieved by means of non-linguistic signs such as facial expression, posture, gesture which are often not redundant elements in an interaction. For example, if we consider emphasis, i.e. accentuation of a certain response, and look at an example from Italian culture we find that a linguistically neutral

utterance accompanied by certain gestures equals what in English would constitute a gesture neutral, but linguistically emphatic utterance. If a person accompanies a refusal for another helping of food, for example, with a slight backward movement of the head, the listener would interpret that as a polite but firm refusal; while in linguistic terms "No grazie" could be translated as "No more, thank you", the message is actually "I really don't want anymore, thank you". To my knowledge this aspect is not tackled in the literature on interpreting.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DIFFERENT AREAS WITHIN LINGUISTICS

All discussion on interpreting and translating presupposes a theory of language. It is only within this framework (whether implicit or explicit) that one can identify and evaluate the problems inherent to the activities of interpreting and translating. Works on translation have tended to cover the spectrum from highly theoretical treatments of the "problem" (sic) of translation (see for example Catford 1965) to the manual/guide approach (see for example Bonino 1980, Newmark 1981).

The authors who have discussed their theoretical basis often refer to a Chomskyan model; it seems that the notion of deep and surface structure fits in very well with the perennial problems interpreters and translators have with the differences between form and meaning (Larson 1984) and works well as an explanatory tool for the teaching of the skills. No inference should be drawn that translation theorists share all of Chomsky's propositions. A general linguistics approach has also spawned the idea of "levels of equivalence" and Catford (1965) used these Firthian or Hallidayan concepts to talk about "lexical equivalence", "syntactic equivalence" and even "phonetic equivalence". These have proved, in my opinion, to be less than productive in advancing theoretical discussions on interpreting and translating and producing methodologies for teaching.

More fruitful avenues have emerged from what have been called branches of linguistics or border disciplines, namely sociolinguistics, neurolinguistics, pragmatics and psycholinguistics and other, difficult to classify areas or approaches within linguistics, such as discourse analysis, text linguistics and stylistics.

The move towards the consideration of language activities in their social context has influenced thinking in translation and interpreting and moved it from the Catford model towards what Newmark (1981) calls "communicative" translation. In this approach, which can be fairly classified as sociolinguistic, the translator or interpreter pays much more attention to the "dynamic equivalence" of the text which entails a recognition of the importance of the social context and the function of the text within that given context. Pergnier (1980), in treating this aspect, also introduces the idea of the interpreter/translator as the "fortuitous" receiver of messages and thus introduces an important element which one could call the "social setting of the translator" which no doubt impinges on the practice of translation and opens up the whole question of the synchronic or diachronic relationship of the translator to the text. This is obviously more significant for translators of non-contemporary texts but could be a problem even in technical translation.

Here we have a slightly different concept of the translator as the sender of the message, a message which per force is constrained by new situational variables since the sender is now another person and the representative of an idiom with consequent incongruities in the knowledge base between the author of the text and the translator.

The "communicative" translation approach has also provided some welcome relief from the centuries-old dichotomy with which translation has been plagued: the literal vs free question.

Neurolinguistics is contributing to the area of interpreting and simultaneous interpreting in particular, with the work being carried out at the University of Trieste to

further our understanding of the role of each cerebral hemisphere in the performance of simultaneous interpreting (Gran & Fabbro 1988) and the work of Lambert (1989). A number of experiments are being done which utilise such techniques as dichotic listening and which are yielding interesting results not only for the teaching of interpreting but also for the selection of students for interpreting courses.

Speech act theory, as applied to translation and interpreting, provides some insights into the first phase of the process, i.e. the interpreter/translator as a receiver and his/her ability to capture the illocutionary force of an utterance. The connection here was made by Steiner (1975), taken up by others such as Arcaini (1982) who has looked at the role of contextual information known by both sender and receiver and the place of the translator in attempting to "discover" what this shared knowledge is in order to fully appreciate the intentionality of utterances. Shuler (1985) has attempted to use speech act theory as a method of assessment of translation quality.

The interest of psycholinguistics in the problems of interpreting and translating is relatively mild. The scope for applying knowledge about language processing to this area is probably vast. Some recent work (Seguinot 1987) using protocol analysis to discover the processes involved in the translation task is promising as is the contribution of Ng and Obana (in these proceedings); this area still requires further development and refinement but the prospects are exciting.

