Meta
Journal des traducteurs
Translators' Journal

META

Translation and the Application of Linguistics

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Volume 39, Number 2, juin 1994

La traduction vue de l'extérieur - Translation: a view from the outside

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/002486ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/002486ar

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Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (print)
1492-1421 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Dasgupta, P. (1994). Translation and the Application of Linguistics. *Meta*, *39*(2), 374–386. https://doi.org/10.7202/002486ar

Article abstract

This article explores some topics at the boundary between linguistics theory and the applied linguistic foundations of the practice of translation. Section 1, *The irrelevance of the avant-garde* , considers the relation between such academic adventures as semiotics and poststructuralism on the one hand and the theory of language and the practice of translation on the other, and argues that radical antiscientism does not bear on the foundations of translation. Section 2, *The irrelevance of the technical* , looks at formal syntax and semantics in relation to the concepts of applied linguistics and shows that careful contemporary linguistics cannot underpin an applied enterprise that includes translation studies. Section 3, *The substantive hase of translation* , indicates (in some detail for translation and at a general level for other applied linguistic activities) the direction that the contemporary integration of various lines of linguistic research is taking vis-à-vis the needs of such applied enterprises as translation, literary studies, language planning, lexicography, and language teaching. Section 3 invokes a concept of substance as opposed to form and thus sets the scene for the concluding section 4, *Pragmatics, applied studies, and scientific progress* , which argues that it is necessary to take help from linguistics in order to construct the field of translation studies in such a way that practitioners can truly benefit freely from all relevant branches of knowledge, in view of the fact that chaos is an obstacle to genuine freedom.

TRANSLATION AND THE APPLICATION OF LINGUISTICS

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Résumé

Les sujet étudiés dans cet article se situent à la limite entre la théorie linguistique et les fondements de la linguistique appliquée dans la pratique de la traduction. On y affirme i) qu'un antiscientisme radical ne porte *pas les fondements de la traduction ; ii) que la linguistique contemporaine modérée ne peut soutenir n'importe quelle entreprise incluant l'étude de la traduction ; et iii) qu'il est nécessaire d'accepter l'aide que la linguistique peut apporter dans le champ des études traductionnelles de façon à ce que les praticiens puissent bénéficier librement de toutes les branches de la connaissance puisque l'on croit que le chaos est un obstacle à la liberté réelle.*

This article explores some topics at the boundary between linguistics theory and the applied linguistic foundations of the practice of translation. Section 1, *The irrelevance of the avant-garde*, considers the relation between such academic adventures as semiotics and poststructuralism on the one hand and the theory of language and the practice of translation on the other, and argues that radical antiscientism does not bear on the foundations of translation. Section 2, *The irrelevance of the technical*, looks at formal syntax and semantics in relation to the concepts of applied linguistics and shows that careful contemporary linguistics cannot underpin an applied enterprise that includes translation studies. Section 3, *The substantive base of translation*, indicates (in some detail for translation and at a general level for other applied linguistic activities) the direction that the contemporary integration of various lines of linguistic research is taking *vis-à-vis* the needs of such applied enterprises as translation, literary studies, language planning, lexicography, and language teaching. Section 3 invokes a concept of substance as opposed to form and thus sets the scene for the concluding section 4, *Pragmatics, applied studies, and scientific progress*, which argues that it is necessary to take help from linguistics in order to construct the field of translation studies in such a way that practitioners can truly benefit freely from all relevant branches of knowledge, in view of the fact that chaos is an obstacle to genuine freedom.

1. THE IRRELEVANCE OF THE AVANT-GARDE

There is a widespread feeling in many circles that such enterprises as the interpretation, criticism, and translation of texts, especially of literary texts, require some sort of humanistic approach rather than any scientific expertise. This feeling is often wedded to a certain rootedness in practice (rather than theory) or in the specificity of a region with its needs (rather than the abstract generality of a discipline with its vicissitudes); in such cases, there is no problem in principle. For instance, the person saying translators do not need linguistics may be a practising translator who finds that the urgent exigencies of real life call for an immediate activism that leaves no time for the subtleties of scientific research or understanding. Or the person may be someone loyal to the cause of Gujarati studies (say) who believes that this unified cultural discipline must take priority, both in

funding decisions and in the thinking of those who wish to study Gujarat and the Gujaratis, over intersecting international enterprises like linguistics or sociology or archaeology which try to define objects of study in disciplinary terms. Such rootedness in practice and loyalty to regional realities may lead to distrust of or impatience with the scientific enterprise of (say) linguistics. But these are soluble problems. They do not represent the hostile, anti-scientific forces that the present section is mostly concerned with. An activist or a regionalist is committed to urgent needs and will not reject a scientific enterprise which respects this sense of urgency, an enterprise which in its applied wing tries to meet activists and regionalists half-way.

