

大学翻译学研究型系列教材

总主编 张柏然

语言学与翻译研究导引

Selected Readings of Translation and Translation Research from Linguistic Perspectives

编 著 孙会军 郑庆珠



南京大学出版社

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大学本科翻译研究型系列读本 大学翻译学研究型系列教材

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总 序

张柏然

到了该为翻译学研究型系列教材说几句话的时候了。两年前的炎炎夏日,南京大学出版社责成笔者总揽主编分别针对高等院校翻译学本科生和研究生学习与研究需求的研究型系列读本和导引。俗话说,独木难撑大厦。于是,笔者便千里相邀“招旧部”,网罗昔日在南大攻读翻译学博士学位的“十八罗汉”各主其事。寒来暑往,光阴荏苒,转眼两年过去了。期间,大家意气奋发,不辞辛劳,借助网络“上天”,躲进书馆“入地”,上下求索,查阅浩瀚的文献经典,进而调动自己的学术积累,披沙拣金,辨正证伪,博采众长,字斟句酌,终于成就了这一本本呈现在读者面前的教材。

众所周知,教材乃教学之本和知识之源,亦即体现课程教学理念、教学内容、教学要求,甚至教学模式的知识载体,在教学过程中起着引导教学方向、保证教学质量的作用。改革开放以来,我国各类高校组编、出版的翻译教材逐年递增。我们在中国国家图书馆网站上检索主题名含有“翻译”字段的图书,检索结果显示,1980至2009年间,我国引进、出版相关著作1800余种,其中,翻译教材占有很大的比重。近些年来,翻译教材更是突飞猛进。根据有关学者的不完全统计,目前,我国正式出版的翻译教材共有1000多种。^{*}这一变化结束了我国相当长一段时间内翻译教材“一枝独秀”的境地,迎来了“百花齐放”的局面,由此也反映了我国高校翻译教学改革深化。

但是,毋庸讳言,虽然教材的品种繁多,但是真正合手称便的、富有特色的教材仍属凤毛麟角。教材数量增多并不足以表明教学理念的深刻转变。其中大多都具有包打翻译学天下的纯体系冲动,并没有打破我国既往翻译教材编写从某一理论预设出发的本质主义思维模式和几大板块的框架结构。从教材建设看,我国翻译理论教材在概念陈设、模式架构、内容安排上存在着比较严重的雷同化现象。这表明,教材建设需要从根本上加以改进,而如何改则取决于我们有什么样的教学理念。

有鉴于此,我们组编了“大学翻译学研究型系列教材”和“大学本科翻译研究型系列读本”这两套系列教材。前者系研究生用书,它包括《中国翻译理论研究导引》、《当代西方翻译理论研究导引》、《当代西方文论与翻译研究导引》、《翻译学方法论研究导引》、《语言学与翻译研究导引》、《文学翻译研究导引》、《汉语典籍英译研究导引》、《英汉口译理论研究导引》、《语料库翻译学研究导引》和《术语翻译研究导引》等10册;后者则以本科生为主要读者对象,它包括《翻译概论读本》、《文化翻译读本》、《文学翻译读本》、《商务英语翻译读本》、《法律英语翻译读本》、《传媒英语翻译读本》、《科技英语翻译读本》、《英汉口译读本》、《英汉比较与翻译读本》和《翻译资源与工具读本》等10册。这两套教材力图综合中西译论、相关学科(如哲学、美学、文学、语

^{*} 转引自曾剑平、林敏华:《论翻译教材的问题及编写体系》,《中国科技翻译》,2011年11月。

言学、社会学、文化学、心理学、语料库翻译学等)的吸融性研究以及方法论的多层次研究,结合目前高校翻译教学和研究实践的现状进行创造性整合,编写突出问题型结构和理路的读本和导引,以满足翻译学科本科生和研究生教学与研究的需求。这是深化中国翻译学研究型教材编写与研究的一个重要课题,至今尚未引起翻译理论研究界和教材编写界的足够重视。摆在我们面前的这一课题,基本上还是一片多少有些生荒的地带。因此,我们对这一课题的研究,也就多少带有拓荒性质。这样,不仅大量纷繁的文献经典需要我们去发掘、辨别与整理,中西翻译美学思想发展演变的特点与规律需要我们去探讨,而且研究的对象、范畴和方法等问题,都需要我们进行独立的思考与确定。研究这一课题的困难也就可以想见了。然而,这一课题本身的价值和意义却又变为克服困难的巨大动力,策励着我们不揣浅陋,迎难而上,试图在翻译学研究型教材编写这块土地上,作一些力所能及的垦殖。

