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Journal of Translation
ISSN 1558-7282 (online)
https://siljot.org

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Journal of Translation 1 (2), 2005: 35–74.
https://doi.org/10.54395/JOT-CJV82

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A Tale of Two Translation Theories

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Abstract

This paper considers two theories of communication and the theories of translation shaped by them. First, the Code Model of communication is characterized and reasons are presented for why it is an inadequate and misleading theory of communication. Then Source-Meaning-Receptor theories of translation that were shaped by the Code Model are characterized and their inadequacies surveyed. Second, the Relevance Theory of communication is introduced. Then Gutt's Relevance Theory based theory of translation is sketched and its dramatic implications for translation are surveyed. Finally, broader implications of the shift from a Code Model to a Relevance Theory perspective are considered, including implications for the praxis of translation, the checking of translations, and the training of translators.

1. Introduction

1.1 A personal note

In the early 80s, when I was in graduate school, I began reading work by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. Their collaboration resulted in the 1986 publication of *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. I got it hot off the press. When I finished reading it I felt that translation theory would have to be rewritten. Although I did not undertake the task, Relevance Theory (RT) changed the way I translated.

The task of rewriting translation theory in terms of Relevance Theory was undertaken by Ernst-August Gutt, resulting in various publications, among them the 1991 publication of his *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*.

Despite the enthusiasm Gutt and I, as well as others, have for this theory and how it applies to translation, it has not gained much ground in SIL circles; most have simply ignored it, being content with the theory they were taught in their pre-field training. There are some who have become outright hostile to it.

This article is my attempt to introduce Relevance Theory and its implications for translation against the background of previous theories. The major sections following this brief introduction are: 2. The Code Model and its inadequacies; 3. The Source-Meaning-Receptor theories of translation; 4. RT-lite: A sketch of Relevance Theory; 5. Implications of RT for translation; and 6. Broader implications: 99 Theses; 7. Postscript: Reform or revolution (followed by infobase information and References).

[1] This article is based on a mini-series I posted to the BT list (Bible translation e-mail discussion group), which was in turn based on a lecture I presented at SIL's Americas Area meeting in Waxhaw in 2001. Since then I have presented it in various places and received feedback from many people: translators (some who are theorists, others who are "in the trenches"), administrators, students, some who are interested because their spiritual lives depend on translations, others simply curious as to what all the flap is about. To all I am grateful; the mistakes, of course, remain my own.

1.2 Disclaimer about theories

Let me begin by saying a few words about theories/models and how they relate to praxis. A theory/model is framed in terms of various elements, making claims about them, about how they are related, and so forth. It provides a framework for thinking about a domain and a vocabulary with which to discuss it. But most significantly, a theory/model shapes how people think about the domain.

As people work—having some theory in the back of their minds—they generally use the good sense with which God has blessed them to go beyond what the theory says. For example, the Code Model does not have a place for context. In spite of this, people who have thought about communication in terms of this model have recognized the importance of context and adjusted their practice accordingly. But still the model influenced how they thought about context, because it remained external to the model. (This will be discussed later on.)

Attempting to characterize commonalities across diverse theories that span decades and to which innumerable minds have contributed requires a large measure of idealization or, to put it less politely, caricature. My caricatures are intended not to demean but to help us understand such matters as what we think, why we have come to think it, and the consequences of thinking it. (And I acknowledge that my caricatures are shaped more by my experience with the meaning-based theories of North America than by some more functionally oriented approaches originating in Europe.)

I expect objections and I will welcome corrections and clarifications. These will be useful if they come with evidence (especially if accompanied by citation) and argumentation showing how a claim does or does not follow from a theory. But arguments like "Most Theory-X proponents believe Y so Theory X implies Y" and "I espouse Theory X and I never thought Y, so Y is not part of Theory X" will not be very helpful. To determine whether Y is a consequence of Theory X or the result of human intelligence we must consider the relationship between claim Y and Theory X without a human intermediary, for as noted above, people generally apply good sense and go beyond their theories.

Valid criticisms of theories must be based either on internal problems (inconsistencies, contradictions) or on a failure to adequately relate the theory to the phenomena for which it should account: the theory fails to explain phenomena that fall in the domain of the theory, it fails to predict phenomena in its domain, it makes false predictions, and so forth. And, of course, such criticisms must be accompanied by evidence.[2]

1.3 Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used:

BT	Bible translation e-mail discussion group
CM	Code Model of communication (conduit metaphor)
RL	receptor language
RT	Relevance Theory
SL	source language
SMR	Source-Meaning-Receptor theory/theories of translation

[2] I am indebted to Ernst-August Gutt for this last paragraph.

2. The Code Model and its inadequacies

Communication is a text-mediated relation between a speaker's meaning and a hearer's meaning.

The Code Model (CM) of communication assumes that meanings are transmitted across a channel from speaker to hearer.[3] This assumption is called the conduit metaphor. More precisely, the speaker encodes the meaning to be communicated into a linguistic form (sound, sign, writing) using his or her lexicon and grammar. The form is transmitted over some channel such as speech or writing to the hearer, who then recovers the meaning by decoding the form, using his or her lexicon and grammar.

MEANING$_{speaker}$ — [encode] →FORM— [transmit] →FORM— [decode] →MEANING$_{hearer}$

Or more simply:

MEANING— [encode] →FORM— [decode] →MEANING

Decoding is—at least to some extent—the opposite of encoding. Accurate communication depends on the identicalness (in all relevant respects) of the grammar and lexicon used for decoding and the grammar and lexicon used for encoding.

For a tidy and fairly recent statement of the CM see Certo (1995, chapter 5).

2.1 Underwood's assessment

The CM has its roots in a 1948 paper by Claude Shannon (Shannon 1948, Shannon and Weaver 1949) in which the mathematical foundations of information transmission are laid. This model was appropriated as a model of human communication. For those with web access I recommend the overview at Mick Underwood's website.[4] The following is part of Underwood's section criticizing the extension of transmission models to human communication:

> The Shannon and Weaver and Lasswell model are typical of so-called transmission models of communication. These two models also typically underlie many others in the American tradition of research, showing Source-Message/Channel-Receiver as the basic process of communication. In such models, communication is reduced to a question of transmitting information.
>
> Although transmission models have been highly influential in the study of human communication, it can be argued that, although Shannon's and Weaver's work was very fertile in fields such as information theory and cybernetics, it may actually be misleading in the study of human communication.
>
> Some criticisms that could be made of such models are:
>
> THE CONDUIT METAPHOR.
>
> Their model presents us with what has been called the 'conduit metaphor' of communication (Reddy 1979) The source puts ideas into words and sends the words to the receiver, who therefore receives the ideas. The whole notion of 'sending' and 'receiving' may be misleading, since, after all, once I've 'sent' a message, I still have it. The underlying metaphor is of putting objects into a container and sending them through some sort of conduit to the receiver who receives the containers and takes the objects out. The important question which is overlooked is: How do the 'objects' get into the 'containers'? In other words, how do we succeed in putting meanings 'into' words and how does somebody else succeed in taking the meanings 'out of' words? Transmission models don't deal with meaning.[[5]]

[3] Throughout this article I intend such statements to apply broadly to speaker, author, signer—and hearer, reader, viewer, etc.
[4] www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/introductory/sw.html.
[5] In this model, meaning is sharply distinguished from information.

> It's probably worth saying that that's not really a criticism of them, since they weren't intended to deal with meaning, but rather a criticism of their (mis)application to human-to-human communication.…
>
> CONTEXT.
>
> Communication differs very greatly according to the context in which it takes place. I might give my partner a kiss when I leave her for work in the morning; if I give you a kiss when I leave work to go home in the evening, the same sign is decoded radically differently. Context is frequently not considered in transmission models.
>
> INTENTIONS.
>
> What do I hope to achieve by talking to you? What do you hope to get out of listening to me? Our intentions fundamentally affect the exchange.[6]
>
> CHANNEL OR MEDIUM.
>
> The information models pay no attention to the effect of the channel used. If I want to communicate with you, do I get someone else to pass on my message, phone you, send you a letter, send you a memo or seek you out to talk to you directly? The choice makes a difference. Obviously, there are also differences in the features of different media which make them more or less appropriate for saying what we want to say.…
>
> RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SENDER AND RECEIVER
>
> I am a teacher and you are my student. There is an imbalance of power there, which must have a considerable influence on the way we communicate. Even if I appear open to criticism, you're likely to be wary of being critical of my teaching, whereas I am probably quite prepared to be critical of your learning.

2.2 General inadequacies

The CM reflects how people thought about communication at the time it was developed and took hold. But it also shaped—and continues to shape—how people think about communication. I will now briefly mention some of the concepts involved (in no particular order):

1. Language is a machine for encoding and decoding. It is primarily structural, consisting of a grammar and a lexicon.
2. Communication is quite mechanical. A person with an operational understanding of a language's grammar and lexicon can encode and decode meanings and thereby communicate in that language.[7] In fact, it is so mechanical computers ought to be able to do it!
3. Meaning, once encoded, is *in* the text. The text determines the meaning decoded from it.
4. Interpretation is like unpacking a container. Lecercle (1999) calls it the "tin-opener" theory by analogy to the task of opening a tin can to remove the contents. He says (ibid:43) that the view encapsulated in the conduit metaphor has established itself as *doxa* (dogma). He goes on to discuss how this is "deployed" in seven "maxims" applied to interpretation.
5. Little of what constitutes our humanness figures in the model. Communicators are simply encoders and decoders, making use of grammars and lexicons. (This is because the CM was an inappropriate extension of Shannon's 1948 model of information transfer, as stated in sec. 2.1.)
6. The CM does not incorporate context. It does not say how context might influence the form a speaker utters nor what a hearer might infer from an utterance in a given context. That is not to say that context was ignored when the CM was dominant, only that the model said nothing about it. When people thought about context, the CM led them to think of it primarily as the surrounding

[6] Underwood's point is that unfortunately there is no place for intentions in transmission models.
[7] The teaching of foreign languages is only recently freeing itself from this way of thinking.

text, the *co-text,* not of the mind-mediated notion of context that has so advanced our understanding of the relationship between form and meaning (utterance interpretation).

More modern conceptions of communication differ from the Code Model in many respects, among them the following:

1. Language is much more than an encoding-decoding machine. Little about human communication is mechanical. The role of grammar has been vastly overestimated and the lexicon is only the tip of an iceberg that includes our encyclopedic knowledge, worldview, attitudes, and so forth.
2. Texts do not contain meanings; meanings are in the minds of communicators. Texts do not determine meanings; along with context they guide interpretation. Interpretation is not like opening a tin and removing sardines. And context is absolutely crucial; its role must be accounted for in a model of communication.

2.3 Specific inadequacies of the CM

This said, let me catalog some of the misleading features of the CM. It should be clear that these result from the absence of context-based inference, and from underestimating the insubstantial (reflecting the bias that something is better than nothing). I will conclude with what I regard as the most significant: the CM's failure to account for nonliteral meanings.

2.3.1 The CM's view that silence can only mean nothing

According to the CM, if nothing is encoded, transmitted, and decoded, then nothing should be communicated. Silence can only mean nothing.

But think of the phenomenal expressive power of silence. By it we can communicate anger, assent, wonder, defeat, and disinterest. Aside from grammatically determined absences (null pronouns, certain types of ellipsis, and so forth), the interpretation of significant silence is directed entirely by the (mind-mediated) context. We need a model of communication that can account for this.

You may feel that this argument is weak because significant silences are rather rare and exotic. Significant silences, however, pervade ordinary speech. Unfortunately the CM fosters the idea that something is better than nothing. (This, by the way, is particularly evident in highly edited texts.)

2.3.2 Overuse of connectives

Some people assume that an explicit connective is more effective than no connective. However, consider the following example (due to Mann and Thompson):

I'm hungry. Let's go to the Fuji Gardens.

We readily infer (with some cultural background) that the Fuji Gardens must be a nearby restaurant at which the speaker can acquire food to satisfy his hunger. Putting anything between the two sentences (e.g., *therefore* or *for that reason*) would sound pedantic and interrupt the tight problem-solution relationship of the parts. The CM cannot account for this because it is a matter of inference, not a matter of text-driven grammar.

2.3.3 Rare use of ellipsis

The CM inhibits the use of ellipsis because meaning should result from decoding form, not from the absence of form.

But ellipsis is frequent in natural discourse. Yesterday I heard a woman giving advice for selecting tile for a kitchen floor. She said, "You want something porous, but not very." I don't think anyone was left in doubt about what she meant.

On a radio program[8] a U.S. senator was interviewed about the high price of medicines for senior citizens. He said (and I quote from memory), "We are trying to foster competition in the pharmaceutical industry to degrade drugs used by seniors." He communicated—as he intended—"bring down the cost of drugs." A CM decoding of what the Senator actually said would lead to a very different meaning.

Ellipsis keeps readers engaged by requiring them to fill in what has been left out. For example, the translation of Matt. 23:25 in Huallaga Quechua begins, *Pucucunapa lätucunapa janallanta mayllanqui; rurintaga mana* 'You wash only the outsides of cups and plates; inside not'. To understand 'inside not' the reader must reconstruct 'You do not wash the insides of the cups and plates'. That would be hard for someone who was not paying attention, for someone who was simply listening passively.

2.3.4 The position of modifiers

Modifiers generally occur adjacent to the word they modify so, for example, adjectives generally occur adjacent to the noun they modify (possibly separated by another modifier). However, many languages allow a modifier to occur at a distance from the modified word, as illustrated by the following pair of examples (provided by Marvin Beachy):

> After his sauna, Hiromi ate a fish raw.
> After his sauna, Hiromi ate a fish naked.

In the first we understand that *raw* modifies *fish*; in the second, that *naked* modifies *Hiromi*. This is the result of inference, not of syntactic rule.

2.3.5 Pronoun resolution

How does one determine the referent of a pronoun? Decades of intense research trying to give an account strictly in terms of syntax has led to an appreciation for the role inference plays in pronoun resolution. Consider example 1 and the alternative continuations in 2a and 2b:

> 1. As John and Paul were walking along, Paul stubbed his toe.
> 2a. "Ouch," he said.
> 2b. "Boy, that must have hurt," he said.

