Parallel Paradigms and Parallel Problems in Translating & Interpreting and Discourse-Pragmatics

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Although the inclusion of an intralingual category in the three kinds of translation proposed in Roman Jakobson's well known essay of 1959 seems to have made little more than a demarcatory contribution to the development of translation studies as a discipline (Hermans 1997) it does at least stand as a reminder that that analogous transformational or representational operations of various sorts are central notions in many branches of linguistics. These notions, however, typically have problematical aspects. Accordingly, the aim here is to consider two linked proposals: i) practice of and reflexion on translating / interpreting can raise in particularly pointed ways a number of tricky issues for theories of communication in general. ii) consideration of related linguistic paradigms can contribute to a better definition of some characteristic challenges for translation / interpreting studies. In short, T/I raises difficult questions for language and language theory can spotlight problematical concepts in T/I. Accordingly this paper, taking an approach to communication associated with various disciplines grouped around pragmatics and discourse analysis, will consider some pertinent areas of theory (and some textual examples) at the intersection of T/I and other discourse genres.[1]

After briefly arguing for the continuing usefulness of discourse studies for T/I, attention will be devoted to some parallel concerns or intriguing conjunctions of discourse-pragmatics theory and T/I. Of particular interest in this respect is the question of discourse variables, the notion of selection among available options and (the other side of this particular coin) the nature and scope of constraints on selection. A further issue, which I propose to link to the first (and one that bears usefully on the question of explicitation in T/I) is that of underdeterminacy.

It is true that translation theory has, in recent years, usefully undergone a cultural turn, but it does not seem productive to set this development in opposition to linguistics-based approaches (see Munday 2001: 190). A number of schools or trends in discourse analysis both engage in close systematic reading and listening (and thus have practical relevance for T/I) and at the same time engage with broad concerns very similar to those addressed by cross-cultural, postcolonial and postmodern theory. The highlighting of linguistically mediated asymmetries of power or of ethnocentric ideologies in cross-cultural communication of the sort often carried out by schools of discourse analysis with an explicitly critical remit (see Fairclough and Wodak 1997) draws, in fact, on theories and methodologies from a wide range of discourse disciplines. Indeed, some aspects of the work over four decades of linguists as diverse as M.A.K. Halliday and William Labov suggests that most branches of sociolinguistics / discourse analysis have the potential to be critical in orientation.[2] There will be occasion to say more on this topic when it comes to discussing

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[1] Since broad linguistic issues are under consideration here, it seems, it seems legitimate to treat translation / interpreting as a single—if multifaceted—area of language use, without taking a position on the question of whether we are dealing with two separate disciplines or sub-disciplines of one.

[2] Even Relevance Theory, for instance, has been utilized to investigate issues of language and power in a conflictive political situation. See J. Wilson and J. Rose. "The Language of Peace and Conflict: Relevance theory and the Anglo-Irish Agreement." In: *Journal of Conflict Studies* XVII (1997), 51-73.

ethnographic and intercultural approaches to language and to T/I. For the moment, however, it is worth devoting a little attention to the use of terms such as translation and interpret(ation) in other linguistic disciplines, particularly in pragmatics, to describe concepts or processes analogous to T/I.

While the term 'interpretive' can have a fairly specialized sense in linguistics (see Hudson in this volume) 'interpret(ation)' is a term / concept often employed in pragmatics and discourse analysis to describe participant sense-making in the reception phase of communicative interaction. It is usually preferred (possibly as less burdened with unwanted senses) than 'understanding' or 'comprehension', and avoids the propensity of 'coherence', to suggest to the unwary an inherent property of utterances or texts themselves. Another suggestive usage, however, is that of an actor in the theatre interpreting a role, especially when we bear in mind that the production format of performance utterances is characterized by the activity of mediators between the originators of a script (such as the author or the director) and the audience for whose benefit the originators' communicative intentions are animated and thus made fully comprehensible.