这两套研究型系列教材的编纂目的和编纂特色主要体现为:不以知识传授为主要目的,而是培养学生发问、好奇、探索、兴趣,即学习的主动性,逐步实现思维方式和学习方式的转变,引导学生及早进入科学研究阶段;不追求知识的完整性、系统性,突破讲授通史、通论知识的教学模式,引入探究学术问题的教学模式;引进国外教材编写理念,填补国内大学翻译学研究型教材的欠缺;所选论著具有权威性、文献性、可读性与引导性。具体而言,和传统的通史通论教材不同,这两套系列教材是以问题结构章节,这个“问题”既可以是这门课(专业方向)的主要问题,也可以是这门课某个章节的主要问题。在每个章节的安排上,则是先由“导论”说明本章的核心问题,指明获得相关知识的途径;接着,通过选文的导言,直接指向“选文”——涉及的知识面很广的范文,这样对学生的论文写作更有示范性;“选文”之后安排“延伸阅读”,以拓展和深化知识;最后,通过“研究实践”或“问题与思考”,提供实践方案,进行专业训练,希冀用“问题”牵引学生主动学习。这样的结构方式,突出了教材本身的问题型结构和理路,旨在建构以探索和研究为基础的教与学的人才培养模式,让年轻学子有机会接触最新成就、前沿学术和科学方法;强调通识教育、人文教育与科学教育交融,知识传授与能力培养并重,注重培养学生掌握方法,未来能够应对千变万化的翻译教学与研究的发展和需要。

笔者虽说长期从事翻译教学与研究,但对编写教材尤其是研究型教材还是个新手。这两套翻译学研究型教材之所以能够顺利出版,全有赖各册主编的精诚合作和鼎力相助,全有仗一群尽责敬业的编写和校核人员。特别值得一提的是,在这两套系列教材的最后编辑工作中,南京大学出版社外语编辑室主任董颖和责任编辑裴维维两位女士全力以赴,认真校核,一丝不苟,对保证教材的质量起了尤为重要的作用。在此谨向他(她)们致以衷心的感谢!

总而言之,编写大学翻译学研究型教材还是一项尝试性的研究工程。诚如上面所述,我们在进行这项“多少带有拓荒性质”的尝试时,犹如蹒跚学步的孩童,在这过程中留下些许尴尬,亦属在所难免。作为教材的编撰者,我们衷心希望能听到来自各方的意见和建议,以便日后再版修订,进而发展出更好更多翻译学研究型教材来。

是之为序。

二〇一二年三月二十七日
撰于沪上滴水湖畔临港别墅

前 言

翻译是从源语到目的语的语码转换过程,因而翻译首先是一种语言现象。语言学作为一门研究语言的科学,在翻译实践以及在对翻译实践的描述、总结和探究中至关重要,甚至可以说是不可或缺的,语言学对于翻译研究的重要性是显而易见。

在历史上,翻译研究逐渐发展成为一个较为系统的学科,可以说始于语言学,并在一定程度上依赖于语言学的研究成果。有关翻译的研究曾经一度是语言学研究中的一个组成部分,或被看成是语言学的一个分支。到了二十世纪中叶,语言学的发展及其对于翻译理论研究的介入,使翻译理论得以摆脱以往点评式、印象式的特点,变得越来越科学、系统。美国的奈达,英国的卡特福德、纽马克,以及加拿大的维内和达贝尔内,都尝试借助语言学的研究成果,对翻译进行学理上的思考和系统的研究,并取得了具有里程碑意义的研究成果。