Discourse analysis and text linguistics can be considered together for our purposes. The former has attempted to tackle another vexing question in the field of translation, namely the "unit of translation" (UT). Basically this refers to the portion or "chunk" of text which is considered the optimal size for submitting to the process of translation. Since the theoretical standpoint of discourse analysis and indeed of text linguistics considers coherence and cohesion as the features binding the text, it is directly relevant to the translator who is *ipso facto* interested in the logical development of a text and is relying on internal textual cues to decide the size of the UT. Newmark (1983) has connected the notion of discourse analysis with that of text typology. The latter concept has interested those working in the area of text linguistics (DeBeaugrande & Dressler 1981) and given rise to a substantial literature on text typology as applied to translation, the main proponent being Wilss (1982).

The outcome of research in the field of discourse analysis has helped the translator to focus on what he/she presumably already knew, that is, the consideration of the implications of text at a larger-than-sentence level; although Newmark (1983) maintains (quite correctly in my view) that undue emphasis on the total discourse is not necessarily helpful to the translator, the benefits of this approach are not to be ignored. Analyses of conversational structure, genre and discourse strategies help the translator to reach a level of understanding of the text much more quickly and allow for a degree of anticipation and prediction which is much more precise than that obtained by purely syntactical analyses.

The attempt to categorize text types for the benefit of translators brings us to the last area of consideration, that of stylistics. In chronological order this was perhaps the first which was systematically applied to translation for French/English (Vinay & Darbelnet 1973). In some ways it cannot be considered as a theoretical approach for it provides a multitude of examples with some very perceptive observations which, while useful to the translator, are very difficult to draw together in a coherent statement of principles.

POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

There are at least three areas which are of interest to those involved in the teaching of interpreting and translating and which should be products of the theoretical

underpinnings of the profession, namely, the sequencing of teaching material, the choice of material and the evaluation of student performance.

In undergraduate courses in Australia the question of the parallel acquisition of language skills and interpreting and translating skills provides the first obstacle. The tasks of interpreting and translating require a preexisting level of language competence and the development of other non-linguistic skill elements as indicated. The first methodological implication therefore is that language teaching should disappear from interpreting/translating courses. This may mean that undergraduate courses as such should disappear and alternative and appropriate language programs be added to current undergraduate language courses as preparatory stages for postgraduate interpreting or translating training.

The distinction between interpreting and translating as apparent from the foregoing should make us question the wisdom of training people for both interpreting and translating since the differences should start at the selection stage. (I am aware of the industrial reality which in some States is demanding both skills where once they were advertising for one or the other.) I guess this is yet another battle which must be fought!

Let me take up some of the teaching approaches already mentioned in the paper. I'll use one example from translation and another from interpreting by way of illustration.

In translation, if we pursue the idea of the difference in temporal terms between the text when it is written and the text when it is translated we immediatly see that our methodology must include some discussion and practice of the effects of diachrony on texts, perhaps divided into text types or in some other manner. This would provide the opportunity for translations of texts written perhaps centuries ago and of some texts of a different kind, say, technical, which were written two years ago. It is at the point of correction/discussion of those texts that elements such as the traps for the translator vis-a-vis his/her role as "fortuitous" receiver can be made. It seems that thus far the organization of didactic material has given more importance to theme or subject matter than to issues in translation. Exceptions to this can be found in the papers by Uchiyama and Campbell in this collection. If we take another example from translation, the form/meaning construct can be well illustrated by the occasional back translation or the back translation of a text which the student has translated some time before.

For an example from interpreting I would like to return to the semiotics of note-taking. Is a graded set of exercises to illustrate the principles of note-taking worth doing? What benefits are there in practising each aspect in isolation? How do we cater for individual preferences in giving students feedback if the performance of the interpretation is the litmus test? In my opinion the global nature of interpreting and/or translating needs to be broken down in order to teach it well.

In conclusion, it seems high time that we freed ourselves from the shackles of any single discipline, be it linguistics or language pedagogy, and we started to work on a didactic specific to interpreting/translating which is based on a theoretical framework which by definition needs to draw on these and many more areas of study and research.

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