ORIGINATOR (SCRIPT)→ [Animator A (→ Animator B)] → AUDIENCE

The fact that, as the diagram makes clear, such communication is frequently realized through an animator addressing another onstage intermediary obviously complicates matters; nevertheless, the possibility of characterizing Interpreting in particular in terms of performative discourse seems to offer intriguing possibilities, especially if we keep in mind not only Erving Goffman's model of performative action, but also the concept of a mode of communication that involves an undertaking, before an audience, to conform to prominent conventions and rules of performance. (Goffman 1986, Foley 1997).

Where translational paradigms of language use are concerned, it is worth noting that one of the central questions, both in theories of language and cognition and in T/I in particular, concerns mental representations or concepts to which utterances may be related in some way, but which remain independent of any specific linguistic realization. Those engaged in theorising T/I have often addressed the question of whether there is some conveniently determinable something, as Hickey (1998: 1-2) puts it, "behind, beneath or belonging to a piece of talk or writing in one language that can be extracted and repackaged in another". A parallel concern is apparent in many branches of linguistics, and there has been much investigation of the relationship between something 'in the mind'—thoughts concepts, representations, intentions, logical forms, propositions mentalese, etc.) and their product or counterpart in actual language use, the encoding, wording, realization, mapping and so on. In the summary of a well-known theorist, "knowing a language … is knowing how to translate mentalese into strings of words and vice versa" (Pinker 1995: 82). The notion that activity that is translation-like in nature is central to language production and reception is found, in fact, in a number of influential approaches to language use. A leading proponent of Relevance Theory, for instance, defines "the model of language use proposed in RT (and in cognitive accounts of utterance interpretation in general) as translational in nature"(Carston, 2002: 59). Again, one of the contributors to a recent handbook of linguistics not only acknowledges that translation is a key element in linguistic anthropology, but also claims that "all ethnographic work of sociocultural anthropologists may be interpreted at least metaphorically as translation". (Darnell 2001: 248). Further examples that come

immediately to mind include the definition of a functional grammar as "one that construes all the units of a language—its clauses, phrases and so on—as organic configurations of functions" (Halliday 1994: xiv); or, from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective, "conceptual metaphors ... are not just a way of expressing ideas through language but a way of thinking about things ... a metaphor is a mapping of the structure of a source model onto a target model". (Ungerer and Schmidt 1996: 119-120).

Translational paradigms of the relationship between internal representations and actual utterances in a single language generally offer interesting analogies with T/I activity; but when interaction in a shared linguistic culture is analyzed from a perspective that has similarities with a T/I speech situation, the parallels are particularly suggestive. . A good example is the T/I-like experimental task set by Gillian Brown, in which participants were required to act as mediators between different contexts in communicating a set of orienteering instructions (provided by a third party) to unseen colleagues whose map was not identical (1996: 41-46). The results lead Brown to reject "that chimera, universally correct interpretation" (*ibid.*: 233) and propose instead a notion of adequacy for the purpose in question, conclusions that would doubtless be favourably received in T/I circles; and her observation that "most communication is typically the basis for some further activity the nature of which will often determine for the listener what can be accepted as an adequate interpretation"(*ibid.*: 23) seems particularly applicable to functional paradigms of T/I. Moreover, her conclusion that, in the absence of detailed evidence of specific intention, hearers "attribute to speakers what they believe that they themselves would mean by speaking in such a manner at that particular point" (*ibid.*: 233) may provide a revealing insight into norms of meaning evaluation used by translators and interpreters for both the input and output stages of their activity.