Thus, to the extent that a humanistic approach to the interpretation, criticism, and translation of texts simply means that the regional specialist or the practising translator concentrates on a language (or a language-pair) as a preferred domain of activity and brings the accumulated knowledge of a life-time of such concentration to bear on the task of evaluating the ideas and suggestions of cosmopolitan or scientific linguists who wish to work with regionalists and practitioners, there is obviously no real quarrel between the specificity of the humanistic approach and the generality of the scientific enterprise. Consequently linguists too can endorse, to this extent, the widespread view that such fields as translation studies and language teaching should be constructed around the autonomous activities of practitioners who need not have specialized training in technical linguistic science. But the tacit understanding is that these practitioners, while retaining their independence, will freely draw upon the resources which linguistics makes available to them.

It is the systematic violation of this tacit understanding by certain extreme advocates of the linguistics-independent study of texts that leads linguists to take a different stance towards their extremism. These radical views, which are called *avant-garde* in this section, explicitly reject the scientific approach to the study of human language and form part of a broader anti-scientism, which regards science as an inappropriate way of examining human affairs in general.

This section argues that the avant-garde proposal to put literary studies on an anti-scientific foundation in its general form — instantiated in such actual tendencies as semiotics, deconstruction, and post-structuralism, when these terms are taken to refer to movements with a message rather than domains of inquiry — is in fact both socio-culturally and academically reactionary rather than radical and fails to serve the needs of real-life translation and textual interpretation. However, these failings of the avant-garde theorists do not absolve us of our duty to learn from the rational kernel of what they have been doing and saying; we have tried to fulfil this responsibility elsewhere (Dasgupta 1990), an effort continued in section 3 of the present paper. Another way to redress any imbalance brought about by the present section's polemic against the avant-garde is to point out that there are also problems with the prevalent interpretation of the applicability of scientific linguistics; this we do in section 2.

Turning now to the avant-garde argument for a science-free theory of textual studies, we shall first present and then criticize an idealized formulation of the argument, prescinding from certain variations. There are both problems and advantages with this procedure. One problem is that many will object to what they take to be misrepresentations of particular avant-garde authors. But I have found that it is a frustrating and pointless exercise to try to argue against particular avant-garde authors, because they define their way out of counter-arguments, essentially by claiming to play a language-game in which such a thing as constructing a successful counter-argument to their proposals is *ab initio* impossible; this is natural, since they do not believe in science and thus refuse to acknowledge the possibility of criticism. This is why I prefer to focus on the main advan-

tage of the procedure followed here. The advantage is that, if I succeed in arguing against the idealized version of the avant-garde argument which I present here, to the satisfaction of a reader who believes in some particular avant-garde theory **T** but who holds that my idealization fails to do justice to **T**, then at least I can ask believers in **T** to clarify how **T** eludes the counter-argument offered here. Such a clarification, trying as it does to dissociate **T** in crucial respects from my idealization here, will inevitably infect avant-garde discourse with the scientific spirit, whereupon avant-gardism will wither away.

I am going to number the points in my idealization of the avant-garde and letter the points in my criticism thereof.

(I) The initial move in the avant-garde argument, which removes texts and other forms of language use (conversations, utterances, expressions) from the purview of a science of language, or sidelines linguistics by offering a parallel and superior thematization of forms (texts and subtexts) in terms of a specifically non-scientific theory, says that linguistics as a positive science is in principle unable to make valid statements pertaining to the domain of culture or history which is the natural home of texts and subtexts.

(II) Move (I) is a version of the bifurcation thesis, the thesis that human affairs are intrinsically unavailable for scientific investigation since they involve a factor that may be called human or subjective or conscious or rational. But a simple bifurcation thesis leaves open the door to a careful linguistics in some human sciences framework. The avant-garde argument goes beyond that mild, humanist form of unwillingness to subject intuitively arrived at conclusions to systematic scrutiny, and makes a second move, which one may call the anti-humanist move. This move says that the human/subjective/conscious/rational element is in fact some sort of false consciousness or ideology which masquerades as common sense and insidiously governs all normal discourse, rendering it pre-critical and thus not to be taken seriously by the avant-garde commentator. Thus an anthropology or a history trying to be scientific cannot in fact function, for the point in such an enterprise whould be to thematize culture or history, when in fact we all need to wake up from the dream in which we think that culture or history is real. Thanks to move (II), avant-garde theorists in trouble with some critic can always opt out of the debate by claimimg that there is no common ground that would make dialogue possible, for what the critic adduces as common ground is *problematic* because it is presented in *pre-critical* or *humanist* terms.