If 2a follows 1 then *he* refers to Paul, but if 2b follows 1 then *he* refers to John. This you infer quickly, effortlessly, and unconsciously. You do not compute it by syntactic rule; indeed, no syntactic rule(s) could be written to accurately resolve such cases.

I was watching a TV program, a biography of Isaiah Thomas, star player for the Detroit Pistons. The narrator told how Isaiah had helped his family, especially one of his brothers. Then the narrator said, "After two decades of fighting drug addiction, he persuaded his brother to enter a rehabilitation program." For a moment I thought that the *he* in *he persuaded his brother* referred to the just-mentioned brother, and that this brother had persuaded Isaiah to enter a rehab program. This struck me as strange because there had been no mention of Isaiah using drugs. Then I realized that it was the other way around, that Isaiah was the one who had persuaded his brother to enter the rehab program and that this was another example of how Isaiah had helped his family. Well, that is how language works: understanding is not a mechanical process. Speakers count on hearers interpreting.

Note: We do not always get it right. Ollie and Sven went to set fence posts. Sven grasped the sledgehammer. Ollie held a post upright and said, "When I nod my head, you hit it." Of course, the first blow killed him.

2.3.6 No account for why a text might be reread

How does the CM answer the question, "What is the point of rereading a text?" Given its mechanistic view of the relation between form and meaning, perhaps the best answer might be simply, "I forgot what it said."

[8] Heard on National Public Radio, March 10, 2002.

However, there is a much better reason for rereading a text: Each subsequent reading causes a slightly different reaction; it provokes new insights, ones that are often deeper than those provoked by a prior reading.

2.3.7 The CM's view of zero meaning

The CM leads one to believe that there can be "zero meaning": If decoding fails, the result is nothing (as though the failure brings the machinery to a stop). In reality, however, it is quite difficult to create zero meaning. No matter how twisted the grammar, no matter how unfamiliar the vocabulary, no matter how ill defined the context, humans are so predisposed to creating meaning that it is hard to say something that does not communicate something.

> United Negro College Fund: A mind is a terrible thing to waste.
> Dan Quayle at UNCF meeting: What a waste it is to lose one's mind.
> David Weber: A mind is a hard thing to turn off.

2.3.8 No appreciation for the value of repetition

Why would a speaker or author repeat something? It would be reasonable from the perspective of the CM to say, "To increase redundancy and thereby lower the probability of transmission errors." To my knowledge no one has ever given that reason for human communication. Rather, I think the CM fosters the idea that there is *no* good reason for repetition: If something has been successfully communicated, then there is no reason to repeat it. (Contributions to BT have explicitly stated this position.)

This is quite demonstrably wrong. Examples of highly effective repetition abound. Here are just two examples:

> Oh Absalom, my son, my son.
>
> My childhood days are gone, gone.

Another example is the last verse of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.

General Douglas MacArthur finished his last great speech[9] as follows: "Today marks my final roll call with you, but I want you to know that when I cross the river my last conscious thoughts will be—of The Corps, and The Corps, and The Corps. I bid you farewell."

Nicolas Cage, playing opposite Meg Ryan in the romantic movie *City of Angels*, says, "I would rather have had *one* breath of her hair, *one* kiss from her mouth, than eternity without it. *One*." Here the repetition of *one* and the ellipsis surrounding the final *one* achieves an incredible effect.

2.3.9 The CM's view that the same input should yield the same output

Because encoding and decoding (the fundamental operations of the CM) are mechanistic (functions of the grammar and lexicon), the same input should yield the same output. However, this is not the case as demonstrated by Sperber and Wilson's example (1990):

> Four times, Shakespeare's Mark Anthony repeats "Brutus is an honorable man." The first time […] his audience is not intended to take these words ironically. The fourth occurrence, on the other hand, is blatantly sarcastic. What happens in between?

[9] West Point, May 12, 1962. See www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/.

2.3.10 The CM's view of nonliteral meanings

The sentence like *Max is a monster* could mean that Max is (really) a monster, but it may communicate that he is large, violent, and aggressive,[10] but not really a monster. The CM can account for how it means that Max is a monster, but not for the nonliteral meanings.

This limitation motivated extending the CM: Decoding is split into two parts, one for literal language (for this, form represents meaning straightforwardly) and the other for nonliteral ("figurative") meanings. If decoding produces an acceptable literal meaning, then that *is* the meaning, period! If, however, decoding produces an unacceptable meaning, then pragmatics is brought to bear.

And what is pragmatics? Pragmatics, according to this view, is a catalog of tropes; that is, of ways the form-meaning relation can deviate from the norm of literalness. (Pragmatics is an asylum of deviants!) A nonliteral sentence is processed by searching for the category to which the trope belongs. Once identified, the interpreter can apply what is known about the relation of form and meaning for that type of trope.

Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. has written about this extensively in *The Poetics Of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding* (1994). In his "Metarepresentations in Staged Communicative Acts" Gibbs (2000:398) outlines part of this view and some of its implications and then goes on to say why it must be rejected:

> According to this traditional view, which I have dubbed the STANDARD PRAGMATIC MODEL (Gibbs, 1994), understanding what any nonliteral utterance means requires that listeners analyze a sentence's literal meaning before other figurative meanings can be derived. Another implication of this model is that understanding tropes requires that a defective literal meaning be found before the search for a nonliteral meaning can begin. Figurative meaning can be ignored if the literal meaning of an utterance makes sense in context. Finally, additional inferential work must be done to derive figurative meanings that are contextually appropriate.
>
> The results of many psycholinguistic experiments have shown these claims to be false (see Gibbs, 1994, for a review). Listeners and readers can often understand the figurative interpretations of
> metaphor (e.g., Billboards are warts on the landscape);
> metonymy (e.g., The ham sandwich left without paying);
> sarcasm (e.g., You are a fine friend);
> idioms (e.g., John popped the question to Mary);
> proverbs (e.g., The early bird catches the worm); and
> indirect speech acts (e.g., Would you mind lending me five dollars?)
>
> without having to first analyze and reject their literal meanings when these tropes are seen in realistic social contexts. These studies specifically demonstrate that people can read figurative utterances as quickly as—sometimes more quickly than—they can read literal uses of the same expressions in different contexts or equivalent non-figurative expressions. Research also shows that people quickly apprehend the nonliteral meaning of simple comparison statements (e.g., Surgeons are butchers) even when the literal meaning of these statements fits perfectly with the context (Glucksberg, Gildea and Bookin, 1982; Shinjo and Myers, 1989). Even without a defective literal meaning to trigger a search for an alternative figurative meaning, metaphor, to take one example, can be automatically interpreted. Moreover, experimental studies demonstrate that understanding metaphor, metonymy, irony, and indirect speech acts requires the same kind of contextual information as do comparable literal expressions (Gibbs, 1986b; 1986c; Gildea and Glucksberg, 1983; Keysar, 1989). These observations and experimental findings demonstrate that the standard pragmatic view of nonliteral language use has little psychological validity, at least insofar as very early cognitive processes are concerned (see also Recanati, 1995).

By the way, in *The Poetics of Mind* Gibbs claims that the literal versus nonliteral distinction is more imagined than real, and that *literal* has never been suitably defined.

[10] Of course, in the right context it might actually communicate the opposite, that Max is a very nice person!

Recall Gibbs's statement that "understanding tropes requires that a defective literal meaning be found before the search for a nonliteral meaning can begin." It is this, I believe, that has led to literal interpretations of passages such as the following:

> Matt. 15.24 I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
>
> Luke 22.36 And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.
>
> 1 Cor. 11:19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

We will return to these later.

3. Source-Meaning-Receptor theories of translation

Translation is a meaning-mediated relation between a SL text and a RL text.

In the day when many translators worried more about the equivalence of form than the equivalence of meaning, the source-meaning-receptor translation theory (SMR) was a bold and significant step forward.

Actually there were, and are, *many* SMR theories (e.g., dynamic equivalence and meaning-based), but here I will use the label SMR for the core assumptions shared by Source-Meaning-Receptor theories, even though this inevitably results in a caricature that does not adequately represent any of the theories.

In what did the SMR theory consist? First and foremost, it took from the CM the concept that a text is an encoded meaning. With this comes the notion that, fundamentally, when encoding, the meaning determines the text; when decoding, the text determines the meaning. Thus translation involves (1) decoding the meaning of the source language (SL) text and (2) encoding this meaning into a receptor language (RL) text.

TEXT_{SL}— [decode] →MEANING— [encode] →TEXT_{RL}

Second, SMR took as an axiom that meaning must remain invariant under translation. From this it follows that any adjustment to the RL text is justified if it is necessary to keeping the meaning invariant ("preserve the meaning").

In this theory, the RL text is an accurate translation of the SL text to the extent that the meaning encoded in the RL text is the same as that "in" the SL text. That is, a translation is faithful to the extent that its meaning decodes to the meaning of the source text.

3.1 What a translator must know

Given these assumptions, a translator must know about the nature of meaning, possible adjustments, the nature of text, and SL decoding and RL encoding. I will comment briefly on each of these.

Meaning: Translators are required to study semantics—to learn about different types of meaning and how to investigate meaning. Considerable attention is given to lexical semantics while little (if at all) is given to pragmatics, and none to formal semantics.

Adjustments: Considerable attention is given to possible adjustments: a passive may be changed to an active (possibly explicating the subject), a metaphor may be changed to a simile,[11] a rhetorical question may be changed to a statement, and so forth. Students are taught to recognize the conditions under which each adjustment might be made. This instruction is reinforced with exercises, sometimes to the point that the trainee acquires a natural reflex.[12]

Text: The concern to know about text has fueled enthusiasm for the study of discourse. This enthusiasm, however, has been largely directed toward approaches that are text-centric (e.g., ones

[11] This is a very misguided adjustment since metaphors and similes have different effects (see Hasson, Glucksberg, and Estes 2001).
[12] Such reflexes are the basis on which interpreters are able to do real-time translation.

that look for structures, ones that take co-text to be the context); little has been directed at approaches more oriented toward the social, pragmatic, or cognitive aspects of discourse.

SL decoding: For the Bible translator, SL decoding involves the study of biblical languages and exegesis. SIL and, I think, various Bible translation agencies generally do not teach these, counting on translators learning them at other institutions. This has had both positive and negative effects.

A positive effect has been that trainees have received a broader approach to interpretation than they would have from CM-oriented linguists who emphasize the grammars and lexicons of biblical languages at the expense of the relevant history, culture, worldview…and extra-biblical literature.

A negative effect has been the failure to connect what is taught as exegesis with what is taught regarding semantics and discourse. Biblical exegesis seems to have been fairly immune to advances in linguistics (although this is perhaps changing).

The other side of the coin is that, by farming out exegesis, our linguistics has been buffered from the pressure to give an adequate account of interpretation. This allows us to continue to believe, under the influence of the CM, that interpretation is decoding, primarily determined by grammar and lexicon.

RL encoding: It is believed that translators will produce a good RL encoding to the extent that they have a good (operational) knowledge of the RL, that is, of its grammar and lexicon. A post to BT put it this way: "Good translators are master communicators because they know the source language and the target language." But this ignores the crucial role of context-based inference, a knowledge of which does not necessarily come along with a knowledge of the more mechanical aspects of language (grammar and lexicon).

3.2 Inadequacies inherited by SMR from the Code Model

SMR inherited various inadequacies from the CM, as will now be discussed.

3.2.1 Misconception about text

In the CM the relationship between meaning and form was regarded as one of encoding/decoding. This led to the notion, which carried through to translation, that meaning was determined by the text; that if a translation did not "preserve" meaning then the problem must lie with the translated text. (A corollary: if one does not understand the SL text, then the problem must be insufficient knowledge of the source language.)

3.2.2 Over-explicitness and over-explication

SMR-based translations are often more explicit than necessary and/or desirable. This is a consequence of risk-aversion coupled with the belief that meaning is (encoded) *in* the text. Thus, to play it safe, explicit connectives are favored over leaving the relationship to be inferred by the reader; ellipsis is rarely used (Indeed, the rule seems to be, "If tempted to use ellipsis, don't!"); modifiers are kept adjacent to the modified (rather than trusting their association to inference); noun phrases and explicit pronouns are overused, and so forth.[13]

[13] At a Translation Consultant Development Workshop where a portion of translation into a Quechua language was being checked, I claimed that it had far too many explicit referring expressions (noun phrases, names, overt pronouns) and made too little use of zero anaphora. The translator insisted that, no, this was good style for this variety of Quechua and that his Quechua coworkers wanted it this way. Both he and the consultant evaluating me let me know that I had overestimated what I knew about this variety of Quechua and had overstepped my bounds as a translation consultant.

Months later I learned that, when the translator and his coworkers were preparing to dub a video of the Gospel of Luke, they had to shorten the translation to fit the timing frames for lip movement (lip-sync). The obvious place to cut: those many explicit referring expressions. After having reduced these, his coworkers agreed that this sounded better. They then went back and reduced them throughout the translation of the entire gospel.

Among the dozens of adjustments that have been identified and discussed in the Bible translation literature, one stands out above the rest: making implicit information explicit. I venture to say that this single adjustment is employed more than all the others put together! There are various reasons for this:

1. Communication involves a huge amount of implicit information. The simplest text may activate volumes. For example, *John opened the door* may cause you to think about John's habit of spending long hours in his recliner watching soap operas on the television, that he was viewing "As the World Turns" when a salesman knocked on the door, that John had to get up and cross the room to the door, that there were rugs on the floor, that John had to first unlock the door, which required that he extend his right arm, grasp the latch and turn it, and so forth. Depending on how the narrative continued, any of these could be considered implicit information.
2. Nothing in the SL text limits the application of the implicit-to-explicit adjustment. To change a passive to an active, the source text must have a passive; to change a rhetorical question to a statement, the text must have a question. By contrast, making implicit information explicit is not restricted by any explicit form. Translators have license to explicate whenever they identify implicit information and feel that it should be made explicit.
3. No principles for the proper use of the implicit-to-explicit adjustment follow from SMR. (Indeed its CM underpinnings do not provide a conceptual base on which such a theory could be formulated.) Nor does the theory yield distinctions in different kinds of implicit information (such as RT's distinctions between implicatures and explicatures and between contextual assumptions and contextual implications).
4. Bible translators are generally risk-aversive. If they believe that meaning resides in the text, then the safe way to translate is to make explicit all the information that the translation should communicate.