In the Relevance Theory branch of translation theory the key notion of interpretive resemblance (see Gutt 2000: 35-46) is, in fact, inspired by a passage in Sperber and Wilson's original exposition in which hypothesized examples are analyzed of what virtually amounts to everyday liaison interpreting (1994: 224-31). A, who does not speak French, asks his friend B, who does, to telephone C, the manager of a French hotel where A had lost his wallet on holiday. A enquires of B what C has said. One possible reply, the translation: "I have looked for it everywhere" is offered as a fairly straightforward instance of representation through resemblance ("it has the same semantic structure"). Consideration of a more complex possibility, "he says he has looked for it everywhere", intended as a faithful summary of a sequence of utterances that did not actually include the sentence "je l'ai cherché partout", leads to the conclusion, that, essentially, every utterance is an interpretive expression of a thought of the speaker's, with the proviso (clearly pertinent for T/I), that that the authors "see no reason to postulate … this interpretation must be a literal reproduction".

A third theoretical paradigm of some interest for T/I is that of presumptive meanings, that is, the notion of generalized implicatures (Levinson 2000). This "theory of idiomaticity, that is, a set of principles guiding the choice of the right expression to suggest a specific interpretation" (*ibid.:* 24), is based on a translational model of language use envisaging "correspondence rules mapping syntactic structures onto semantic representations, and again mapping semantic representations onto communicated thoughts or utterance meanings" (*ibid.*: 8-9), and the concept of "utterance-type meaning", that is, inferences licensed by the particular form of expressions, is explicitly linked by Levinson to "a great body of language lore,

beyond knowledge of grammar and semantics", familiar to students of translation and second language learning' (*ibid.*: 22-23). Even a cursory consideration of Levinson's summary of his first two principles will suffice to reveal the potential of superficially equivalent wordings to create substantially different implicatures:

> If the utterance is constructed using simple, brief, unmarked forms, this signals business as usual, that the described situation has all the expected, stereotypical properties.
> If, in contrast, the utterance is constructed using marked, prolix, or unusual forms, this signals that the described situation is itself unusual or unexpected or has special properties (ibid.: 6).

As Levinson observes, it is perfectly feasible that "two ways of saying the same thing might be unequal in their conversational import, or one way of saying something might pre-empt another" (*ibid.*: 24). It is thus incumbent on interpreters and translators to ensure that the default inferences licensed by the forms of expression used in source utterances are not altered by the forms of expression chosen for utterances in the target language—a task requiring, of course, native speaker 'feel' for the often very small differences between standardized and less usual wordings.

The broad issue raised here, that of semantic or functional equivalence, is one that is, of course, problematical for discourse theory and T/I alike. To practice T/I is to be constantly reminded of the need to select between linguistic options in the target language; but equally, as producers, receivers or analysts of discourse in a single linguistic culture, we are aware that speakers have a choice between what William Labov (according to a distinguished former student) defined, perhaps a little disingenuously, as "different ways of saying the same thing" (see Schiffrin 1994: 377). Indeed, language-use itself can be regarded as a process of selection within a network of interlocking options—in one neat definition, "using language in general can be defined as the constant making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for linguistic or extralinguistic reasons" (Verschueren 1991: 190)

The production of translated or interpreted texts could, at best, be regarded as a marginal case of saying the same thing in a different way. However, while there are obvious differences involved in saying the same thing in different words and saying the same thing in words of a different language altogether, the similarities, are instructive, particularly where the problematic nature, for T/I, of the concept of equivalent alternatives is concerned. Although the term "free variation" is used to refer to the substitutability of one sound for another (Crystal 1997:158) it does not seem likely that such a dispensation can be extended to linguistic choice above the phonological level. As we have seen, Levinson's theory of preferred interpretations strongly suggests that choice between discourse variables is hardly ever 'free'. Further corroboration of the existence of important constraints on wording comes from variationist sociolinguistics. As mentioned earlier in connection with the work of Labov, research in this discipline has from the outset been conducted within a framework of broader social and political concerns, and continues to be based on the presumption that in all speech communities there are linkages between linguistic forms and their social functions. Choice of discourse variables, whether on the semantic, stylistic, functional or text-type level, is thus subject to social as well as linguistic constraints, and substitution inevitably has pragmatic and socio-interactional consequences.