(III) After move (I) disables the natural sciences and move (II) disqualifies all possible mental or cultural sciences, one could still imagine a discursive or textual science proposing and using concepts and building theories with conceptual tools of some sort, perhaps without dialogue with any other discipline but nevertheless following autonomous rules. However, hard-core avant-garde work insists on a third move, the anti-theoretical move, which says that avant-garde metatextual or metadiscursive practice can never legitimately construct theories or concepts, for that would be an unrealistic, idealistic attempt to bridge gaps — between different thinkers belonging to different places and times — which are not legitimately bridgeable in view of the context-bound nature of whatever any thinker says or does. Avant-garde work is a series of happenings; any unities one may read into them (when one speaks of deconstruction as a movement, for instance) are unofficial; there is only a dispersion of plural discursive activity. However, some authors consent to speak of such work as theory, construing this as a mass noun meaning 'theoretical practice', a frequently used synonym.

(IV) From these postulates of textual theory the avant-garde argument derives certain important theorems. For continuity of numbering we shall call the first theorem *move (IV)*: no text is to be interpreted in terms of meanings intended by the author, for there is nothing real that could be called the author's subjectivity from which such intentions

could have arisen (by move (II)), and a text cannot be seen as projecting a world of its own, since one cannot identify two text-occurrences across time or space as the **same** text, as that would be an illicit theorization (move (III)). To summarize move (IV): you can never validly legislate about how a given text is to be read (you can only invite a reader to do it your way, and this is always unofficial). This is the anti-interpretive theorem.

(V) Then there is the anti-fidelity theorem that applies to translation. It says that it is illegitimate to speak of a translation being faithful or unfaithful to the original, as move (IV) shows that there is no specific construal to be faithful or unfaithful to.

(VI) Finally, we have the anti-clarity theorem applicable to all writing by avant-garde and fellow-traveller writers. It states that aiming for expository clarity in writing always subordinates the new text to old canons of exposition and fails to force the reader's attention (the way obscure avant-garde writing does) into new paths which alone can break the insidious hold humanism has on the non-avant-garde mind; thus, one must write at a distance from the language of ordinary thought. This applies also to the texts one is writing as a translator. Thus, move (VI) reinforces move (V).

(VII) Moving into what is assumed to be the home ground of linguistics, avant-garde work proposes a hypothesis about the relations between forms and meanings in texts in general. We may call it the anti-analytical hypothesis. It says that the meaning of any linguistic expression — word, sentence, discourse — is inexhaustibly multiple and crucially unanalyzable.

Abstracting away from existing differences between a natural science construal and a formal science construal of the scientific enterprise of linguistics, we can easily see that linguists today present a united front on the issue of the bifurcation thesis. Thus it is unproblematic to offer (A) as a response to (I). The remainder is my own work.

(A) Linguists in general feel that those who believe in the bifurcation thesis share with the behaviourists an archaic physicalist conception of the natural sciences and a pre-Lakatosian view of mathematics, and consequently fail to examine the existing practice of linguistics. If bifurcationists could have produced a viable alternative account of the facts of human languages, they would have done so by now. The record shows that there exists a viable non-commentatorial (non-hermeneutic) science of linguistics — though one may worry over whether it is a natural or a formal science — and that avant-garde work has failed, despite decades of effort, to produce a credible commentary on the nature and existence of this science.

(A-1) It may be useful to add here a clarification regarding the status of the relation between linguistics and avant-garde work. While many lines of poststructuralist and semiotic discourse have not tried to produce anything purporting to be a critique of linguistics, deconstructionism is an obvious exception. There is supposed to be a text that deconstructs, among other things, Saussure's course of lectures commenting on the nature of the enterprise he was engaged in. And various avant-garde authors, not only deconstructionists, have expressed a preference for Hjelmslev (as against Saussure) on the basis of his prolegomenal work commenting on what he thought he was doing, thus suggesting that there could be an avant-garde appropriation of Hjelmslev's critique of Saussure. Therefore the last sentence of (A) may seem to call for comment.

The point to notice is that avant-garde writing does not comment on, and seems unaware of the existence of, the empirical work of Saussure on Indo-European historical linguistics (especially his work on the sonatic coefficients which created internal reconstruction and the laryngeal theory at the same stroke) and that of Hjelmslev on the case category. This research is the obviously far-reaching part of those men's writings. It cries out for modern rereading and reappropriation. Saussure's internal reconstruction fractured

the unity of protolinguistic time by introducing a time line incommensurable with that of comparative reconstruction. Hjelmslev, by suggesting a restatement of the localistic theory of case, unsettled forever the privileged or neutral non-position of the nominative and broke up the centred unity of the case field in the clause. Even if we restrict our attention to structuralism, it is clear that the avant-garde community has failed to assess linguistic writings because it has not read even those writings that were fortunate enough to be canonized (let alone marginalized classics like the work of Lucien Tesnière), but has merely glanced at some books where some canonized authors have stated their intentions — a curious procedure, if one recalls the avant-garde's insistence on move (IV). Thus, the last sentence of (A) obviously stands.