No one is proposing a ban on making implicit information explicit, only that this galloping horse must be reined in. And this will require richer and more realistic theories of communication and translation.

3.2.3 Inadequate account of context

Because the CM did not incorporate the notion of context, SMR did not provide accounts of the role of context in translation: its role in understanding the SL text, its role in shaping expression in the RL text, the possibility of enriching the RL context by means other than the text itself.

I do not wish to imply that translators were not taught the importance of context nor that they fail to appreciate it. Context was definitely taken into account in biblical exegesis. However, SMR per se had little or nothing to say about it. As stated in section 3.1, a contributing factor was probably that exegesis was not taught as part of translation theory, but as a separate discipline, thus relieving somewhat the pressure to incorporate context into SMR.

3.2.4 Less nonliteral language

SMR adopted Gibbs's "standard pragmatic model" whereby a literal interpretation must be found to be defective before a nonliteral interpretation is entertained. Thus, nonliteral language is regarded as exceptional, a departure from the normal literal. This bias is reflected in how translators relate to both the source and receptor texts.

In interpreting an SL text, translators (and commentators) are biased toward a literal interpretation; they struggle to come up with an adequate translation (or explanation) of the literal interpretation of many passages. I believe the predisposition toward literal interpretation is why 1 Cor. 11:19 has generally been interpreted literally. Witness the note in the *NIV Study Bible* that reads, "As deplorable as factions may be, they serve one good purpose: they distinguish those who are faithful and true in God's sight." The assumption is that if it *can* be interpreted literally, then it *must* be so interpreted, even if, as in the case of 1 Cor. 11:19, it is inconsistent with a theme of the book (see 1 Cor. 1:10–11), and even if it requires ascribing a reflective tone to a verse right in the middle of a harsh scolding.

In applying their craft, translators do as taught: They recognize tropes (exceptional cases). They search for equivalent tropes, but these are hard to find and, when found, often involve more risk. And they apply one of the prescribed adjustments: a metaphor can be translated as a simile; a rhetorical question, as a statement, and so forth. Many of these adjustments move the text toward a more literal rendering. (As one consultant used to say frequently, "Why don't you just say what it means!") Consequently SMR-based translations have less nonliteral language than the SL text to such an extent that I've come to think that many translators believe that a good translation—an idiomatic one—is a translation that an RL reader can understand literally!

3.2.5 Other more specific cases

The preceding criticisms of SMR are rather general. To these could be added more specific ones corresponding to the liabilities of the CM that have already been pointed out: silence can only mean nothing (2.3.1), over-use of connectives (2.3.2), rarely using ellipsis (2.3.3), the position of modifiers (2.3.4), over-explicit reference (2.3.5), no account for why a text might be reread (2.3.6), the notion of "zero meaning" (2.3.7), no appreciation for the value of repetition (2.3.8), failure to appreciate subtle changes of meaning due to context (2.3.9), and an inadequate account of nonliteral meanings (2.3.10). I leave it to the reader to review these and think about how they show up in SMR-based translations.

3.3 But SMR is more than that!

Reacting to such a caricature of SMR, some have objected that SMR is really much more. And this is true.[14] As stated in section 1.2, intelligent people went far beyond what the theory says. They recognized that all manner of things such as context and cultural knowledge were relevant to translation, and took them into account when translating.

But appreciating that certain things are relevant to communication or translation and incorporating them in a theory are two quite different matters. The question is, "*To what extent* and *how* were these incorporated into the theory?" Wayne Dye wrote (BT post, March 22, 2002, Re: SMR translation theories):

> All of those [adjustments…] were made on an empirical basis. We recognized that hearers had a worldview as well as a grammar, and we took into account both when choosing how to translate. Indeed, an empirical approach can do nothing else. One ascertains what people are "getting out of" a passage and adjusts the RL form to bring their understanding as close as possible to what the original hearers were understanding.

And further,

> Charles Kraft summarizes the process like this, "… the communicator has certain meanings in his mind that he encodes in cultural symbols [primarily linguistic symbols—WD] and transmits in the form of a message to one or more receptors. The receptors, for their part, decode the message in their heads and thereby derive the meanings on the basis of which they act" (1978:359). The message subsequently may be clarified by the source after feedback from the receptors. This is a simple model….

So the theory has been modified by the addition of an empirical output filter:

$$\text{TEXT}_{SL} — \boxed{\text{decode}} \rightarrow \text{MEANING} — \boxed{\text{encode}} \rightarrow \text{DRAFT}_{RL} — \boxed{\text{check+correct}} \rightarrow \text{TEXT}_{RL}$$

And that filter is where all manner of very important matters such as context and world view are incorporated. They are not built into the core of the theory, perhaps because the core of the SMR theory resists their incorporation.[15]

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[14] For a tidy statement of an enhanced SMR model of communication as presented in a non-translation domain, see chapter 5 of Samuel Certo's *Human Relations Today: Concepts and Skills* (Chicago: Austen Press, 1995).

[15] Let's consider an analogy. Suppose we want to develop a theory of equations (which we could call Algebra). An equation would be something like 2=1+1. Suppose our theory says we can apply any arithmetic operations we please. Let's multiply the left side by 2 and add 5 to the right side. Of course, we'd like to make sure that, whatever operations we apply, the equation remains "balanced," so we add an empirical output filter to impose that condition. In the case

Iver Larsen commented on this output filter as follows (BT post of March 31, 2002, Re: SMR translation theories):[16]

> "I don't think it is just an output filter. It also recognizes, although rather implicitly, that the original author used a cultural filter before penning the words. They had their own and different culture and had a different audience in mind."

In my view this is essentially correct. A translator was expected to learn exegesis "elsewhere" (see sec. 3.1), so there was little pressure to give an explicit account of how world view and culture fit in SMR.

And—I hope we all agree—an output filter is *not* a reasonable way to incorporate such important matters into the theory.

4. RT-lite: a sketch of Relevance Theory

> **Communication is a text+context-mediated relation between a speaker's meaning (intention) and a hearer's meaning (an interpretive resemblance to the speaker's intention).**

The fundamental text on RT is Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (1986, 2001). This is not an easy book to read so I recommend starting with a more accessible introduction like Diane Blakemore's *Understanding Utterances* (1992).

Here begins a brief survey of some basic ideas of RT. Because it is a full and rich theory, what follows is only a highly abbreviated introduction and not a substitute for reading the RT literature.

4.1 Ostensive-inferential communication

Please do not be put off—as have some—by the fancy word *ostensive*. Think of it simply as meaning "show" or "provide a clue." It does mean a bit more: provide a clue in a way that makes evident that you intend to communicate something thereby.

Also note that, although I use the terms *speaker* and *hearer* below, I intend them to encompass other forms of communication, such as writing, reading, and signing.

"Ostensive-inferential" communication happens when:

1. The speaker purposefully makes evident to the hearer ("ostensifies") a clue as to what the speaker wishes to communicate, that is, a clue to his or her *intention*.[17]
2. The recipient *infers* the intention from the clue and the context. Put another way: the hearer must interpret the clue, taking into account the context, and surmise what the speaker intended to communicate.

A fundamental concept of RT is that normal human communication by means of language is ostensive-inferential. The clues we use when we speak may be very complex linguistic expressions, but they are still only clues and they still require interpretation.

The following are some simple, real examples of communication. Think about how each is ostensive-inferential. Ask yourself, What message is communicated (the inferred part)? What is the context? What is

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under consideration the left side is 2×2=4 and the right side is 1+1+5=7. So we take a balance and put 4 measures on the left and 7 on the right. We note that the balance tips to one side. So we modify the operations (say by adding only 4 to the right side) and again submit the modified equation to the output filter. We repeat this cycle until the equation passes the output filter. This is a simple model (echoing Kraft) but a crucial feature has been put into an empirical output filter. And that's how SMR incorporated crucial stuff. My objection is not that intelligent people didn't recognize the necessity of taking all manner of things into account; it is that these were never incorporated into the theory in a reasonable way.

[16] The quotation from Larsen included *not* following *I don't think it is* but this obscured what Larsen was trying to say so I omitted it.

[17] Actually two intentions are made evident: (1) The communicative intention is (roughly) the message, "I want to communicate something to you by means of this clue." (2) The informative intention is the "content" (information) the speaker wants to communicate.

the clue (the ostensive part)? Why is it a good clue? What mental steps ("computations") must the hearer make to get from the clue and the context to the message?

1. Rick Floyd's dog loves to play ball. When someone is at the dining room table the dog brings his ball to the threshold (he's not allowed to enter uninvited), lays it down in front of him, pats his paw next to it, and nudges it into the room. Those present would have to be pretty dumb to fail to infer that the dog wants them to do something with that ball! Now what could that be?
2. A child comes up to a parent and raises his or her arms, showing (ostensifying) that the wish to be picked up. The parent understands and picks up the child.
3. Before my son began to speak, he would play a game. He would drop his spoon from his highchair onto the floor. As soon as we looked at him, he would drop his head and look intently at the spoon. We understood and picked up the spoon. (The cycle would be repeated until one or the other of us got tired or distracted.)
4. In Bangalore, India, where I was taking part in a workshop, I met a bright Indian boy, four-year-old Eric. One day someone folded a piece of paper into a toy he could manipulate with his fingers. The next day he came to me, patted the paper on my clipboard, raised his hand in front of my face and moved his fingers around. I understood that he wanted me to fold one of those toys for him.
5. By the end of the workshop four-year-old Eric had learned a few words of English. When I said my last good-bye his response was, "Bangalore no, Nasik yes." It was the perfect clue—given his linguistic resources—for communicating that he was moving from Bangalore to Nasik.
6. On a rural road in upstate New York I drive past a yellow road sign: "14 TON BRIDGE." Does it mean that the bridge weighs fourteen tons? Hmm … there must be a better interpretation. What do I care how much it weighs! Why is this sign not more explicit? Traffic signs tend to be terse: "BLIND CHILD AREA," "BANGALORE MAINTENANCE STARTS" (next to the road as one enters Bangalore), and so forth. Many signs leave it to the reader to infer their sphere of application: When I see "SHOES MUST BE WORN," "NO SMOKING." "NO FOOD OR DRINK ALLOWED," I do not infer that these activities are prohibited everywhere, but when I see "JESUS SAVES" I infer that the author intended that it apply everywhere.
7. An eight-year-old child (whom I had just met) asked me if I had seen the movie Shrek. I immediately responded with a sustained, monotone roar. She danced with delight. Not only had I given her evidence that I had seen the movie, I also showed her that I had grasped one of its defining moments.
8. I put some potatoes in the microwave. My wife, bustling to get dinner on, said, "Your potatoes are done." Why did she say "*your* potatoes" instead of "*the* potatoes"? Why was *your* a better clue than *the*? I hastened to get them onto the table.
9. I was in the lobby of a law firm waiting for my 10 o'clock appointment. The secretary there called the lawyer's secretary on the intercom and said, "Tell Tony his 10 o'clock's in the lobby."

We could add innumerable examples, some for which the linguistic expression is simple, others for which it is long and complex; some that require little inference, others that require a great deal (like the phrase, "unerring muse who makes the casual perfect"[18]). Whatever the case, we would see that normal human communication is ostensive-inferential: Linguistic expressions are simply clues from which hearers must infer speakers' intentions.

4.2 Interpretation and relevance

A fundamental concept of RT is that communication by means of language is ostensive-inferential: An utterance is a clue, nothing more than a clue, a clue from which the hearer must infer what the speaker

[18] This phrase was written by Robert Lowell in a tribute to Elizabeth Bishop for her persistent honing of poetic phrases (from projects.vassar.edu/bishop/uncollectedpoems.php).

intends to communicate. Inference—which can take one far beyond what decoding can—makes it possible to interpret utterances.

However, if this inferential process—striving after an interpretation—operated willy-nilly, ostensive-inferential communication could not possibly work. Minds (and the brains on which they are implemented) would exhaust themselves in aimlessly searching for interpretations, and take far too long in doing so.

Fortunately, a simple principle constrains interpretation, the Principle of Relevance. It has a "mini-max" character such as found throughout nature; for example, bubbles minimize surface while maximizing volume. This is seen again and again in the behavior of organisms; for example, shoppers seek to minimize expenditure while maximizing acquisition ("getting the biggest bang for the buck").

The Principle of Relevance states that the hearer is justified in expecting to get adequate interpretive benefit for minimal processing effort. That is, a hearer should get a reasonable return for the effort expended on interpreting the clue relative to its context. When someone tells you something, the words come with an implicit contract, something like, "I, the speaker, being of a sound mind, guarantee you, the hearer, that if you dedicate yourself to the task of understanding what I say, taking into account the context, then you will be satisfied: the meaning you discover will adequately compensate you for your efforts." Then with "Satisfaction Guaranteed" in hand, you can go ahead and interpret what I say as follows:

1. With minimal effort, compute an interpretation of the clue (ostensive stimulus) in its context.
2. Are you satisfied with this interpretation for the effort you have expended? If so, accept that interpretation—live long and prosper. If not, repeat step 1 but work a little harder, perhaps taking into account more of the context.

For example, suppose you have made yourself a tuna sandwich and left it on the kitchen table, and I say to you, "The cat just came in." With minimal effort you can understand that a certain feline pet has entered the house. Are you satisfied with that meaning? Do you feel that it adequately compensates you for the trouble of processing it? Perhaps not. (Certainly not if it was quite evident to you that the cat came in.) So you seek a more satisfying meaning.

Suppose further that the cat—as you and I both know—loves tuna and has no qualms about getting up on the table. You can add this thought to the computation and understand that your sandwich may be in peril of being eaten by the cat. Are you satisfied now? Maybe so; maybe not. If not, you might add to the computation that you do not see me budging to rescue your sandwich, and you go on to infer that I intend to suggest that you should act to rescue your sandwich. Perhaps my "The cat just came in" broke the icy silence following a heated argument. A bid for reconciliation? Perhaps, but certainly not if your sandwich was within my reach.