从二十世纪八十年代后期开始,文化批评和文化研究在西方学术界崛起,并逐渐上升到主要地位,学者们开始从文化角度切入翻译研究,语言学途径的翻译研究因为其“唯科学主义”的嫌疑受到质疑。借用张柏然教授的话说,“翻译的语言学范式给人们带来了理性思维,破除了原来与文学研究范式的神秘性和主观直觉的研究方式,从主观性走向客观性,使翻译研究取得了很大进展。但由于语言学范式使译者过多依赖于语言的规律性,忽视主体的主观能动性,排除言语活动的社会制约性和规定性,从而突出了原文文本的中心性,追求同一性和一致性,最终堕入语言逻各斯中心”。^① 语言学理论在翻译研究中一统天下的地位也受到挑战,翻译研究出现了“文化转向”,语言学途径的翻译研究似乎出现式微的迹象。然而,从前几年开始,文化途径的翻译研究似乎逐渐失去了兴奋点和增长点,人们于是乎又回过头来重新反思翻译问题,有些学者开始探讨“翻译研究的语言学回归”。在编者看来,翻译研究中语言学回归绝不可能是一种简单的回归,历史的洪流不会逆转,翻译研究也绝不能简单地回到语言学途径。

文化途径的翻译研究丰富和发展了人们对于翻译活动的认识,使人们得出了这样的认识:翻译是多元的跨学科领域,没有哪一门学科理论可以解决翻译研究中的所有问题。语言学、文学、文化学、心理学等各个学科的理论对于翻译研究来说都是必不可少的,都会对翻译研究产生指导借鉴意义,而其中语言学无疑是最

^① 《外语与外语教学》2008年第6期。

为重要的。

其实语言学途径的翻译研究从来都没有停止过。即使在文化途径的翻译研究占据学术界的主流地位的时候,很多学者一直没有放弃他们的努力,从语言学的角度出发,在翻译研究领域进行了踏实、深入的研究,并且吸收了文化途径翻译研究的成果,取得了令人瞩目的成就,对于我们进一步认识翻译活动的本质规律做出了贡献。

为帮助读者了解语言学对于翻译活动和翻译研究的意义,了解翻译理论建设中语言学所扮演的角色,了解当前语言学的研究成果在翻译研究中的具体应用,以及语言学途径翻译研究的所产生的激动人心的成果,编者精选了语言学途径的翻译研究学术论文,汇编成《语言学 & 翻译研究导引》这本研究型教材。

为凸显本教材的研究性,编者首先以语言学的不同流派为线索,选择各个语言学途径翻译研究方面的重要学术文章。其次,在决定相关学术论文的取舍时,编者重视选文的代表性和经典性。需要指出的是,我们选材的范围局限于英文和中文两种文献,英文文献为主,也有个别中文文献。这并不是说其他的语言文化中没有这方面的研究成果,只是由于编者的阅读范围的限制以及要让大多数读者理解的宗旨使然。教材还提供了具体研究案例,帮助读者通过研读这些文章了解相关领域的研究动态,掌握相关课题的研究方法及学术论文的写作方法。除此之外,在选择研究案例的时候,我们特别选择了一些以英汉、汉英翻译为研究语料和研究对象的论文,从而能够为更多的研究者所理解,接受起来也更容易些。

本书共分九章,每章由“导论”、“选文”、“研究实践”等三大部分组成,选文后还有“延伸阅读”和“问题与思考”。“导论”部分简要介绍特定流派的语言学理论如何从独特的研究视角出发审视翻译问题的,力争概括出该理论流派的整体情况、研究脉络和前沿思想。“选文”部分是相关流派的代表性论述。这些文章绝大多数选自学术期刊,少量文章选自学术专著或百科全书。每篇选文配有“导言”,位于选文的正文之前,介绍作者的学术背景、所选文章的来源及其主要内容。“研究实践”部分是根据选文所讨论的研究课题和研究内容,选择一些学者的研究案例,力图帮助读者从这些研究案例中得到启发,找到研究的模式与方法,通过学习和模仿,创造性地开展具体的课题研究,培养读者的学术研究能力。

本书在编写过程中得到了南京大学博士生导师张柏然教授和南京大学出版社领导的大力支持,编者在此表示衷心的感谢。另外,许伟和徐铭远在书稿排版过程中都牺牲了自己的休息时间给予我们很大的帮助,郑贞也热情地提供了一些珍贵的资料,在此一并表示感谢。