(B) We have seen that the bifurcation move fails because it shares with real positivists the reactionary assumption that only physicalism and logical positivism count as characterizations of the natural and mathematical science paradigms — an assumption which relegates the study of language along normal lines to some 'human' domain outside the natural or mathematical sciences. Similarly, the anti-humanist move fails because it shares with imperialist ethnology and a variety of court historiographies the assumption, obviously reactionary, that history must represent a line of real power which effectively silences the voices that did not cross the validity threshold, and that correspondingly anthropology's task is to describe the primitive customary ways of irrationality from some standard civilized viewpoint. The basic gesture of the anti-humanist rejection of the sciences of history and anthropology amounts to claiming that such sciences can only be variations on these hegemonic themes. By this gesture anti-humanism helps freeze history and anthropology into, in fact, odes to the victory of Western civilization, preventing the real progress made by historians and anthropologists from being seen and used — just as move (I) prevents the real progress made by linguists from being perceived and assimilated. The avant-garde authors who make or endorse moves (I) and (II) are trying to say: we know what standard linguistics, history, and anthropology amount to; we have found the one right way of disestablishing the evil order that these disciplines enshrine; dear reader, please join our true resistance to this true throne we have identified. But the secret is that they have not discovered the one real establishment and are unable to teach us any unique art of resistance. Their naively anti-hegemonic rhetoric leads us to suspect, rather, that some established configuration that seeks real hegemony might be producing such an avant-garde as its alter ego, the better to rule both halves of its world — the ruling group and the opposition.

(B-1) We might wish to pursue this suspicion. In terms of the standard contemporary research paradigm of generative linguistics, which sees itself as a rationalist island surrounded by an ocean of empiricism (coming from psychology, sociology, etc.), the simplest hypothesis is that it is the empiricist establishment that produces this literary pseudo-opposition to itself, one that shares its basic assumptions. This is too vast a topic to be taken up in this article.

(C) Move (III) again rests on a reactionary assumption, this time about the necessity of taking a classical view of concepts — in terms of criteria for membership in a set, or defining features constituting an 'intention' or essence, or some other abstract and context-free method of fixing the boundary of a concept without crucial reference to any of the real-life percepts that the concept is supposed to handle. Given this reactionary assumption about what concepts must be, move (III) wants us to stop using concepts in serious inquiry and to muddle along, instead, with unofficial and informal links from action to action, from discussion to discussion. But the assumption has fairly good natural alternatives. Max Weber's ideal-types, inter-war psychology's gestalts, and the post-war period's fuzzy sets and family resemblances and (prototype-based) natural categories

have been offering a series of non-classical characterizations of the concept, rendering any naive rejection of the classical concept seriously out of date. Some of these characterizations appear to come close to what many avant-garde authors have in mind. Thus move (III) again is unsound and based on a reactionary misunderstanding of the field of options.

(C-1) The bifurcation move, the anti-humanist move, and the anti-theoretical move are intended to pit avant-garde work against the unwanted interference of science in human affairs, supposedly; but we have seen that in fact these moves reinforce, by naively pseudo-opposing, the foundations of an archaic, empiricist conception of science, culture, history, and concepts. Thus, these moves and the avant-garde paradigm based on them are irrelevant to the work of translation or serious literary analysis, for they do not represent any progress over the science, historiography, and conceptual presuppositions of the late nineteenth century. However, a 'charitable' view of the avant-garde which seeks to read some worthwhile content into their writings might choose to regard moves (I)-(III) as versions of certain proposals associated with the generative linguistic paradigm — (p) mentalism, (q) non-subjectivism or the proposal that generative research, following normal scientific realism, may construct theories on the basis of concepts without any counterpart in the common sense view or views about the subject, and (r) the theory of markedness, seen in terms of the way it displaces the classical view of concepts. But the distance between (I)-(III) and (p)-(r) remains considerable, for (p)-(r) are postulates in a scientific enterprise, while (I)-(III) constitute a particular rejection of science in human studies, and the formal similarities do not amount to the sort of common ground that facilitates dialogue.