This example illustrates an important point: Speech radically underdetermines thought. What is uttered (or spoken or written) is little compared to the thoughts it provokes. And humans expect this: a person who is too explicit is taken to be tedious, pedantic, even coercive.

4.3 Explicature and interpretation

Every reader is an initial Watson and an eventual Holmes. —Lecercle

As we've seen, a speaker communicates by giving a clue from which the hearer must infer an interpretation, and the interpretation-seeking inference is guided by the principle that processing efforts must yield satisfactory interpretive results. In RT two types of utterance processing are assumed: (1) a largely grammatical and semantic one and (2) an inference-driven pragmatic one.

(1) FORM+CONTEXT→ grammar+semantics+enrichment →EXPLICATURE

The first type of processing corresponds roughly to the CM's concept of decoding. It involves parsing, lexical lookup, and computing a semantic representation. (This computation is compositional: the meaning of each unit is a function of the meaning of its constituent parts.) Enrichment involves basic operations

such as disambiguation and referent identification. These may access encyclopedic information and other aspects of the context.

The result is the *explicature*, which is a thought/proposition[19] sufficiently fleshed out that the hearer can reasonably ask, Is this true or not?

(2) EXPLICATURE+CONTEXT= inference ⟹ INTERPRETATION

The second type of processing involves inference based on the *explicature* and the *context*. The meaning that results is the *interpretation*. It should approximate (as closely as reasonable) what the speaker intended to communicate by uttering the *form, that is, the speaker's* informative intention.

The following are some clarifications of the two preceding figures:

1. In the first figure I used "→" to represent the grammatical and semantic processing between the form (F) and the explicature (E), but in the second figure I used a thicker arrow "⟹" to indicate the inferential process between the explicature and the interpretation (I). It should be noted that the CM does not distinguish these two types of processing. Form and meaning are related simply by encoding (M→F) or decoding (F→M). RT does make the distinction, recognizing that the interpretation may be very similar to the explicature (F→E⟹I) or very different (F→E⟹⟹I). The latter is called weak implicature/communication because it leaves a great deal of responsibility to the hearer. But make no mistake; weak communication can be extremely powerful! (More about that later.)

2. Strictly speaking, an utterance's interpretation consists of both its explicatures and implicatures. I sometimes forget this and refer to the interpretation as though it were only the implicature(s).

   In the literature the terms *interpretation, message,* and *meaning* are used fairly interchangeably to refer to the *interpretation*. To make matters worse, the process itself is also called *interpretation*. Fortunately, context keeps us afloat in this terminological swamp.

   Form is usually referred to in RT discussions as *utterance*. (Perhaps *form* reflects thinking more about written communication and *utterance* more about speech.)

3. For reasons of exposition I say little about the role of context in the construction of the explicature. To see that context is indeed involved, ask yourself what the verb *to feed* means in light of these three examples:

   The farmer *fed* the sheep.
   The sheep *fed* the farmer and his family for three weeks.
   This recipe *feeds* five people.

4. The two types of processing shown in the preceding diagrams are not *stages* of processing; rather, they are *types* of processing. There is a growing appreciation that they are more integrated (mutually feeding) than a simple two-stage model would allow. (And no claim is intended as to how the brain actually carries out these processes.) Sometimes the difference between them may be a bit fuzzy, but RT nevertheless recognizes two types of processing: (1) recovering the linguistically encoded meaning and (2) constructing through inference the implicatures.

Kempson (2001:399–400) puts it this way:

> The overall picture of interpretation is that grammar-internal principles articulate both syntactic and semantic structure for sentences, a semantic structure for a sentence being an incomplete specification of how it is understood. Pragmatic theory explains how such incomplete specifications are enriched in context to yield the full communicative effect of an uttered sentence, whether metaphorical, ironical, and so on. This is the view adopted by relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1995).

[19] The explicature can also be a set of propositions, but I will speak of it as a single proposition.

4.4 RT and coding

Lest the reader think that RT altogether rejects the role of coding and decoding in communication, consider the following quotation[20] of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's "Pragmatics, Modularity and Mind-reading" (section 2):

> Before Grice's pioneering work, the only available theoretical model of communication was what we have called the classical code model (Sperber and Wilson, 1986/1995, chapter 1, sections 1–5; Wilson, 1998), which treats communication as involving a sender, a receiver, a set of observable signals, a set of unobservable messages, and a code that relates the two. The sender selects a message and transmits the corresponding signal, which is received and decoded at the other end; when all goes well, the result is the reproduction in the receiver of the original message.…
>
> Human verbal communication…involves a mixture of coding and inference. As we have seen, it contains an element of inferential intention-attribution; but it is also partly coded, since the grammar of a language just is a code which pairs phonetic representations of sentences with semantic representations of sentences.…
>
> Inferential comprehension, then, is ultimately a metapsychological process involving the construction and evaluation of a hypothesis about the communicator's meaning on the basis of evidence she has provided for this purpose. It clearly exists in humans, both in pure and mixed forms. As we have seen, verbal communication involves a mixture of coding and inference, and there is room for debate about the relative contributions of each.

4.5 Watson and Holmes

For fun, let's consider Lecercle's elegant statement that "Every reader is an initial Watson and an eventual Holmes" (1999:4). With its preceding co-text it reads as follows:

> Progress along the path of interpretation is achieved in two ways. By GLOSSING [computing the explicature –DJW].…And by GUESSING, by solving the enigma of the text: drawing inferences from hints. Every reader is an initial Watson and an eventual Holmes.

The co-text helps, but Lecercle's statement can only be really understood and appreciated by readers who have more *context*, readers who can bring to bear on interpretation some knowledge about the brilliant detective Sherlock Holmes and his companion Dr. Watson, characters in Arthur Conan Doyle's mystery novels. Watson was able to catalog a lot of facts and make basic inferences from them, but it was Sherlock Holmes who could go beyond these to infer who had committed the crime. Lecercle assumes that his readers know this (or, if not, that they will ferret it out).

The reader who can bring this knowledge to bear on the interpretation of Lecercle's statement is rewarded with a nice way to express a profound insight about human communication, namely, that the initial step in interpretation, the calculation of the explicature, is like what Dr. Watson did, and the second step, inference yielding an interpretation, is like what Sherlock Holmes did. So every reader is an initial Watson and an eventual Holmes. Clever, huh? And that brings us to context.

4.6 Context

An advantage of RT over the CM is that it incorporates context within the theory itself: the inferencing that produces explicatures and implicatures *depends crucially on context*.

For RT, context is neither the physical situation of the utterance nor the surrounding text (which is referred to as the "co-text"). *Context* is a collection of thoughts,[21] ones that can affect inference. And context can affect inference only when it is in a mind (hence the term *mind-mediated* context).

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[20] Taken from Sperber's web page: dan.sperber.com.
[21] Technically, they are called "propositions" rather than "thoughts."

Suppose, for example, that Mary asks John, "Do you want a cup of coffee?" and John responds, "Coffee would keep me awake." To interpret John's response, Mary might bring to bear all sorts of thoughts into the inferential process:

> John will soon go to work a night shift.
> One is naturally inclined to sleep at night.
> One must stay awake at work, even at night.
> John will have to stay awake.
> John would welcome help staying awake.
> Coffee helps the one who drinks it to stay awake.
> If John were to drink coffee, it would help him stay awake.
> John must want coffee.
> John is accepting my offer.

If, however, Mary thinks that John wants to sleep, then she would understand his response as indicating that he does not want coffee. This illustrates an important point: Mary's interpretation does not really depend on whether John wants to stay awake or sleep, but on whether Mary *thinks* he wants to stay awake or sleep. The context for Mary's interpretation is in Mary's mind.

A significant part of context is the collection of thoughts a communicator attributes[22] to the interlocutor:

- For a speaker, the context contains the thoughts the speaker believes the hearer will use in computing the interpretation. In the exchange between Mary and John, if John thinks that Mary thinks that he wants to sleep, then he cannot accept the coffee by saying "Coffee would keep me awake."
- For a hearer, the context contains the thoughts the hearer believes the speaker assumed he or she would use in computing the interpretation. In the exchange described above in which Mary assumes John wants to stay awake, if Mary thinks that John thinks that she believes that coffee puts one to sleep, then she might understand John's "Coffee would keep me awake" as rejecting the coffee.

In the July 2, 2002, episode of the television program *Law and Order* two lawyers were discussing a case where a Mr. Steinmetz was accused of murdering his wife, presumably because she believed he was a Nazi war criminal. One lawyer said, "What's relevant is what Mrs. Steinmetz was thinking." The other countered, "What's relevant is what Mr. Steinmetz *thought* she was thinking."

Remember that I finished the cat tale in section 4.2 with "but certainly not if your sandwich was within my reach." Well, now you know that I should have said, "but certainly not if *you knew that* your sandwich was within my reach." What affects your interpretation is not where I am in relation to your sandwich but where *you think* I am in relation to it, and where *you think that I think* I am in relation to it. Context is in the mind.

4.7 Mutual cognitive environment

The collection of thoughts a speaker and hearer attribute to each other has a fancy name, the *mutual cognitive environment*. I guess "environment" suggests amorphous stuff—like air—that impinges with subtle effects; "cognitive" suggests that this stuff is in the mind (and a good thing, too, since that is where it can bear on inference); and "mutual" suggests that the speaker and hearer are on the same page, each attributing this stuff to the other. (Me? I like to think of it as a tropical swamp in which inferences can reproduce prolifically.)

In some cases things can get pretty complicated. The hearer thinks that the speaker thinks that the hearer thinks that… (as illustrated in sec. 4.6). However, for the most part, the mutual cognitive environment is simply the thoughts shared by the speaker and hearer, that is, the thoughts they both believe, coupled with each assuming that the other holds those thoughts.

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[22] Here "X attributes Y to Z" means that "X believes that Z believes Y."

When an utterance implies other communication events, the mutual cognitive environments of each must be taken into account. For example, if I tell you about a conversation I overheard between Mary and John, we must take into account the mutual cognitive environments of (1) our communication and (2) Mary and John's communication. And if in that conversation Mary told John something she heard Tom say to Sally, we must take a third mutual cognitive environment into account.

And this last point is supremely important for translation. In addition to the mutual cognitive environments of the events described, those of the author and translator must be taken into account. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

4.8 Interpretive resemblance and interpretive use

When a child asked me if I had seen the movie *Shrek* (see sec. 4.1), I could have responded with a simple *yes*, but instead I responded with a sustained, monotone roar, imitating Shrek. The child immediately understood that I was indicating that I had indeed seen the movie.

Thus, in this context my roar and yes were alike in an important way. Either one would communicate a positive response. We can say that in this context they "interpretively resemble" each other because they have the same interpretive consequence. I hasten to add that they don't have *exactly* the same consequences; my roar communicated much more than a simple *yes* would have, but they share the main one: either would indicate a positive response.

My roar was an instance of "interpretive use"; I was counting on the child with whom I was talking to interpret my response and come to the same conclusion she would have reached had I simply said yes.

Let's take another example. If "What a lovely day!" is said on a warm, sunny day, it is likely to be understood as expressing what a nice day it is. If, however, it is said on a cold rainy day, it is likely to communicate just the opposite, something like "It is a dreadful day."[23]

In last Sunday's sermon the pastor described his anger at being cut off at an intersection by a rude and irresponsible driver. He said, "I really wanted to…*bless* that guy." The congregation understood that what he said only slightly resembled what he intended to communicate.

Why are such things possible? Because speakers use utterances interpretively; because hearers are aware of this and interpret utterances (relative to their contexts); and because resemblance can be achieved in myriad ways. Indeed, an utterance X can be taken to resemble any of the following (among any number of other possibilities):

I affirm X.
Perhaps X.
I deny X.
You really think X?
I think X is the stupidest thing I've ever heard!

The concepts "interpretive resemblance" and "interpretive use" help us in many ways. Kempson (2001:414) writes:

> Just as drawings, such as cartoons, may "resemble" a person without depicting them at all accurately, so propositions can be used to resemble thoughts they convey, a use of language which is called "interpretive use." Metaphorical uses of language, like other rhetorical effects, are said to constitute an interpretive use, with the sentences being used to convey a relationship of resemblance between the proposition expressed by the utterance and the thought(s) it is intended to convey.

To the metaphors and other rhetorical effects that Kempson identifies as interpretive use can be added another important case: Gutt characterizes translation as interlingual interpretive use (see sec. 5.9).

[23] But even on a warm, sunny day "What a lovely day!" could be understood to mean "It is a dreadful day," if, for example, you've just been informed that you've been fired.

5. Implications of RT for translation

Translation is an interlingual, text+context-mediated relation between a SL author's meaning (intention) and a RL reader's meaning (an interpretive resemblance to the speaker's intention).

A rich theory of communication, particularly one that grapples with the role of context in interpretation, has profound implications for translation. RT is such a theory. In sections 5.1–5.11 a few of the many important implications of RT for translation are summarized.

The scholar who has most explored the implications of RT for translation is Ernst-August Gutt. Two among his many publications are:

- *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context.* The first edition was published by Basil Blackwell in 1991; a second edition was published by St. Jerome Publishing in 2000.
- *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (1992). This was written specifically for Bible translators. It is included on the Translator's Workplace CD. I particularly recommend a careful consideration of the questions raised in chapter 5.

Other SIL scholars (e.g., Regina Blass, Christoph Unger, Ronnie Sim) have also made significant contributions to the theory and its application to translation.

5.1 Implicit information

RT demonstrates that interpretation involves a vast amount of implicit information. This has led some of us to believe that the explication strategy (making implicit information explicit in the text) cannot succeed, that considerable background information must be communicated outside the text itself.

However, this is not to say that implicit information should never be made explicit. So the question is, Which implicit information might/should be made explicit, and which not? RT provides some insights leading to some partial answers.

First, the over-arching principle is relevance: If we make explicit certain information that the hearer does not need, causing the hearer to expend more processing effort, then the hearer should seek greater interpretive compensation. For example, my wife, Diana, and I have a son, Christof. If I say to her, "Do you know what Christof did?" she will assume I'm talking about our son Christof. But what if instead I say, "Do you know what our son Christof did?"? For the added effort of processing "our son" Diana should expect compensation. She would be justified in thinking that (I intend to communicate that) he did something that we, as parents, could be proud of or that we were somehow responsible for.