Similarly, in linguistically-oriented critiques of news reporting in the media, it is often pointed out that different ways of saying the same thing "are not random, accidental alternatives, since differences of expression carry ideological distinctions"

(Fowler 1991: 3-4), and, as Fairclough points out, even low level choices involving single clauses and even single words within them can have significant ideological effects (1995b: p. 109). That grammatical as well as lexical choice is important in this respect is confirmed from the perspective of functional grammar. Nominalizations, for instance (defined by Halliday as rewording processes and properties as nouns), embody powerful authorial positions because their use "tends to mark off the expert from those who are uninitiated" (1994: 352), and Halliday's model of transitivity has also been used to demonstrate that choice of participant and process types can be an effective means of shaping representations of social reality (see Fairclough 1995a, Caldas-Coulthard 1996). The question of variant wordings as vehicles of ideological concealment or distortion is not, of course, an exclusively intralingual concern. As work in the areas of both ethnography and post-colonial and intercultural approaches to T/I has demonstrated, the translation of texts from cultures with very different value systems often results in the values of the assimilating culture being ethnocentrically imposed. This domesticating process is at least transparent in the familiar 'scientific' word-for-word glosses designed to enable readers to reconstruct the morpho-syntactical configuration of the original utterances, but it can easily become invisible when, for instance, the lexicalized concepts and grammatical structures of a 'first world' oral culture are transposed into textual forms more acceptable to a 'third world' readership (Woolf 1997, 2002).

An extreme illustration of what might almost be termed the equivalent variable fallacy (and my first example of a para-translational text) is provided by the entry for "Gibraltar" in the style book of the Spanish daily, *El país*. Commisioned from a member of the Spanish diplomatic service, the entry is basically a list of expressions to avoid and of those to use in their place. The text is not an instance of purely intralingual substitution, however, since Spanish journalists are prone to imitate English expressions, and formulations in English of U.K. perspectives on the status of Gibraltar lurk behind the Spanish wordings whose use is proscribed. Without comment and with full acknowledgment that the long-standing issue of Gibraltar is a vexing one for the Spanish government, samples of the catalogue of dos and donts are reproduced here purely as an illustration of the strong presuppositions relexicalization can create:

AVOID	USE
La frontera	El puesto de control
Restricciones	Serie de medidas
Reapertura de la frontera	Suspensión de las medidas en vigor
[Comunicaciones] entre Gibraltar y España	[ ] entre Gibraltar y el territorio circunvecino
La voluntad de los Gibraltereños	Intereses administrativos y económicos[3]

A further broad issue that constitutes as a central concern for T/I is that of linguistic indeterminacy, the characteristic vagueness or porosity of meaning, ambivalence of function or text-type, fuzziness of context, and shifting configuration of interactional relationships that characterizes natural language communication. Carston's observation (2002: 31) that "underdeterminacy is an essential feature of

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[3] *El País: Libro de estilo* (Madrid: Ediciones El País, 1991.)

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natural languages because there are no eternal sentences in natural languages" (an eternal sentence being defined as one whose truth value stays fixed through time and from speaker to speaker) gives a useful insight into the problems this characteristic of language use can pose for T/I where questions such as faithfulness / equivalence or the tendency to explicitation are concerned. Underdeterminacy can, I believe, be linked to the mirage of free alternatives through the way we tend to interpret an utterance or even a larger discourse segment by subsuming it under a higher-level functional category, such as performing an illocutionary act or deploying a communicative strategy. This is especially true of everyday interaction, in which the meaning or function of many expressions needs to be determined as much on the basis of contextual information as on linguistic content. For instance, there are a multiplicity of forms, "ranging from the canonically explicit to the ambiguously indirect" available for the performance of the single act of apology. (Lakoff 2001:201).