由于时间和水平的限制,书中的疏漏之处,还敬请广大读者批评指正。

编者

2012年11月

目 录

第一章 绪论:语言、语言学与翻译研究	1
导 论	1
选 文	2
选文一 On Linguistic Aspects of Translation	2
选文二 Translation and Language: A Linguistic Approach to Translation Studies	8
选文三 Linguistics and Translation	10
选文四 翻译的语言学情结	26
选文五 翻译学研究中的语言学模式与方法	32
选文六 试析翻译的语言学研究	39
延伸阅读	44
问题与思考	44
研究实践	45
重新审视现代语言学理论在翻译研究中的作用	
——比利时“语言与翻译研究国际研讨会”专家访谈录	45
第二章 语言对比与翻译研究	54
导 论	54
选 文	55
选文一 翻译与对比语言学	55
选文二 Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation	59
选文三 Principles of Correspondence	62
选文四 Shifts of Translation	78
选文五 Type, Kind and Individuality of Text: Decision Making in Translation	86
延伸阅读	96
问题与思考	97
研究实践	97
汉语双主句英译初探	97
标语翻译的文本分析和翻译策略	
——以上海世博会标语的翻译为例	104

第三章 系统功能语言学(SFL)与翻译研究	113
导 论	113
选 文	114
选文一 M. A. K. Halliday and Translation	114
选文二 J. C. Catford and SFL	120
选文三 Peter Newmark and SFL	123
选文四 Basil Hatim, Ian Mason and SFL	127
选文五 Translation Quality Assessment: Linguistic Description versus Social Evaluation	130
选文六 系统功能语言学路向翻译研究述评	144
延伸阅读	151
问题与思考	152
研究实践	152
汉英部分语篇衔接手段的差异	152
第四章 文体学与翻译研究	159
导 论	159
选 文	160
选文一 The Place of Literary Stylistics in the Translation of Fiction	160
选文二 Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator	172
延伸阅读	193
问题与思考	193
研究实践	193
基于语料库的译者风格与翻译策略研究	
——以《红楼梦》中报道动词及英译为例	193
第五章 语篇分析与翻译研究	204
导 论	204
选 文	205
选文一 Text Linguistics and Translation	205
选文二 语篇语言学与翻译研究	211
延伸阅读	218
问题与思考	218
研究实践	218
小说翻译的语义连贯重构	218
第六章 语用学/社会语言学与翻译研究	229
导 论	229
选 文	230
选文一 Pragmatics and Translation	230
选文二 Perlocutionary Equivalence: Marking, Exegesis and Recontextualisation	235



选文三 Pragmatic Aspects of Translation: Some Relevance-Theory Observations	248
延伸阅读	258
问题与思考	259
研究实践	259
Contextualization in Translator—And Interpreter-Mediated Events	259
第七章 心理语言学/认知语言学视域下的翻译研究	277
导 论	277
选 文	278
选文一 Psycholinguistic/Cognitive Approaches to Translation	278
选文二 Decision Making in Translation	284
选文三 Think-Aloud Protocols	289
选文四 Aesthetic Progression in Literary Translation	294
选文五 Cognitive Characteristics of Re-categorization in C-E Translation	305
延伸阅读	314
问题与思考	314
研究实践	314
汉英交替传译活动中译员的口译停顿现象实证研究	
——以国际会议口译职业受训译员为例	314
第八章 语料库语言学与翻译研究	324
导 论	324
选 文	324
选文一 语料库翻译学——新研究范式	324
选文二 语料库翻译学:课题与进展	326
选文三 Corpus-based Translation Studies in the Academy	335
选文四 Corpus-based Interpreting Studies: Early Work and Future Prospects	340
延伸阅读	348
问题与思考	348
研究实践	349
基于语料库的莎剧《哈姆雷特》汉译文本中“把”字句应用及其动因研究	349
参考文献	361

第一章 绪论：语言、语言学与翻译研究

导 论

翻译是用一种语言的文本来代替另外一种语言文本的过程,在操作过程中必然要涉及语言。因此,对于语言本质的认识,对于语言使用规律的理解是有效进行翻译的必由之路,而语言学理论与翻译理论有着天然的联系。