That much is pretty uncontroversial. The rub comes when we think about how we anchor relevance to different mutual cognitive environments (or "worlds") as discussed below.

Second, RT's distinction between explicature and implicature is useful.[24] Explicating to help the reader compute the explicature is generally acceptable. After all, if the hearer doesn't get the explicature, the implicature(s) can hardly be computed. However, explicating to help the hearer compute the implicatures should be done with much great caution.

Why the difference? Well, computing the explicature consists largely in form-based linguistic computations, with fairly restricted context-driven inferential enrichments. Thus, material added to help the hearer reach the explicature is not very likely to provoke undesirable inferences. By contrast, computing the implicatures is entirely inferential. Since the hearer expects interpretive compensation, added material is likely to trigger all sorts of inferences, often unintended ones.

As with any heuristic, this must be applied with caution, always subject to the principle of relevance and keeping squarely in view the communication event (mutual cognitive environment, world) relative to which it should be applied, as discussed in section 5.8 below. The following examples provide food for reflection:

[24] RT proponents do not necessarily agree on this, nor on the rationale given here. The reason is that considerable research has shown that computing the explicature involves more context-based inference than initially thought.

When John was riding to school, he got his pants caught in the chain.
When John was riding his bicycle to school, he got his pants caught in the chain.
When John was riding his bicycle to school, he got the right leg of his pants caught in the chain.
When John was riding his bicycle to school, he got the cuff of the right leg of his pants caught in the chain.

When John was riding his bicycle to school, he got the left leg of his pants caught in the chain.
When John was riding his bicycle to school, he got the seat of his pants caught in the chain.

5.2 Enriching the mutual cognitive environment

What is spoken or written dramatically underdetermines the thoughts that it provokes. This happens because—in the process of interpretation—a hearer brings to bear all sorts of information from the context: ideas previously learned, ideas triggered by the environment, assumptions about the speaker's goals, and so forth. An utterance may be little more than a catalyst that triggers massive processing, with wide ranging effects. This is—inescapably—the nature of human communication.

Crucially, it follows that only a fraction of the information needed to communicate a rich concept may appear in the text itself. We need to keep this in mind both when we exegete and when we translate. It may be necessary to introduce considerable information into the cognitive environment outside the translated text itself. There are effective channels such as footnotes, book introductions, glossaries, Bible study aids, and concordances. Bible teachers, pastors, indeed the very fabric of the church, may also play an important role in enriching the cognitive environment so that a Bible translation can be understood.

Permit me an analogy. The information that an utterance conveys (its explicature) is analogous to an explosion. Probably each of us has seen a film, whether of actual events or fictional ones, in which a rocket hits a munitions dump or fuel depot, triggering an explosion vastly larger than what the rocket's payload would cause. Well, that's how communication works, even normal everyday communication. The small amount of information conveyed by the utterance can ignite a huge amount of inference. *Fueled by the context*, it produces an interpretation that lights the night sky!

The CM-SMR legacy has led translators to attempt to pack an explosive charge sufficient for a huge explosion into the rocket. But there *are* limits, limits to what will fit, limits to how much the rocket can carry to the target.

RT, on the other hand, suggests that we *ship* some of the explosive material to the target. That way all we have to do is hit the target with a small rocket-borne charge, pretty much as the original text did for the original reader.

5.3 Strong versus weak communication

Many Bible translators think that we must "do our best to communicate accurately and clearly the intended meaning of the Scriptures."[25] But what if the author did not intend to do so? What if the author is more concerned about engaging the readers, about setting them off on an interpretive path, than about communicating a particular meaning, about getting them to a certain endpoint?

Many of the things Jesus said are like this: "I am the light of the world." "Let the dead bury the dead." "Where there's a corpse the buzzards gather." "You must be born again." What these have in common is that Jesus is not communicating a single, precise meaning but inviting the hearers to seek an interpretation while leaving them great interpretive latitude in doing so.

A nice way to understand such cases follows quite naturally from the inferential nature of RT.[26] *Strong* communication takes place when the speaker tightly controls what inferences are computed, resulting in the hearer's getting a precise meaning. *Weak* communication takes place when the speaker exercises little

[25] Taken from a post to BT.
[26] There is no natural way to accommodate them in CM or its progeny because meanings are understood simply as being encoded, transferred, and decoded.

control over the inferences, resulting in the hearer's getting a diffuse meaning or one of various possible interpretations.[27]

Here's an analogy (thanks to Rick Floyd, personal communication): In strong communication we unleash a single arrow straight at the bull's-eye. If the arrow hits it, we've succeeded; otherwise we've failed (to one degree or another). In weak communication we launch a fistful of arrows in the direction of the target. If they land somewhere near the target, we're satisfied.

Weak communication is a defining characteristic of poetry. Songs are full of it, from popular songs on the radio to those sung in church. Some are marvelous: "Shine Jesus shine…flow river flow…blaze Spirit blaze…and let there be light." Others puzzle me, like "Speak the mind that in Christ we know."[28] And others rankle me, like the intentional obfuscation "Hear the voice of my cry," where the more natural "Hear the cry of my voice" would fit just as well.

Hunter Lewis (1990) wrote, "In the world of human thought…the most fruitful concepts are those to which it is impossible to attach a well-defined meaning." *Grace* and *glory* are two good examples.

Here are some more examples of weak communication:

- India is a beehive.
- After the graduation ceremony of the Asia SIL in Darwin everyone was hurriedly taking pictures. A young Australian was holding things up, taking a great while to compose her picture, even to arranging flowers. A Dutch instructor made a pointed comment to hurry her up. I (an American) added another. She finally snapped, "This is Australia."
- On the radio this morning I heard a bishop speaking about the fallout of the sexual abuse scandals. He complained that many wanted to "pull the blanket of shame and guilt over the rest of us." His use of "blanket" spoke volumes. Blankets cover bodies; blankets are used in beds; beds are the primary locus of intimacy; people, especially children, hide under blankets; blankets are sometimes used to hide other things. Simple words, a simple figure, rich implicatures.
- "And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matt. 9:10–13)
- As my friend Joan Baart and I were eating supper in the university cafeteria, talk turned to chess. Overhearing us, Keren Everet asked me, "Have you ever played Joan?" I immediately snapped "No!", just a bit too quickly and just a bit too loudly. Keren pondered a moment, chuckled, and asked, "How bad did he beat you?" (By the way, it *was* my intention to communicate to Keren that I had played Joan and that he had beaten me so badly that I didn't even want to talk about it. I marked my response as interpretive use by saying "no" too quickly and too loudly to pass for a simple denial. And I did this quite instinctively; it was not premeditated.)

Weak implicature, loose talk, interpretive use—they are all around us. And when we get to translation, we should strive "to keep the strong as strong and the weak as weak" (stated by Iver Larsen in a BT post).

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[27] For the dedicated, Christof Unger (unpublished manuscript) provides a somewhat more technical characterization of the strong-weak distinction: "There is thus a difference in the degree of responsibility that the hearer has to take in attributing different implicatures (intended implications) to the speaker. In some cases, this responsibility will be low, that is, the speaker has left the hearer little choice. In others, the responsibility is higher. Sperber and Wilson (1995) say that in the former case the implicature is STRONGLY communicated ('strong implicature'), whereas in the latter it is WEAKLY communicated ('weak implicature')."

[28] I have not yet found anyone who could explain this line to me, but some songwriter wrote it, some publisher published it, the worship leader liked it, and when I gently complained about it to a leader in the church he reflected—somewhat bemused—that the lyrics had passed their screening process. And it blesses people. Go figure!

5.4 Responsibility and taxonomy

RT recognizes that understanding involves considerable context-based inference and that this can carry the reader far beyond the explicature (the "immediate" meaning). But can translators count on that happening?

As translators translate, they should consider *how much* interpretive responsibility should be left to hearers. To fail to leave a reasonable amount of responsibility to the hearer makes the text tedious, stodgy, perhaps insultingly simple (as though talking down to a child), or even coercive (forcing the translator's interpretation on the hearer). On the other hand, to leave too much responsibility to the hearer would provoke communication failure.

Consider the Japanese proverb "Don't blow against a hurricane." It could be translated as an explanation of an interpretation, something like *Do not oppose forces that are so powerful that you have no chance of making the slightest difference.* That may communicate the "meaning" but is tedious, pedantic, distasteful. Or it could be translated literally, something like *Do not blow against a hurricane,* but if hearers do not know what a hurricane is, then this translation may not be understood, at least not until the hearer learns what a hurricane is.

When we think about types of translation, we are likely to think about only one parameter, the degree to which the RL form resembles the SL form, literal on the high end, free on the low end. It is high time we begin to think in terms of other parameters.

The parameter that strikes me as most lacking is the degree to which responsibility for interpretation is judiciously allocated to the reader.[29] This parameter would correspond (approximately, on average) to how much an appropriate interpretation (I) goes beyond the explicature (E).[30] If E and I are very similar (E $\Rightarrow$ I), the reader is left little role in interpretation. If, on the other hand, E and I are quite different (E $\Longrightarrow$ I), then the reader is given considerable responsibility for inferring I from E.

5.5 Risk

Because communication involves inference, it is risky business. And Bible translators tend to be very risk-averse. Douglas Robinson (1996:xvi) wrote about "a collectivized anxiety about sacred texts that has survived massive demystificatory assaults and has generated through the centuries an astonishing variety of avoidance behaviors that can best be explained, it seems to me, through the notion of taboo." Translators need to overcome this anxiety because—by playing it safe, by pre-empting the hearer's responsibility—they are likely to produce a translation that is tedious and distasteful, one that fails just as miserably as one that leaves too much responsibility to the hearer.

Paul Zellmer wrote the following (in a 2001 BT post):

> Nine years ago when I was learning Tagalog, I was asked to speak to a group on Col 4.2–4.6. Because I was not yet proficient in Tagalog, I developed my talk in English. When I went to put it into Tagalog, I was surprised to find that a major teaching on the usages of salt was meaningless because the translation that was being promoted at that time did not even have the word *salt* in it. I had to go back and use that phrase "in the original, it says…" in order to bring out the message that I wanted to make to the people.
>
> After finding a number of instances like this, this group has since stopped using this and nearly every other Tagalog translation. Instead, they have chosen to use an English version. I personally think that this is a travesty, and it was caused by over-translating so that the individual can understand without help rather than translating so that groups that were already at work would have a source they could use in their teaching processes.

I suspect that the translators of those Tagalog translations were unwilling to risk using 'salt' and instead used some explanation of what they understood salt to represent. They lost big time!

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[29] This parameter is about *text*—whether it is translated or otherwise—and how a reader should relate to it.

[30] This would correlate roughly with the number and complexity of the implicatures, and some measure of the additional context that must be accessed to infer them (beyond the context accessed to get the explicature).

Communication involves risk,
so translation involves risk,
more than twice as much!
Risk-averse translators don't,
so risk-averse translators shouldn't.
So, Risk-Averse Translators, don't!

5.6 The historical Jesus

The strong-weak parameter can help us appreciate the communication style and strategy of the historical Jesus. He used a great deal of weak communication. He was a risky communicator. He motivated people to understand, but made them stretch to do so. He invited them to wonder who he was, but he did not—with only a handful of exceptions—disclose that he was the Messiah. He did not coerce hearers into his meanings or into believing that he was the Messiah.

When translating the Gospels, we may want to put Jesus' words in simple, clear terms, even to making them crystal clear, the model of clarity. In doing so, we may distort the historical Jesus, making him out to be a coercive communicator. And thereby we may undo his rhetorical strategy.

5.7 Exegesis

Recognizing the benefit of RT concepts and insights to exegesis, I summarize a few of the salient RT concepts here: tropes (sec. 5.7.1), echoic utterance (sec. 5.7.2), repetition (sec. 5.7.3), and rhetorical impact (sec. 5.7.4). Many others could be mentioned as well.

5.7.1 Tropes

Exegesis has been strongly influenced by what Gibbs called the standard pragmatic model, by which tropes are considered only when a literal interpretation is judged defective. This bias may account for the resistance of some exegetes and translators to nonliteral interpretations in cases such as Matt. 15:24 and 26; Luke 22:36; and 1 Cor. 11:19. Gibbs's insight helps us understand that bias, but it is RT that provides the theoretical basis for understanding how such cases work and why they are quite natural, indeed why they are far more pervasive in natural discourse than we may have previously imagined.

5.7.2 Echoic utterance

An echoic utterance is one that expresses a thought expressed or attributed to someone other than the speaker (or one that the speaker previously expressed or held or should hold). Some examples are:

1. My brother-in-law Hans, an aviation mechanic, was aggressively trying to turn a key in a frozen lock. I snapped, "Don't bust it!" He howled with laughter. Why? Because he immediately recognized that I was echoing wisdom that he had forcefully voiced a year before while he was helping me fix my car. He had warned me not to tighten a bolt too hard, but I snapped it off. So my aggressive "Don't bust it" took him back to a moment he relished ("Clumsy Ph.D. Thinks he can be a mechanic!").

2. Clive Robertson, the host of a morning radio show on the Australian Broadcasting System Classic Radio, frequently uses echoic utterance to engage his listeners: "…and there's this miniature harpsichord, and a twelve-year-old pianist…Oh my!…and she's pounding away, this wonderful music." Here Clive's "Oh my!" (set off by higher pitch) echoes a sentiment attributed to us, the radio audience; it is what *we* should say (or think), not what *he* is saying.

3. In a 1998 *Notes on Translation* article on Jesus' use of echoic utterance I argued that in the account of the desperate Canaanite mother in Matthew 15, Jesus echoed "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" to the disciples, who were thinking that it justified their dismissing this foreigner. The disciples correctly inferred that Jesus uttered it to communicate his rejection of their request, so they returned to the woman and allowed her to approach Jesus. Further, Jesus echoed "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (Matt. 15:26) to the

racists around him (among whom might have been the religious authorities from Jerusalem mentioned in Matt. 15:1).

In light of RT's concept of echoic utterance, this interpretation is natural and unforced. And it resolves various problems that arise if one understands Jesus to be "literally speaking his mind."