Thus, whilst hearers are often alert to the way different wordings can realize different discursive functions or strategies, in ordinary language use they do not necessarily expect such functions or strategies to be explicitly encoded, but tend to rely on contextual information to infer the force of an utterance. The more contextually embedded an interaction, the higher the incidence of linguistic underdeterminacy, and the more the illusion can be fostered that choice of one particular form of expression or another is not necessarily a matter of importance. This effect is further complicated by the fact that provision of more specific information can license (in Levinson's sense) inappropriate interpretations in that it may be perceived as marked or prolix. A tiny but telling example from a translation perspective is provided by a modern staging in Catalan of a Shakespeare play in which a character announces he will conceal himself "behind the arras", (Mateo 1997). This was originally rendered by the translator as "darrera la tapissería", but then amended by the play's director to the vague "aquí darrera" ("behind here"). The absence of the drapery in question in the Catalan production does not seem to account for the change, since, in any case, it would similarly have been absent in the theatre of Shakespeare's day (*ibid.*). The director's decision does (at least to me) seem justified, not for reasons of realism as such,[4] but because modern audiences presume that stage dialogue will conform to the basic norms of everyday communication and (in this particular instance) avoid licensing a distracting inference to the effect that the choice of this particular curtain (rather than any means of concealment conveniently to hand) is a significant piece of information.

Functional approaches to translation have gained considerable currency in recent years, and have succeeded in clarifying many aspects of T/I as social practice. On the other hand, it can sometimes seem that functional paradigms have perpetuated in a different guise many of the problems that have consistently plagued the concept of equivalence. It is fair to say, however, such problems become particularly apparent when consideration of a further, complicating set of specifically T/I functions is added to the existing functional or generic complexity and ambivalence of texts in general. In discourse it is common for different purposes and strategies to intersect, overlap or be conflated, and. the dynamic, interactively negotiated nature of language mediated interaction and of social agency as a whole tends, in any case, to undermine predetermined notions of function. Whether in terms of speech acts, politeness

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[4] I am disagreeing here with Mateo's conclusion that the director's change was motivated by an excessive desire for realism. As Mateo herself points out, the production was, in any case, not a realistic one.

strategies or conversational moves, or of extended texts and higher-level speech situations, it is always possible for speakers and writers to exploit 'surface' functions strategically for other purposes. The following translational text is an everyday example of ambivalent functional multi-layering. The text appears on the packaging of a small single use camera of the type often found on sale in summer holiday resorts (the name of the manufacturer has been omitted and some of the text's orthographic and design features reproduced in simplified form):

On the upper surface of the packaging (black on yellow background):

High Definition

Unbeatable picture sharpness
Une netteté maximale pour vos photos

Definizione dell'immagine senza confronti
Fotografias con uma nitidez insuperable

SINGLE USE CAMERA
APPAREIL PRÉT A PHOTOGRAPHIER
SINGLE USE CAMERA INKLUSIVE FILM
CÁMARA DE UN SOLO USO
MÁQUINA DESCARTÁVEL)

On the back of the packaging:

High Definition

Für maximale Schärfe Ihrer Bilde   Onovertroffen scerpe foto's
Fotografias com uma nitidez insuperável   Lyömätön kuvan terävyys
For/För ekstrem/maximalt skarpe bilder

The front of the package is taken up with a picture of the camera itself. The text on the top shares space with close-up photographs of smiling young people (presumably examples of the sort of shot that can be taken with the camera) with chromatic motifs, and with a triangular hole (for hanging the product on a rack).

What, then, is the function of the printed text in various language-versions? If the intention might be thought informative, it is worth noting that the instructions for using the camera are not given in textual form at all, but in pictorial illustrations on the back of the packaging, and the technical specifications are in print so small as to be virtually illegible. It would thus seem that the provision of information is not a primary concern. One possibility is that the text serves principally as an advertisement for the product, stressing to potential buyers the clarity of the photos it will produce. It could thus be functionally interpreted in terms of the canonical act-of-advising formula: Buy / Choose (this product) because it is in your interest. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible the text simply has an emblematic function, as confirmatory

subtitling for the various pictorial messages, and as a contribution to the overall aesthetic attractiveness of the packaging.