(D) The anti-interpretive theorem (IV) is standardly illustrated by giving hard-core literary examples, for which it is obvious that there are obstacles preventing straightforward understanding or interpretation. Nobody would quarrel with the view that interpretability is non-universal. The fallacy lies in inferring, invalidly, that non-interpretability is universal. The literary scholar who loves obscurities because they provide him or her with a living is welcome to explore the ways in which the smear of this obscurity emanating from hard-core literature even infects some aspects of the rest of discourse and possibly abridges even the certainty with which one may translate English sentences like *Mohan ate fish* into Bangla *Mohon mach khelo* or Hindi *mohan ne machlii khaayii*. It becomes unacceptable, though, when such scholars' intense interest in intractable mysteries gets in the way of scientific efforts to systematize and handle the soluble problems. So much for the logical invalidity of the anti-interpretive theorem. See (H) below for some discussion of its reactionary socio-cultural consequences.

(E) Proponents of the anti-fidelity theorem (V) in translation studies have not yet explained how they propose to systematize such intuitions as the intuition that the Bangla sentence *mohon Dim khelo* faithfully translates *Mohan ate eggs* but not *Mohan ate fish*. They tend to hand-wave impatiently at some elementary conceptions recorded in standard grammars and dictionaries which their stratospheric theorizing aspires to go beyond. But gestures like this do not tell us whether to abolish grammars and dictionaries, or whether to somehow come up with better grammars and dictionaries (possibly to be supplemented or enriched by avant-garde means), and in the latter case how to improve the linguistics that makes grammar/dictionary reform possible.

Since we are not told what range of examples the anti-fidelity theorem is for, and since this product of what is supposed to be a historico-culturally sensitive enterprise has no suggestions to offer in the domain of improving the grammatical and lexicographic aids to the practices of translation and literary interpretation, it is fair to conclude that the

theorem is contentless and unhelpful. Its logical invalidity, of course, follows from that of (IV).

(F) The plea for wilful obscurity is fortunately not heeded even by the major avant-garde workers themselves, and thus seems not to call for any special remarks.

(G) Dasgupta (1990) offers a detailed critique of the anti-analytical hypothesis (VII), which is therefore not discussed here.

(H) The anti-interpretive and anti-fidelity theorems work in the service of pathological social processes which need separate discussion. When one sees a particularly irrational network of ideas, one often seeks to understand it in terms of sociological reasons for the irrationality; we may toy with a few ideas of this sort here with reference to a special case, the use of the avant-garde paradigm by some scholars who translate or supervise translations from Indian languages into English in the domain of 'cultural' texts. In the interests of clarity, we focus on theorems (IV) and (V).

There is a demand for English translations of third world cultural material. Earlier efforts to meet this demand, as in the Writers' Workshop initiative from Calcutta, used a simple paradigm of 'transcreation' or creative translation which emphasized the need to allow an unusual degree of licence in such a transcultural enterprise. But current work along the same lines is taking place in the context of a take-over of the literary field by some articulate *theories* (under erasure, of course, because of the third move) which inherit the scientism of Marxist and structuralist analysis and which suffer from a need to appear to have theoretical justifications for all practices undertaken by the true believers. Hence the need to supplement normal transcreation practices (which respond to a market need coupled with a situation where translators are necessarily working in haste and without what they themselves would have felt to be adequate training in the grammatical-lexical equation between the languages they are handling) with an apparently serious discourse against interpretability and fidelity in general.

Had it been the case that such *theorizing* reinforces the translation practices that are socially needed anyway, one could have chosen to lament the rise of such pseudo-justifications which pollute the academic literature and side-track rational work, but one would not need to resist avant-garde *theorizing*. It would count as a moderately useful systematization of what some translators think they know.

However, this is not so. The larger needs of social development call for a very different sort of translation on a massive scale — the translation of technical, scientific, legal, and other modernizing literature from English (and the languages of other advanced democracies) into third world languages. This means that there is an urgent need for the training of large numbers of qualified translators who can handle this task. Training material has to be produced quickly. This involves maximizing the area of clarity, not obscurity, and of analysis, not obfuscation. In this perspective, avant-garde literary tendencies harm the cause of real translation the way radical skepticism harms serious philosophizing: such *radicalism* makes it difficult to learn and practise the art of genuine criticism which alone can save the big modernizing effort from the real danger of uncritically succumbing to instrumental positivism. The skeptic unwittingly strengthens the hand of positivism by leading reasonable people to believe that the only choice is between positivist science (allied with uncritical common sense) and this avant-garde obscurity.

Thus, the apparently radical initiatives of avant-garde thought actually end up having reactionary socio-cultural consequences. Avant-garde thought solves the problem by taking no responsibility for the developmental (techno-scientific, etc.) translation wing of the modernization enterprise, thus leaving this important activity in the hands of simple-minded technicians of language and terminology. I wonder if the day will ever come

when our eminent literati suddenly realize that only the hazardous enterprise of transferring modernity to the developing nations — a translationlike enterprise at the level of society, culture, economics, and politics — can release the topology of this modernity from the contingent geometry it has assumed in its Western origin by giving it a plurality of rebirths in new settings, and can thus perhaps render a non-pathological modernity conceivable. This hazardous enterprise could use some help from the literati as well, when they get tired of their irrelevant quasi-theoretical adventures.