5.7.3 Repetition

The CM-SMR legacy provides no motivation for repetition. If a meaning is expressed once, that should suffice. A senior translation consultant who held this view posted to BT, "Enough already! First time is enough!"

By contrast, RT does provide an account of repetition, as outlined by Adrian Pilkington. About the sentence "My childhood days are gone, gone," he says that, although the repetition of "gone" adds nothing to the meaning itself, it "requires greater processing effort, but offers more contextual effects in return." How does this work? Pilkington explains (2000:124):

> [The] proposition is followed by the single word "gone". This verb takes an obligatory argument in subject position. This subject is not provided linguistically, so it has to be inferred. In this case the obvious candidate is the concept encoded by the phrase "childhood days". The previous propositional form is repeated, using the same concepts. The effort involved in reconstructing the same propositional form leads to greater activation of assumptions stored in encyclopaedic entries attached to the constituent concepts, in particular here to the concept CHILDHOOD…. [2000:126 W]hat occurs is an increase in the salience of a wide range of assumptions. CHILDHOOD is a rich concept, with a wealth of assumptions stored in its encyclopaedic entry. This information consists, to a large extent, of beliefs about childhood that belong to a particular cultural viewpoint.

When these are activated as contextual assumptions—Pilkington continues—the reader will derive implicatures such as "The speaker's days of innocence are gone," "The speaker's days of ingenuousness are gone," and "The speaker's carefree days are gone." Without the repetition, the reader is unlikely to get to ideas like these.

An interesting discussion of repetition on BT considered examples like the following (brought to the list mostly by Christoph Unger):

> Jeremiah 22:29 "O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord: …"
> Numbers 7 (where the official record of gifts is fully repeated twelve times)
> Haggai 2:4–9 "…declares the Lord…declares the Lord…declares the Lord Almighty. This is what the Lord Almighty says…says the Lord Almighty…declares the Lord Almighty…says the Lord Almighty…declares the Lord Almighty."

My impression is that for each case there was a reason for the repetition that fits Pilkington's analysis, and that generally the BTdiscussants had reservations about simply removing the repetition. Of course, to these we could add many, many more. Here's just one more, Ps. 124:1–2:

> [1]If the Lord had not been on our side
> —let Israel say—
> [2]If the Lord had not been on our side
> when men attacked us

Another case will be discussed in the next section.

5.7.4 Rhetorical impact

The CM-SMR legacy has—I believe—skewed our understanding of the way texts affect readers. In fact, it has left our rhetorical antennae sorely singed. For example, consider Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman reported in John 4:16–18. The RSV rendering is as follows:

> [16]Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." [17]The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18]for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly."

Why did Jesus say "You are right in saying…" and almost immediately follow with "this you said truly"? I believe his twice-stated affirmation of her truthfulness is a rhetorical device to pull her up short, signaling his recognition that she is using the literal truth to tell a lie. (By the way, I have not come to this because of any knowledge of Greek, but simply because people generally do not repeat themselves without a reason.)

Now let's see how this is rendered in two SMR-shaped translations. The Contemporary English Version localizes the two statements, rendering it as a natural affirmation that the woman has responded truthfully:

> [17,18]The woman answered, "I don't have a husband." "That's right," Jesus replied, "you're telling the truth. You don't have a husband. You have already been married five times, and the man you are now living with isn't your husband."

The New Living Translation simply eliminates the repetition:

> [17]"I don't have a husband," the woman replied. Jesus said, "You're right! You don't have a husband—
> [18]for you have had five husbands, and you aren't even married to the man you're living with now."

If Jesus had actually responded as in either of these translations, would the woman have been brought up short? And would either translation lead an English reader to suspect that Jesus was doing anything other than affirming the woman's truthfulness? I believe the translators failed to appreciate the rhetorical impact of repetition.

Fortunately RT can help restore our rhetorical sensitivities. As a theory of communication, it is sufficiently broad and deep to tackle rhetorical and literary phenomena and yield satisfying accounts of them. This is illustrated by Pilkington's analysis of repetition discussed above.

5.8 Worlds and quotation

When you read "Once upon a time there was a troll who lived deep in the forest..." you create a world. You imagine a forest, a troll, perhaps a cave or hollow stump, and you expect the story to continue in this newly created world. And if, in this world, the troll says to his little troll-ling, "Let me tell you a story. In a far-off land there lived a boy," you create another world. And in this world the boy might say to his father, "Yesterday in school, the teacher.…"

We create worlds, and worlds within worlds. In these worlds, when participants communicate with each other, we expect the principle of relevance to govern their communication, and we expect it to be applied relative to that world, not with respect to one of the outer (containing) worlds.

Now, suppose I want to report to you the conversation I initiated with Diana by saying "Do you know what Christof did?" What if, on the assumption that you don't know that Christof is our son, I decide to help you out by adding "our son." I tell you that I asked Diana, "Do you know what our son Christof did?", for your benefit misrepresenting what I actually said to her. You would assume that, since my wife would certainly know that Christof is our son, I intended to communicate to her more than simply "Do you know what Christof did?" You apply the principle of relevance relative to the world of my conversation with Diana, thinking about what she and I know, not with respect to the world of my conversation with you. My effort to help you obviously leads to distortion.

What if, instead of a direct quote, I quote myself indirectly, telling you that I had asked Diana if she knew what our son Christof had done. Now you can understand "our son" to be something I did not say to Diana, but added to help you know who Christof is. "Great! Problem solved!" you say.

Wrong! Wrong because the indirect quote can be understood either way. You cannot tell whether I said "our son" for your benefit or to provoke Diana to seek additional implicatures. A significant difference gets

lost! That's a liability of indirect quotation: the boundary between the two communication events, that is, the two mutual cognitive environments, gets fuzzy.[31]

Givon (2001:155) has this to say:

> Predictably, direct quote complements (144b) [She said: *"I'm not sure."*] constitute a more *verbatim* rendition of the quoted speech, with the speaker-quoter taking more responsibility—and legal culpability—for the exact *form* of the quotation, often including mimicry and gestures. Somewhat paradoxically, while taking responsibility for the exact form, the speaker also disclaims responsibility for the *contents* of the direct-quoted information.
>
> In contrast, indirect quotes such as (144a) [She said *(that) she wasn't sure.*] are much more heavily edited by the speaker, and are not meant to represent the exact form of the quoted speech. They thus display more of the quoter's interpretation of the quoted speech. While not taking great responsibility for the form of the indirectly quoted speech, the speaker now takes more responsibility for its contents.
>
> The difference in responsibility for the contents of the quoted information is highlighted by the anchoring of the *deictic* operators such as speaker-hearer pronouns, demonstrative and deictic adverbs. Those placed inside a direct-quote complement are indexed to the main-verb's *subject*. Those inside indirect-quote complements are indexed to the *speaker*.…

We will now see how this relates to translation.

5.9 Types of translation

Gutt in his *Translation and Relevance* (1991, 2000) develops a theory of translation in which he describes three major types of translation:

1. "Covert" translation[32] seeks to pass as an original communication, often not disclosing itself to be a translation. It is like an original RL composition, simply inspired by the SL text. Its interpretation requires no knowledge of the SL communication on which it was based, neither the text nor the context in which the SL text was written. Strictly speaking, it may be a misnomer to call such translations "translation" at all. Gutt correctly observes that there's not much point in trying to develop a translation theory that encompasses covert translations. We often encounter covert translations (advertisements, brochures, product descriptions) without even suspecting that they are translations; in other cases, we catch some unnatural expression that makes us suspect that they are. The French translation of the "Help" information for the Shoebox program is a covert translation; there is no explicit claim that the French translation is a faithful reproduction of an English original.

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[31] With direct quoted speech there is some buffering between the quote and the containing sentence (the one in which the quote is embedded). This buffering is lacking with indirect speech. I present three bits of evidence for this: First, compare the following examples:

Direct: I asked Diana, "Do you know what Christof did?".

Indirect: I asked Diana if she knew what Christof had done.

With a direct quote, the quoted portion is interrogative, so the subject and auxiliary are inverted. With an indirect quote it is not interrogative so the inversion is not applied (witness the ungrammatical **I asked Diana (if) did she know*…).

The difference in this example is simply interrogative vs. non-interrogative. In languages with evidential marking this sort of phenomena may present a more significant issue. With a direct quote, both the quote and the containing sentence can bear evidential marking, each faithful to the communication event it reflects. However, with an indirect quote, it may be that only one evidential is allowed, generally that of the highest clause.

Second, with a direct quote the tense of the quote is independent of the tense of the containing sentence. But with an indirect quote, the tense in the quote changes from *know* to *knew*, reflecting a tighter relationship between the quote and containing clause. (Of course, not all languages have relative tense.)

Third, compare the following examples:

direct: I asked Diana, "Do you know what *she* did?"

indirect: I asked Diana if she knew what *she* had done.

In the direct quote *she* can only be understood to refer to someone other than Diana, whereas with the indirect quote the second instance of *she* could refer either to Diana or to someone else.

[32] Don't blame Gutt for the concept or the label; both were in use before he discussed it.

2. "Direct" translation focuses on translating the SL clues. It is analogous to direct quotation. (That, however, does NOT mean translating literally!) The context with which the clues must be interpreted must be (in relevant aspects) the context of the original communication. Thus, a direct translation must be supported by materials and programs to teach the original context (e.g., book introductions, footnotes, glossaries, study guides, and specific teaching). The Revised Standard Version is a good example of a direct translation. I have made good use of a study edition of the RSV because it had ample notes to help the reader understand the text. For the most part the notes give context rather than explaining the meaning of the text.

3. "Indirect" translation does not require translating the original clues or accessing the original context, but instead focuses on achieving interpretive resemblance (see sec. 4.8) to the original. It is analogous to indirect quotation. The translator may substitute other clues, omit material not deemed relevant to the RL reader, and inject material not present in the SL text in order to guide the RL reader, as when I added "our son" to help you out (in sec. 5.8).

   Indirect translation presumes that the reader will interpret the translation relative to the context at hand, perhaps with little or no knowledge of the context in which the SL text was originally communicated. It suffers the liability that the boundary between the SL and RL communication events gets fuzzy, leaving the reader unable to know with certainty what was written by the original author and what the translator might have added or omitted. Many modern translations of the Bible into English are indirect translations.

Gutt characterizes direct and indirect translation as interlingual interpretive use. As stated in section 4.8, interpretive use is defined in terms of interpretive resemblance. Resemblance, of course, is a matter of degree. In light of this, Gutt views indirect translations as varying along a scale of interpretive resemblance, and direct translation occupying the endpoint corresponding to highest possible interpretive resemblance, achieved when the translation is interpreted relative to the original context.

So where *should* a translation be along this scale? There is, of course, no single answer; it depends on many factors.

One factor—one that Gutt stresses—is the importance of matching translations with target audience expectations. In particular, the translation and its readers must agree on the context to be used in interpreting the translation; otherwise no end of dissatisfaction and misunderstanding will result.

Another factor goes right back to the principle of relevance at the heart of communication: what sort of translation will yield adequate benefits for reasonable costs. If readers find the cost too high, that is, if they find the translation too difficult to understand, then they will simply not read it. That cost, however, could be reduced in several ways:

- by making the translation more explanatory (but that is likely to reduce interpretive resemblance).
- by providing more context (e.g., footnotes, book introductions, supporting material) or by teaching the context, for example, through scripture-use activities or a scripture-use program. Of course, these do not come for free: even the reader must "pay" to enjoy the benefits.
- by producing multiple "retellings" differing in their degree of interpretive resemblance and the extent of their dependence on readers' knowledge of the original context. For example, two Bible translations might be produced: one a "children's" Bible, relaxing interpretive resemblance and contextual dependence, the other an indirect translation having a high interpretive resemblance and thus requiring considerable background knowledge.

How the challenge is met may be limited by what is possible. It is important to consider what the target audience thinks a translation should be. There may also be limitations imposed, for example, by what supporting material can be provided with the translation and by what resources are available for teaching.

As to how an ancient and authoritative text should be translated, many favor indirect translation, with considerable latitude concerning the minimal threshold of interpretive resemblance. Others favor direct

translation. Ralph Hill (personal communication) observed that the crucial question is essentially hermeneutical:

> Does God speak directly to RL people through an RL translation that has been adapted to their context at the expense of the original context, or does he speak indirectly by enabling them to understand the ancient conversation between original authors and their readers? The latter enablement views reader understanding to be a process that requires time that is fed by the Holy Spirit through teachers (Eph. 4:7–16) who have access to essential information to help fill in the specific gaps of a given RL. We call this Scripture Use.
>
> Put in other words, does God speak indirectly through a direct translation (claiming to represent the original conversation) or does God speak directly through an indirect translation that adapts the original conversation to eliminate obstacles at the expense of historicity?

In section 5.11 below I suggest that direct translation may have some advantages for communicating "authenticity" and "authoritativeness."

5.10 A model of the mind that illustrates direct and indirect translation

In one of his books, creativity guru Edward de Bono likened the mind to a contoured surface composed of something like gelatin. Thoughts are like warm marbles. When placed on the surface, they roll according to the contours of the surface. As they go, they melt the surface slightly, leaving a trace of their course. This metaphor captures some important aspects of the human mind and the brain on which it is implemented. (For example, it is hard for a marble to escape a deep path created by the passing of many previous marbles.) It could be stated more scientifically in terms of neural networks, but the gelatin-and-marbles model serves our purpose well, which is to talk about different types of translations (see sec. 5.11 for the relation of these types to authenticity and accuracy in translation).

Context is like the contoured surface of set gelatin. An utterance is like a warm marble. Its explicature is like the place where the marble is set down on the surface, the starting point of the path it takes. (To keep the discussion simple, I'm ignoring how one determines the explicature.) The interpretation is like the endpoint of that path. (And, of course, for weak communication there is not a single endpoint, but a range of acceptable points.)

The impression an utterance makes on a mind is the path the marble takes. This is not the starting point (explicature). It is not the ending point (interpretation). It is the path left by the warm marble moving from the explicature to the interpretation as influenced by the contoured surface (context).

Now let us apply this analogy to translation. Imagine an SL utterance and its RL translation. Consider how the SL and RL utterances, when interpreted, affect an SL mind and an RL mind (respectively). For each there is a path from the explicature to the interpretation. How similar are these two paths? Well, that depends on the type of translation.