Functional indeterminacy has important consequences of course, for the question of faithfulness in T/I, since it may not always be clear what purposes and goals are to be faithfully adhered to. There are parallels here in the presumption of professional commitment to faithfulness—to conscientious representation of the meanings, intentions and purposes of source texts and according to the norms and expectations of the culture in and for which the work is carried out, on the part of T/I practitioners and those (such as journalists) similarly engaged in reproducing in some way the utterances of others. Where intralingual speech presentation is concerned, it is interesting to note that a move in the 1990s toward abandoning the notion of faithfulness to an original has, in recent years, been reconsidered, and the concept of faithfulness restated in terms of sensitivity to different reporting contexts and the expectations they create (see Semino, Short and Wynne 2001). However, today's reporting practices, especially in the media, are characterized by multiple inputs and segmented audiences that are reached through a series of transformations along a chain of communicative events. In such circumstances it can be difficult to establish who is reporting to whom. Once again, the presence of T/I situational and discursive features makes ambivalent complexities much more visible. The newspaper article from which the following short extract is taken—ostensibly a Japanese tourist's retrospective account of his experiences while helping to clear oil-polluted beaches in northern Spain—appeared under the series title "First Person" and the individual title "The Pilgrim's Progress":

> There were hundreds of dead birds, fish and crustaceans. Since I did not speak any Spanish or English, I just had to help the other volunteers and do what they were doing. We tried to put the dead animals out of our minds as we worked, and focus on cleaning as quickly as possible.

The by-line "(As told to Susana Fernández Caro)"[5] can only leave readers wondering where the interview took place, in what language was it conducted, in what language was it first published, to what extent is it a verbatim account of a first person narrative, and so on. A possibly more flagrant example—and my concluding one—is taken from a less prestigious newspaper, covering the transfer to Arsenal of a young Spanish footballer (who had no English):

> Reyes ... says he has been overwhelmed by the welcome he has received at Highbury. And after training with his new team-mates for just over a week the 20-year-old says he has seen enough to convince him they can win the European Cup. Reyes said "I've been totally gobsmacked. The people here at Arsenal are incredible".[6]

The fluent use of English idiom here should not be attributed to the mediation of an interpreter; but rather to the desire of the of the journalist to produce 'footballerspeak'. (In any case, recently-imported Spanish footballers, when interviewed, tend to respond in a more abstract, less colourful style than their British counterparts, a trait immediately detectable in the voice-over translations that accompany recorded television interviews with such players). The problem with utterances reported in celebrity interviews, of course, it that it is not always the case that an interview took place at all. Material is often be passed by the celebrity's agent

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[5] The article appeared in the *Financial Times Magazine* 3/1/04.
[6] Simon Baskett, in the *Daily Mirror*, 8/2/04.

direct to journalists, and judging by one piece of evidence produced in a fairly recent libel suit brought by a supermodel, it is not unknown for a staff of a newspaper or magazine to fabricate an interview from press cuttings.[7]

In many areas of late modern social communication the input of translators and interpreters (like that of other specialized practitioners in the field) is routinely subjected to a process of effacement in that the particularity and timing of their contribution threatens to fade into an indistinct background of multiple contributions, and their purposes or principles can be deflected or undermined in the interplay of competing interests and strategies. It is against this background that there has been considerable discussion of the desirability of transparency or 'visibility' in T/I mediation. What is demonstrated by reported media interviews of the type just considered here—and, for that matter, by other opaque genres such as media reports based on and often 'quoting' government or corporate press releases originally announced in a language other than that of the readership or audience—is that such debate, and the awareness of broader socio-communicative issues it promotes, should be vigorously maintained.

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[7] A point frequently made by Naomi Cambell in her libel suit againstt the Daily Mirror in February 2002. See, for instance, the comments reported in Dan Milmo "Naomi defends appearance in Madonna sex book", *The Guardian*, Monday February 11, 2002.

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