2. THE IRRELEVANCE OF THE TECHNICAL

Implicit in section 1's polemic against avant-garde textual theory, it might seem to a hasty reader, is an invitation to the practitioner of translation or of advanced (*e.g.* university-level) native language pedagogy or of non-native language pedagogy to accept instead the whole package of contemporary linguistic science. In order to emphasize that that is not what is intended, we are devoting an entire section to the idea that contemporary technical linguistics is also irrelevant to the work of such practitioners of the language arts.

By technical linguistics I mean careful contemporary research as a whole, from non-linear phonology and morphology to formal syntax and semantics, as distinct from the more accessible forms of early generative work that had come to the fore in the sixties and made such an impact on neighbouring disciplines like philosophy and literature that their image of linguistics to this day is based on early generative grammar.

This is not the place to show that technical linguistics in general, and in particular its formal syntactic and semantic component which could seem relevant to workers in the translation field, must be seen as a success story in descriptive and explanatory progress compared to earlier work. Let us take it for granted that technical linguistics does represent a great advance. We shall even assume, with some idealization, that the principles discovered by technical work today provide the underpinnings of the effects described in the classical generative grammars of the sixties, and that thus there is a standard sort of scientific continuity in the enterprise, with earlier effects being derivable from later theories via descriptively motivated oversimplifications.

Our question in the present section is whether technical generative grammar as it is practised today is of any relevance to the language arts in general and translation in particular. We will answer this question in the negative, and diagnose this as a problem, to be addressed in sections 3 and 4. While our remarks are applicable to all careful forms of generative syntax and semantics taken seriously in the leading universities today — including relational grammar, generalized phrase structure grammar, and so forth — we will take Chomsky's theory of Government and Binding (presented in Chomsky (1981) and associated commentarial writings) as representing the field as a whole. We do this for the sake of brevity and because a bigger exercise would yield similar results.

The problem is best seen with respect to a concrete case. Consider the category of questions. The GB (Government and Binding) form of technical syntax does not formally recognize the existence of questions, although GB writings do make a considerable amount of pretheoretical use of the term *Question*. What GB does offer is an account of certain pretheoretically delimited domains of data in terms of the serious theoretical concepts that belong to various modules or subtheories, such as the proper government module built around the Empty Category Principle (which says that nonproniminal empty categories must be properly governed) and the binding module built around the binding principles which include *principle C*, the principle that an R-expression must be A-free within the domain of the closest operator, if any, that binds the R-expression. These mod-

ules, coupled with the thematic module imposing a one-to-one pairing on thematic roles and arguments and the bijection module imposing a similar pairing on operators and variables (thus forcing every operator, include every *question word* [a pretheoretical notion], to move to a non-A-position at LF if it has not done so by S-structure), end up constituting a network of options and impossibilities in which it is possible to retrieve and make sense of all the information about *questions* that would normally be provided by a sixties-style descriptive transformational grammar of the kind that translators and other consumers of applied linguistics tend to feel comfortable with. However, while the GB account does reaffirm and enrich the earlier scientific analysis of what one continues to identify pretheoretically as questions, GB as a system is nowhere concerned with questions qua questions, but permits the term *question* to exist informally, outside the theory, an unofficial historical survival from earlier theories of language.

In general, notional terms like Question have no theoretical status in the formal syntax/semantics on which present-day research tends to focus. One implication of this is that technical work today in formal syntax/semantics does not directly bear on issues in fields like translation theory that are adjacent to and can make use of results from applied linguistics. For it is in terms of notional categories like Question or the Relative Clause Construction that generally accepted codifications of language structure have always been based; this goes also for the way the practitioners of language arts such as translation normally conceive of their field of work. The mismatch between modern technical linguistics and its potential users is a serious problem — an issue that section 3 and 4 will address.

3. THE SUBSTANTIVE BASE OF TRANSLATION

Focusing on translation, but bearing in mind the broader domain of the language arts, this section tries to identify a vector in the contemporary consolidation of various lines of linguistic study that is likely to meet the needs of the practitioners of the language arts who are not professional scientists of grammar, reasonably soon if not immediately. It is suggested here that translators (and analogously other language arts practitioners) need not wait for this useful consolidation to happen, but can contribute to the overall process by trying to come up with an independent, practice-oriented formulation — drawing on whatever resources from disciplines like linguistics, philosophy, literature, psychology, and the social sciences seem reasonable and natural to them — of what one might call the substantive base of translation. These two headline sentences are clarified in the rest of this section.