Direct translation seeks (for each utterance) to make the RL path as similar as possible to that produced by the SL utterance on an SL mind. That is, when the translation is read and interpreted by an RL mind, the paths it scribes should approximate the paths the SL utterance would create on an SL mind. To the extent that this is achieved the RL text interpretively resembles the SL text.

To achieve interpretive resemblance it may be necessary to change the contours of the RL surface. To influence the path, we may need to modify it only in one or two crucial places, or we may need to substantially reshape it.

If the RL surface has been suitably prepared, then an RL marble placed at approximately the same initial coordinates will roll approximately along the same path, melting the surface as it goes, and ending at approximately the same final coordinates. Real speak: Given some adjustments to the context, the RL utterance corresponding to the SL utterance will create an impression on the RL mind very like that created on the SL mind, as context-directed inference reaches an interpretation.

In sum, direct translation focuses on the paths scribed by each utterance on the mind, seeking to make the paths produced by corresponding SL and RL utterances as similar as possible.

In *indirect translation* the primary concern is to get the marble to the endpoint, with little concern about the path it took to get. One possibility would be to set each RL marble right at the endpoint. The resulting translation would be of the explanatory sort produced under the influence of SMR. However, since marbles don't necessarily stay where they are placed on the surface, they may roll in unexpected ways, that is, they may trigger undesirable inferences.

Another possibility would be to leave the RL contours unchanged and place each RL marble at a position from which it will roll to the correct endpoint. The coordinates of the RL starting point do not necessarily correspond to those of the SL, and generally the RL marble will scribe a different path than that of the SL. These paths are of little concern; what matters is that the RL marble reaches the correct endpoint (corresponding to the SL endpoint). This, I think, is the anthropologically oriented approach advocated by Charles Kraft, Dan Shaw, Wayne Dye, and others. (It strikes me as an SMR approach enriched by some RT concepts.

Between these two possibilities there are, of course, any number of combinations giving greater or lesser importance to the starting point, the path, and, of course, the endpoint.

5.11 Accurate, authentic, authoritative, authorized

The terms *accurate*, *authentic*, and *authoritative* are not to be confused. Each is a different concept. I propose the following definitions:

> A translation is *accurate* (or "faithful") to the degree that its interpretation in the RL mind is similar to the interpretation the SL text produced in the SL mind (to the degree that endpoints for the RL marbles correspond to the endpoints for the SL marbles).
>
> A translation is *authentic* to the degree that it affects an RL mind in the same way that the SL text affected an SL mind (that is, to the degree that the path it scribes on an RL mind is like that which the SL text scribed on an SL mind). A direct translation is authentic and an indirect translation is accurate but not necessarily authentic. (Note that an authentic translation is—by definition—accurate, but an accurate translation is not necessarily authentic.)

In the past we have been concerned mostly with accuracy, with getting the marbles—by whatever means necessary—to the "correct" endpoints. Why is this? Here's my guess. We have been led to think of "meanings" much like fixed objects out in some Platonic space, out there with integers and other things, discrete objects that we can manipulate symbolically, ones we can grasp and stuff into a text. We have paid too little attention to the role of inference and consequently have failed to see that "meanings" are more like paths than points (paths directed by context and inference). We've thought of meanings more like photographs than video clips, more like poses than gestures. We have lost a crucial dimension: how a text *affects*.

Now let me venture a thought on the meaning of *authoritative*. We speak of "The divine inspiration and consequent authority of the whole canonical Scripture." As I understand this, "authoritative" is a property of a text. This property follows from the authority of its author or of some individual or institution that has authority to declare it so. In some cases they would be empowered by the author to declare the translation authoritative; in other cases they would act on their own authority.

The crucial question is: Are there criteria that can be imposed on a translation such that it will be as authoritative as the source text? Here are some possible answers:

1. There are no such criteria so there is not much point in discussing this perspective further.
2. The criteria are not about translation *per se*, but about translators: authoritativeness is preserved to the extent the translator is competent and his or her competence is reflected in the translation. Being competent to translate a divinely inspired text may be understood as being divinely guided, that is, by the Author of the source text.
3. We must enumerate types of translation and, for each type, the conditions under which it would preserve authoritativeness.

Pursuing the third alternative, I make the following proposal: An authentic translation preserves authoritativeness if and only if both the informative intention *and the communicative intention* are translated authentically. Let me explain.

An act of ostensive-inferential communication communicates two intentions: a communicative intention and an informative intention. The informative intention is the "content," that is, what is to be communicated. It is the part we have been most concerned about translating accurately (at least in the SMR tradition). The communicative intention, on the other hand, has to do with communicating to the reader that the author intends to communicate by means of the ostensive stimulus. It is like an implicit statement: "I, by means of this ostensive stimulus, intend to communicate to you." This anchors the communication with its author, thus invoking the author's authority. Thus, if this communicative intention is translated authentically, the translation should communicate that same measure of authoritativeness as the source text.

How can the communicative intention be communicated? This difficult question must be addressed for each language. To my knowledge, little has been written about it. I doubt that there are general answers, but I feel it has much to do with the "tone" or "voice" that the document carries.

For an authoritative text, what comes to mind is how the communicative intention might fail to be communicated. For example, I believe that a particular translation of The Acts of the Apostles into Quechua failed to communicate the communicative intention because it had too much the character of a folktale. A remarkable case where the communicative intention was communicated in a translation of the New Testament is documented in Crowley's (2001) article "The Indigenous Linguistic Response to Missionary Authority in the Pacific": the missionary translator's grammatical errors contributed to giving the text a divine voice because people expected divinities to speak differently than humans.

My suggestion regarding authoritativeness is very tentative and sketchy I have simply outlined the general character of what strikes me as an interesting perspective from which to consider this important issue.

6. Broader implications: 99 Theses

This section lists some of the broader implications of RT for the future of Bible translation. The list is by no means complete and is not in any particular order.

6.1 Openness

We need to foster an openness to new ideas, a climate in which new perspectives can be considered without hostility. From the start RT-based translation theory triggered fierce opposition, probably because of the incorrect perception that it promotes literal translation. Translators who embraced RT have been branded as literalists and suffered the consequences of that label; L:RT::A:HP[33]! Most disturbingly, the rejection of RT-based translation theory prevalent among Bible translators has largely preceded—and therefore pre-empted—an understanding of it. This is not academic behavior.

Administrators need to be cautious about the appointments they make lest they reinforce an entrenched position. In one SIL branch, for example, before the older generation of translation consultants retired they made sure that the translation department would remain solidly in the hands of like-minded people. All appointments were of course approved by the Director, who had no translation experience, on the advice of the retiring experts.

6.2 Recurrency training

It is vital that translation personnel get recurrency training. This includes consultants. They need not *embrace* recent thinking about translation but should at least understand the basic concepts of new theories, if for no other reason than to understand why those with whom they interact may translate differently. This is true for both translation consultants and translators "in the trenches."

[33]Hester Prynne, the protagonist of Nathaniel Hawthorn's *The Scarlet Letter.*

6.3 Negotiations with shareholders

We need to be negotiating more with "shareholders," those who will be using our translations in the decades to come. In the past translators have decided what type of translation was best for the intended recipients. Should it happen that they not want the type of translation provided, then the translator assumed that they did not understand its virtues. The strategy then became that of trying to convince the recipients that this type of translation was better than what they wanted. And the translator was right—sometimes!

6.4 Typology of translation

We need to start thinking about translations in terms of a richer set of parameters (see sec. 5.4). We should cease to think simply in terms of literal (formal) versus free (idiomatic). The simplicity of such an approach may be appealing, but it hinders and distorts an understanding of how translations can and do differ.

6.5 More biblical studies

Whereas the CM fostered an overestimation of what is "in" a text, we now appreciate the crucial role of context in interpretation. Therefore we should encourage translators to engage in more biblical studies. I do not mean the study of Greek and Hebrew, which will carry one only so far. For example, no amount of knowledge about the Hebrew language will shed light on the meaning of "Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk." This is not to say that we should place less importance on the study of biblical languages, only that we should increase the importance given to other areas of biblical studies.

6.6 Establishing the context

In the past translators felt that their main goals were met when—leaving aside other academic goals—their translation of the New Testament or the Bible was published and some minimal literacy had been done, perhaps supplemented by some "Scripture Use" activities. We now recognize that, in many situations, this is not sufficient to ensure that the recipients be able to read the translation with understanding. The problem is generally that the readers "lack background knowledge." For the translation to be understood, the reader's cognitive environment must be enriched considerably beyond what the text itself could bear. This might be done in various ways:

- by using in-text aids such as book introductions, glossaries, cross-reference apparatus, and footnotes. (Their use may require negotiating with those who fund the publications, since some agencies place strict limits on what can be included.)
- by using supporting materials such as *How the Jews lived,* study guides, perhaps even Sunday school materials.
- by preparing multiple "retellings," that is, different forms of Scripture tailored to different audiences, being especially sensitive to what knowledge that specific target audiences can bring to bear on understanding the text.
- more focused Scripture Use programs. By clarifying what context needs to be established outside the translated text itself, RT can provide important input for the design and implementation of programs, making them more effective.
- more interfacing with those who will implement Scripture-use programs, especially if there is a growing community of believers. I believe this can be done without sectarianism, but it will require creativity and caution.

These and related issues should be considered in planning a language program, both at the outset and as the plan is periodically reviewed.

6.7 Old Testament translation

Old Testament translation should be encouraged because—among other good reasons—it provides so much of the context for understanding the New Testament. Those who set themselves to translating the OT will

appreciate RT particularly because so much of the OT is poetry. Poetry is weak communication and thus a translation theory that encourages explication and clarity destroys it. As more of the OT is translated older translation theories will chafe like burlap and RT—with notions like weak communication—will feel like silk pajamas.

6.8 Literacy

Literacy is much more than teaching people to sound out words. Readers must be taught to read for meaning, and this requires context-based inference. Bottom line: literacy is a larger challenge than some have imagined. Of course, literacy workers have been saying this for years. They didn't need RT to show them *that*! But RT helps us all understand just how true it is.

6.9 Missiological purpose

Many Bible translation organizations are committed to translating the Bible—or parts thereof—into languages for which it has not yet been translated and to enable people to read it with understanding. Beyond their institutional goal, however, Some individual translators may have a more ambitious missiological purpose, the primary instrument for which is their Bible translation. Unfortunately, this framework sometimes fosters the idea that, since the translation is a means to a higher purpose, it may be shaped in any way that moves the program toward that end. This makes me very uneasy.

So what does this have to do with RT? Well, in my opinion Gutt's application of RT to translation has provided a framework in which we can meaningfully discuss this issue. Perhaps this will eventually lead to some sort of limits (ethical principles or standards) for translating a sacred text.

6.10 Training

The equipping of translators needs to be approached more as *education* than as vocational training. We need to provide *compasses* more than *maps*, as Weick (2000:162), quoting Hurst, points out:

> It is the combination of thrownness, unknowability, and unpredictability that makes having some directions, any direction, the central issue for human beings. Sensemaking is about navigating by means of a compass rather than a map. Maps, by definition, can help only in known worlds—worlds that have been charted before. Compasses are helpful when you are not sure where you are and can get only a general sense of direction." (Hurst, 1995, p. 168). Hurst goes on to argue that maps are the mainstay of performance, whereas the compass and the compass needle composed of values are the mainstay of learning and renewal.

Bill Hall (personal communication) suggests that another way to accomplish such education is through mentoring. The more experienced traveler can teach a less experienced one to interpret the compass as they move forward together.

But let's consider some more specific issues relative to translator training, namely pragmatics (sec. 6.10.1) and pedagogy (sec. 6.10.2).

6.10.1 The necessity of pragmatics

To prepare linguists to do translation, we teach them grammar and semantics, these being essential for understanding the relationship of an utterance to its explicature. It is imperative that we also teach them a variety of pragmatics that helps them understand how interpretations are computed from explicatures and context. In what used to be the standard SIL courses there was a semantics-pragmatics course, but the pragmatics part kept getting lost. (One notable exception: The program in Holtzhausen has kept pragmatics as a central part of the course.) If pragmatics is not taught as a separate course, then at least one half of the semantics-pragmatics course should be dedicated to pragmatics.

Discourse continues to be a hot topic for many translators. Unfortunately most of the focus continues to be on text-centric (structural) approaches. It is time to move on to more pragmatic approaches, particularly those that ground discourse study in cognition (e.g., Lambrecht's 1994 *Information Structure and Sentence Form*).

6.10.2 The pedagogy of translation

The CM and SMR may have led us to underestimate the complexity of translation and, as a consequence, to underestimate the difficulty of "transferring" the necessary collection of science, skills, and art that is involved. RT presents a more realistic picture of the complexities and difficulties, forcing us to recognize that translators need more and better preparation. (Perhaps we will also have to rein in our optimism about transferring it to people with little or no formal education.)

Much of current translation training centers on possible adjustments that can be made when translating, based on the following approach:

1. A range of instances are grouped under some label such as passive, rhetorical question, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, and so forth.
2. Properties are identified for determining whether a particular case is a member of the category or not, and a definition of the category is formed in terms of those properties.
3. Heuristics are formulated for how an instance of the category might be translated (e.g., "A metaphor can be translated as a simile.").

Thus, the translator's task is to identify—based on its properties—the category to which an instance belongs and then apply the heuristics for how a member of this category should be translated.

It is time we question this approach. How well has our purpose been served by an approach built so solidly on taxonomy? Consider the difficulties:

1. Many categories have very fuzzy boundaries. There is good reason to believe that no boundary can be established between, say, irony and sarcasm. It is like trying to identify the boundary between red and orange.
2. Upon encountering cases that do not fit tidily into some category, what should we do? Suppose, for example, that my wife puts on a new dress and I fail to comment within a reasonable time of first seeing her. She might sweetly whisper in my ear, "My! What a pretty dress you have on!"

   She is echoing to me a thought I ought to have expressed. It is not something I said, simply something I should have said. Further, she does not reject what it says; indeed, she believes that the dress is pretty. She is kindly reminding me that I ought to have said something. What is this? Is it sarcasm? Irony? The question is irrelevant: nothing is to be gained by establishing its category.