Linguistics and literary theory are centrally concerned with questions of form, structure, and the distribution of functions internal to a structure. Their legitimate concentration on these issues tends to draw them away from the content of language and discourse — from the domain of substance, content, external functions, ideology, and the real-life sources and goals of texts and conversations. The language arts have to handle language material and impart or improve language knowledge in the context of real and ever changing popular assumptions about the substance of language and of its embodiment in discourse. Thus translation, language planning (including especially term planning), language pedagogy (including both non-native and native language pedagogy, and especially the advance levels at which the teaching/learning context provides a public forum for the popular and yet systematic investigation of grammatical and textual/literary phenomena within particular languages and across specific language boundaries), lexicography, and other language arts (such as language counselling in the press or in the form of semi-journalistic books on usage for public use) can bring to bear on the social

handling of language their own substantive perspective on language, which they will have to develop, which may need to be rigorous and systematic (to ensure a high degree of usability) without degenerating into the obscure mannerisms of a technical academic expertise. Initially, it may be necessary for practitioners of each language art to develop this kind of substantive base autonomously, without help from neighbouring arts, hoping that these efforts will come together with each other and can jointly benefit from whatever principles results of the linguistic and literary sciences turn out to be of real value.

We turn now to linguistics. The question is whether there is any direction contemporary work is taking which leads to the expectation that the linguistic sciences will, fairly soon, come up with something that can meet the obvious needs of the language arts in general and translation in particular. We are looking for a plausible affirmative answer to this question. As in section 2, it is natural to focus on the syntactic-semantic wing of linguistics. The remarks here are somewhat speculative as they reflect a particular reading of trends of research; but the conclusions are argued for, and the argument is open to inspection and assessment.

The long development of mainstream generative syntax has led to the conclusion that the level of representation at which thematic relations are most perspicuously represented (D-structure) and that which best displays scopes (LF) are distinct from each other and from the S-structure level which offers an optimal view of the predication structure of any arbitrary sentence. Given the independently firm assumption that thematic, scopal, and predicational relations are all matters of 'meaning' in some pretheoretical sense, it follows that there is no formal level of syntactic structure that is privileged in its proximity to semantics. Rather, semantics pervades the entire syntactic network. This state of affairs has pushed the study of meaning out of syntax proper and encouraged a new widely accepted rapprochement between the semantic study of meaning and the pragmatic study of language use. It is a pragma-semantic dimension, then that is believed to pervade all levels of syntactic representation.

Perhaps the intellectual climate is ready for the emergence of a systematic branch of linguistics, call it pragma-semantics, which inhabits and comments on today's type of formal syntax, employing notional devices (such as the concept of a Question) to mediate between the syntactic theory of linguistic form and some social or external characterization of the substantive element in which language use takes place. Many elements which would flourish best in such a pragma-semantics, such as the Gricean principles of conversational implicature, are already widely accepted and used. Other areas, like the study of metaphor and iconicity, are occupying crucial spots in an emerging 'cognitive' space of inquiry involving linguistics and allied disciplines, and they too would work optimally as subtheories of a coherent pragma-semantic theory.

The attempt in Dasgupta (1990) to propose an objective-impressionist theory within a substantivist research programme for the theory of meaning and translation may now be seen as a contribution to the pragma-semantic fund, a fund for institutionalizing a pragma-semantic branch of linguistics. Such a branch will keep the rational content of the generative grammar of the sixties alive and available for applied linguistic use — by offering a new formulation of the notional categories which that generative grammar used to employ in its description of constructions along traditional lines — and will do this without trying to turn the clock back and revive justly discredited theories. Thus, for the language arts practitioner, it will be as if the more tractable and intuitively interpretable grammatical theories of the sixties are back again, and yet pragma-semantics will in fact

mediate (without sacrificing any principles) between the empirical and social needs of the language arts and the rational and scientific exigencies of the core linguistic discipline.

Forces like typology and relational grammar, as well as certain functional schools of linguistics, and interdisciplines like psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, have been steadily exerting pressure on core linguistics in a way that leads one to expect that, through the joint efforts of syntacticians and other language scientists, a pragma-semantic theory will soon emerge that can organize and deploy the important insights into linguistic substance which were latent in the looser linguistics of the sixties and which must now be made explicit as we consolidate the linguistics disciplines and their interrelations.

4. PRAGMATICS, APPLIED STUDIES, AND SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS

The pragma-semantics envisaged in section 3 may be a well-founded dream based on a certain reading of current trends. But the discipline of pragmatics is already a reality. And it is interesting that it has mainly developed in the context of linguistics as a scientific enterprise, taking a rational and activist line that presents an interesting complement to the development of the relatively poetic and passionate discipline of semiotics, also in a setting provided by linguistic. It seems clear that the applied studies in general, and the applied linguistic disciplines plus language arts in particular, have more to gain from the activism of pragmatics than from the pathos of semiotics. Scholars within linguistics proper have tended to be favourably disposed towards, and relatively willing and able to welcome concepts coming from, pragmatics rather than semiotics. The suggestion here is that workers in applied linguistics and the language arts should think about and make sense of this preference. This is linked to the proposal in section 3 that workers in the translation field should work on their own foundations, highlighting issues of substance rather than form. Pragmatics works with accessible notions and deals with matters of substance, whereas semiotics is committed to a study of form.

Semiotics is concerned with typically unconscious symbolic processes which often vary across cultures. Its agenda inherits the issues of nineteenth-century symbolism in poetry and the twentieth-century anthropology of symbols, invoking the thematic space of a late-Romantic quest for authentic roots in which the human desire to find meaning can be poetically understood if not systematically justified or explained. The basic element of semiotic work is the sign, a complex of signifier and signified with some displacement and projection; the scientific nexus is with the psychology not of cognition but of extremely primitive and poorly understood processes, shared by humans with all animals, processes which endow percepts with significance without yet building a conceptual level of meanings or a pragmatically real level of references. This unavailability of meaning and the affective intensity of the formal phenomena to be studied lead semiotics to concentrate on form.

In contrast, pragmatics thematizes people's actions *vis-à-vis* the mutually adjusted rationalities of actors in a social situation, real or imagined, and thus deals with notions of meaning. Being an open discipline, it is capable of reflexive work on the boundaries and foundations of pragmatics and its links with the sciences and arts it serves as an aid or adjunct. See Dasgupta (1988) for some discussion of the pragmatic road from the formal microlinguistics of grammar to the social macrolinguistics of language as a whole. Without much exaggeration, one might describe pragmatics as the study of the substantive or real-life use of forms, the study of how form is situated in substance.

Applied studies in general, not only applied linguistics, must deal with the problem of using scientific resources in social life. This is a pragmatic issue to the extent that scientific results are forms and the issues of life are substantive issues. But the relation

between science and pragmatics goes deeper than that. Not only does the non-scientific social user have to decide pragmatically what various pieces of science will mean in real life; even the scientist working in some new period P_j has to make pragmatic decisions in relation to what is becoming the old science of period P_i — has to decide how pieces of P_i science will not count as meaningful in the context of P_j science (perhaps as derivatively meaningful, via some oversimplifying reduction that transforms P_j hypotheses into P_i Hypotheses). Even within science, the relation between different periods, across a boundary created by scientific progress, is a social relation in the sense that its management can benefit from pragmatics. All social and rational dialogue relations that involve the meshing of two cognitive beings can be conducted more carefully if the notions of pragmatics are brought to bear on them. This is why pragmatics can help even translators in working out the substantive foundations of their enterprise.

If translators choose to take this assistance, they are indirectly drawing on the resources of linguistics. Pragmatics — unlike analogues constructed in the instrumental rationality framework, such as game theory — crucially respects the formality and meaningfulness of the forms whose social exchange is thematized in pragmatic principles, and works within the assumptions of linguistics regarding the nature and functioning of meaning.

The fact that using pragmatics counts as taking help from linguistics may look like a bad thing if one conceives of the situation in terms of power struggle in which depending on linguistics is incompatible with translators building their own independent theoretical base. But surely this is not the right approach to the matter. The point is that the practitioners of the language arts, including translators, need to have free choice among the resources made available by the relevant fields of knowledge. For free traffic one needs some orderly conventions; chaos is not conducive to real freedom, for it anarchically curtails the range of options available. If pragmatics, a relatively neutral domain which has some epistemological links with the linguistic sciences, turns out to be useful in building an independent base for the practitioners of the language arts, then surely using it will not threaten the purity of these practitioners' independence.

The need for independence is a moders need. Modernity involves openness and a sustained willingness to acquire new information and to adjust life to this information — a willingness and ability to learn and unlearn. Pragmatics happens to be the domain which clarifies the terms of information sharing between actors in an intercognitive situation. Workers rooted in activism or regional loyalty to a particular language can make sure of their cognitive independence by thinking about how and what they learn from whom; such thinking is a species of pragmatics, and can only benefit from exposure to careful reflections on the management of cognitive independence, the practical basis of modernity itself.

COLOPHON

This article is couched in a deliberately Indian style. Section 1, for instance, presents the view of the opponent as a '*puurva-paksha*' and our counterview as a '*siddhaanta-paksha*' in classical Indian style. Also Indian is the emphasis on impersonal reference to ideas rather than name-dropping. Hence the paucity of bibliographical references. This paucity should also please readers who agree that translators should not be asked to read large quantities of linguistics.

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