   What *is* vitally important—particularly when translating—is to understand how such an utterance works: what achieves and how it does so. RT helps us to understand phenomena for what they are; it does press them into categories, whether into traditional categories or into some refinement of those categories.
3. The taxonomic approach fosters "labelism," that is, thinking that if one can label some phenomenon then one understands it.
4. The taxonomic approach is foreign to many non-Western cultures. As we widen the translation labor pool to include many from non-Western cultures, we should focus on *how* communication works and *how* to apply this understanding to translation, and not focus on a category-based tradition inherited from Aristotle.
5. Perhaps most significantly, the taxonomic approach grinds to a halt when a translator is unable to identify the category to which a case belongs. As explored on BT, there is no agreement among experts even as to such well-worn categories as simile and rhetorical question.

   For example, Larson (1984:247) identifies *John is as tall as a beanpole* as a simile. However, I believe that this is not a simile, at least not in the tropical sense. I believe that it is simply a

> comparative and that its figurative (nonliteral) sense is due to hyperbole, played against the assumption that bean poles are conventionally taller than is normal for a person of John's age.[34]
>
> On the other hand, it seems to me that phrases such as *doe eyes*, *cat eyes*, *fish eyes*, *raccoon eyes*, *cauliflower ears*, and *moon faced are* similes. They fail the technical definition in not having an explicit comparator (*like*, *as*), but the way we understand them is as a simile: eyes like a doe's eyes, ears (shaped) like a cauliflower, and so forth. So I maintain that although some identify *John is as tall as a bean pole* as a simile, it is not one, and although *doe eyes* has not been identified as a simile, it is one.
>
> As to the labeling of rhetorical questions, a competent translator in a 1972 article in *Notes on Translation* (44:40) identified "Would you like to join us for dinner?" as a rhetorical question. It is not a rhetorical question but a real one, seeking information. It does so with indirection: The speaker invites someone to dinner by inquiring about a precondition, about the addressee's *desire* to come to dinner.
>
> My point: What hope is there for Joe translator to correctly apply a category-based approach to adjustments when even the experts cannot reliably classify particular cases?

How is the taxonomic approach reflected in training? Well, considerable time is dedicated to working through a catalog of possible adjustments. As each is taught it is reinforced with exercises asking the student to recognize an instance of some category and then apply the recommended adjustment. Success is when a trainee acquires something like a natural reflex.

But we need to shift from a *reflexive* pedagogy to a more *reflective* one. What would this involve? Enabling students to think more deeply about the relevant domains. More theory. There's nothing so useful as theory, as we often say.

6.11 Checking and quality

Translations need to be checked for various things: exegetical accuracy, faithfulness, intelligibility (understanding that a communication failure on a first reading might be just right), naturalness (with awareness that foreignizing may be beneficial), and so forth. However, in the light of what is now known about communication it is time to reconsider checking procedures and the assumptions on which they are based. Overall we hope that they improve translations, but I am convinced that they can also have a deleterious effect.

This, I know, will strike some as heresy. Checking has become sacrosanct, perhaps because, as Dye and Kraft describe it (see sec. 3.3), checking has been added to SMR as the module by means of which worldview and such are incorporated.

6.11.1 The naive helper check

I am particularly concerned with the effect of the "naive helper check," which is conducted on the assumption that anyone should be able to understand a text if it has been translated well enough. Lest you think I am beating a dead horse, I cite the Translation page of a major Bible translation organization, under "Policy," which includes the June 1997 update of "Papers on Translation Policies and Procedures":

> Another important component of checking is comprehension testing with "naïve" helpers, i.e. mother-tongue speakers who have not been involved in making the translation and who are new to the content. The goal of this testing process is to discover whether the translation is communicating well and whether the message that is being communicated is indeed the accurate meaning of the original text.

The CM-SMR legacy predisposes a translator to think that, when there is a communication failure, the problem must reside in the text. Checking, then, assumes that if a rendering fails to communicate "*the* meaning" (the translator's or consultant's interpretation of the SL text), then the translation must be

[34] By contrast, *John is like a beanpole* is certainly a simile.

deficient and should be modified to more effectively determine that decoding yields the desired meaning or—to put it bluntly—to more effectively coerce the reader into that meaning.

My concern follows from the failure of such approaches to give due consideration to context. Their application is based on a theory that does not have an adequate account of context, ignoring that the knowledge a reader brings to bear on understanding a text can shape its interpretation even more than the text itself. Translators who do not realize this tend to make translations more explicit than necessary or desirable. In particular, a translation geared to naive speakers is likely to be distasteful to readers who have some background and unacceptable to the church.

The naive helper check might improve a text if conducted with a real person and with the communication failures carefully noted and analyzed in terms of context, followed by cautious modifications to the text. But how often is this the case? Many of us are probably guilty of having rushed to repair a communication failure by building background into the text—explicating the implicit—without due consideration of the broader implications.

There is a dangerous variant of the naive speaker check. Rather than actually checking with a real live person, someone *imagines* a naive person and how he or she would interpret a text. I have often heard consultants say something like "And what do you think *they* will understand by *that*?" The consultant creates a fictional person, an archetype of naiveté, a fictional act of communication, and judges a rendering based on this fiction.

Mother-tongue speakers who participate in the translation may also do this. I know of such a case, of a member of a translation committee who feels responsible for representing the worst case: the isolated monolingual with absolutely no background. The rest of the committee has had to deal with his imagined communication failures attributed to an imaginary person. This committee member has caused delays and possibly endangered the translation's acceptability to the church.

This behavior stands in marked contrast to a translator's imagining how a *real* person, someone he knows intimately, might understand the text. For example, another mother-tongue translator I know often imagines how his monolingual mother would understand his translation, and this has proven to be very helpful.

6.11.2 Contextual information and explication

RT provides an alternative to the predisposition to think that communication failures must be due to faulty text. When there is a communication failure, yes, the problem may be *in* the text, but it may also be that the reader is unable to access some background information necessary for "getting the meaning" (deriving adequate and appropriate implicatures). And, yes, the solution may be to modify the text, but it may also be to leave the text just as it is and supply the necessary information outside the text (as suggested in sec. 6.6). So when checking turns up a communication failure, RT motivates the translator to ask, Does the problem lie in the text itself or in what the reader brings—or fails to bring—to bear on its interpretation? Having asked this, the translator is more likely to find an appropriate solution rather than precipitously modifying the text.

6.11.3 Explicating the implicit

An experienced translator once told me that, of the many suggestions made by the consultant who checked his translation, the overwhelming majority were to make implicit information explicit. I see this as a symptom of a deeper problem.

Because the CM and SMR do not include inferential components, they do not foster an appreciation that explicating the implicit is likely to trigger further inferences, ones that might carry the reader far beyond simply accessing the explicated information. By contrast, RT motivates the translator to ask, What implicatures would follow from making this implicit information explicit?

6.11.4 Textual fabric

Another area of concern is that consultants may provoke changes that tear the textual fabric, damaging the delicate threads of the discourse, including rhetorical and literary ones. The translator, of course, is responsible for seeing that modifications to the text do not damage it, but that is easier said than done, particularly when one is hastening to get a book into print.

There's a more serious aspect of this problem: The knowledge that checking will probably tear those delicate threads undercuts the translator's motivation to carefully weave them into the textual fabric in the earlier stages.

6.11.5 The dynamics of checking

A couple of years ago in a brief conversation with an experienced and competent translator I said, "I think checking can do damage to a translation." He was shocked and hesitant to agree. When I saw him over a year later his first words to me were, "I've seen it!" Well, he can cope with the danger since he is an intelligent, educated, self-confident person with a good grasp of the receptor language. I'm more worried about cases where the work of a less educated, less self-confident mother-tongue translator is checked by an educated expatriate consultant, one who, despite knowing perhaps nothing about the receptor language and culture, will nonetheless command great respect by virtue of education and nationality. And—take note—we enVision[35] that —such cases will increasingly be more the norm than the exception as translation work is shifted from people of the North to others.

Another dynamic of checking that needs greater attention is getting the checker and the translator(s) on the same page. Before checking begins, there should be some interaction to help the checker understand such things as what type of translation is being produced, what characteristics the translators value, what decisions have been made and the factors that have been taken into account in making them. A shared understanding could reduce a great deal of unnecessary stress.

6.11.6 A lesson from advertising

The greatest concentration of expertise in the testing of communicative effectiveness is found with advertisers. Advertising operates with virtually unlimited resources, honing messages that cost millions to broadcast, with huge economic consequences for success or failure. And advertising gets quick and precise feedback in terms of sales figures.

A few decades ago there were advertisements in which an attractive (but not too attractive) and competent-looking homemaker stood beside a washing machine and said something like "Buy Tide because it makes your clothes cleaner and brighter." But those days are gone. Think what advertising has come to now.

Today's advertisements are designed to engage, often by showing a fragment from which the viewer can construct a story. Many mystify to the point that it is virtually impossible to discern what is being advertised. If I were used as a naïve viewer to test advertisements along the lines of the naïve helper check, the ads would be rejected immediately.

Has the advertising industry gone bonkers or have they discovered something important? I rather think the latter. It seems that they have come to understand that the most powerful way to communicate is not to beat people over the head with an explicit message but to get them engaged and get them to construct the message from subtle clues.

7. Postscript: Reform or revolution?

Givón writes as follows (2001:xvii):

[35] Here I refer to Vision 2025, a joint resolution of the highest governing bodies of SIL International and Wycliffe Bible Translators International.

> Scientific discovery is gradual, cumulative, hierarchic, but seldom orderly. One proceeds from baffling visibles to first-order invisibles; one retraces and retracts, groping for tentative second-order and elusive third-order generalizations. The ultimate complexity of the emerging theory is only constrained by the complexity of the phenomenon and the availability of ways and means.… In the course of such a protracted endeavor, the periodic trumpeting of brand-new—or brand-name—theories that purport to solve everything, *deus ex machina*, is a puzzling if altogether human irritant.

Working toward a theory of translation that passes muster both scientifically and practically is as Givón describes: "gradual, cumulative…." And I am aware that many have been irritated by the trumpeting of claims about RT, but the basis for their irritation has been perhaps more imagined than real. Whether real or imagined, let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

Some have begrudgingly admitted that SIL's SMR-based translation theory could benefit from some RT-motivated patches applied here and there, that both its theory and its practice could benefit from some fairly minor and gradually applied RT-motivated reforms. But I do not believe this. I think RT is revolutionary, that it represents a fundamentally different perspective from the CM, that is, a paradigm shift. And this difference carries through to the translation theories built on the communication models, on the one hand, to the SMR theory built on the CM and, on the other hand, to Gutt's extension of RT to translation.

I know that what I say here is not the politically correct thing to say. And having lived through turbulent decades in Peru, I know the natural antagonism between reformers and revolutionaries. Well, you can shoot me at dawn.

Appendix: Framing Translation Theory and Its Assumptions

I think it helps to frame translation theory—and our discussion of it—as three tiers:[36] (1) a theory of communication, (2) a theory of translation, and (3) a theory of translation of authoritative texts. These, I assume, are related by subsumption: a translation is a type of communication; the translation of an authoritative text is a type of translation.

SMR has been used for all three of these. It would help to distinguish them (not doing so hides assumptions):

SMR-C for the underlying theory of communication (the or some enhancement thereof)
SMR-T for the theory of translation
SMR-TA for the theory of the translation of authoritative texts

These distinctions motivate the following questions:

1. We assume that SMR-C subsumes SMR-T, but how do they differ? That is, what assumptions are added to SMR-C to yield SMR-T?
2. Likewise, what assumptions are added to SMR-T to yield SMR-TA?

Answering these questions may expose assumptions that are currently hidden.

Likewise RT has been used for all three tiers:

RT-C for RT proper, a theory of communication
RT-T for Gutt's extension of RT to translation
RT-TA for RT-T applied to authoritative texts

I don't think there are hidden assumptions in RT-C (well, not any that would interest us). Sperber and Wilson have laid it out very explicitly, even tediously so, not to mention the scores of other people who have contributed (e.g., Blakemore and Carston). Nor do I think there are hidden assumptions in RT-T. Gutt (1991, 1992) did an admirable job of stating what assumptions are added to RT-C to yield RT-T. There and elsewhere he has been quite explicit about covert, direct, and indirect translation, about differing degrees of

[36] This appendix is based on my response to Wayne Dye's BT post of Mach 29, 2002 subject: RT debate: hidden assumptions.

interpretive resemblance, and about covert translations not being subsumable under a theory of translation because they are insufficiently constrained.

Some people unfamiliar with RT-C and/or RT-T have confused them. (I suspect this is because the SMR literature did not clearly distinguish SMR-C and SMR-T.) Perhaps this hindered them from seeing how explicitly the assumptions were made.

Before moving on to authoritative texts (RT-TA), let me comment on the degree of difference between the two theories. I see the most dramatic difference between SMR and RT theories as coming at the level of communication. If we put aside enhancements and stick to the core assumptions, we can say that SMR-C treats communication as text-conveyed meaning whereas RT-C treats it as a text+context-mediated relation between a speaker's meaning (intention) and a hearer's meaning (an interpretive resemblance to the speaker's intention). That is a major difference. Further, there is a fair consensus that moving with Grice away from transmission models (e.g., the Code Model, conduit metaphor, and SMR) toward inference-based interpretation represents a paradigm shift. That shift was inherited by RT from Grice's work.

The difference carries through in translation. SMR-T treats translation as a meaning-mediated relation between an SL text and an RL text. By contrast, RT-T treats it as a text+context-mediated relation between an SL speaker's meaning (intention) and an RL hearer's meaning (an interpretive resemblance to the speaker's intention). This is certainly a fundamentally different perspective, a shifted paradigm. Of course, it matters little whether one thinks there has been a paradigm shift. What matters is whether people really understand these theories, their implications, and how they play out in applications.

Now back to how SMR-T and RT-T are applied to authoritative texts. In section 5.11 I proposed a step toward RT-TA (which is RT-T applied to authoritative texts). I framed it in terms of the model given in section 5.10 rather than "interpretive resemblance" but the correlation is clear. I look forward to seeing how this will stand up to informed criticism. I would also welcome knowing how SMR-TA differs from SMR-T.

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