起初有关翻译的研究只是语言学研究中的一个组成部分,或者说是语言学的一个分支,翻译研究可以说起源于语言学研究,并在很大程度上依赖于语言学的研究成果。

虽然翻译的过程涉及与两种相关语言有关的大量非语言问题,但是如果没有语言学理论的输入,翻译理论就很难实现系统化、理论化。正如罗杰·贝尔(Roger Bell)在他的专著《翻译与翻译过程》(*Translation and Translating*, Introduction, xv, 1991)的序言部分所指出的那样,“翻译理论家们如果不利用语言学的研究成果,他们对于文本的评说就难免失之主观,难免会带有规定性的色彩”。语言学的发展及其对于翻译理论研究的介入,使翻译理论得以摆脱以往点评式、印象式的特点,变得越来越科学、系统。20世纪中叶,语言学理论的发展继续带动翻译研究的发展,人们对于翻译研究的兴趣越来越浓厚。以至于每当语言学的理论有所发展,就会有人尝试将其应用到翻译理论研究中去,从而使翻译研究得以发展、深化。这一时期从语言学的视角探讨翻译问题的学者有加拿大的维内(Jean-Paul Vinay)和达贝尔内(Jean Darbelnet),他们于1958年发表了著名的《法英比较文体学:翻译方法论》(*Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*)。另外一个较早从语言学的角度来考察翻译问题的学者是雅各布逊(Roman Jakobson),他1959年发表的《语言学视角下的翻译面面观》(“On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”)是从语言学视角考察翻译现象的经典之作。接下来从语言学角度研究翻译问题的是美国翻译理论家奈达(Eugene Nida),他先后发表了他影响巨大的著作:《翻译科学探索》(*Toward a Science of Translating*, 1964)以及《翻译理论与实践》(*The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 1969, with C. R. Taber)。同时期,英国学者卡特福德(J. C. Catford)出版的著名的《翻译的语言学理论》(*A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, 1965)也具有重要意义。这些学者都借助语言学理论,对翻译进行学理上的思考和系统的研究,并取得了具有里程碑意义的研究成果。从此,翻译研究从语言学研究独立出来,并有可能逐渐发展成为一种独立的学科。

然而,这些研究远远不是语言学途径的翻译理论的全部,语言学的发展一直滋养着翻译研究。翻译研究领域出现“文化转向”以后,翻译理论家们把语境的因素(社会、历史、文化、心理学以及计算机技术)的发展都融入翻译理论的研究。仅就语言学而言,对比语言学、社会语言

学、系统功能语言学、语篇语言学、心理与认知语言学以及语料库语言学等都被纳入翻译研究中,使翻译研究这一学科的羽翼日渐丰满,并逐渐发展成为一门相对独立的学科。

选 文

选文一 On Linguistic Aspects of Translation

Roman Jakobson

导 言

罗曼·雅各布逊(Roman Jakobson, 1896—1982),著名文学理论家和语言学家,出生于莫斯科,从小接受良好的教育,结交很多有才华的艺术家、诗人和学者。莫斯科语言学界以及布拉格语言学界都是他与他人合作先后于1915年和1926年创建起来的。他的论文“On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”拓展了翻译的内涵,除了语际翻译之外,他还将语内翻译和符际翻译纳入翻译的范畴。这篇论文在1959年首次发表,收录在哈佛大学出版社出版的、由Reuben Brower主编的具有里程碑意义的《论翻译》(*On Translation*)一书中。这篇文章是最早从语言学角度探讨翻译问题的文章之一,一直被视为翻译研究领域的经典之作。

According to Bertrand Russell, “no one can understand the word ‘cheese’ unless he has a nonlinguistic acquaintance with cheese”(Russell, 1950:3). If, however, we follow Russell’s fundamental precept and place our “emphasis upon the linguistic aspects of traditional philosophical problems,” then we are obliged to state that no one can understand the word “cheese” unless he has an acquaintance with the meaning assigned to this word in the lexical code of English. Any representative of a cheese-less culinary culture will understand the English word “cheese” if he is aware that in this language it means “food made of pressed curds” and if he has at least a linguistic acquaintance with “curds.” We never consumed ambrosia or nectar and have only a linguistic acquaintance with the words “ambrosia,” “nectar,” and “gods”—the name of their mythical users; nonetheless, we understand these words and know in what contexts each of them may be used.

The meaning of the words “cheese,” “apple,” “nectar,” “acquaintance,” “but,” “mere,” and of any word or phrase whatsoever is definitely a linguistic—or to be more precise and less narrow—a semiotic fact. Against those who assign meaning (*signatum*) not



to the sign, but to the thing itself, the simplest and truest argument would be that nobody has ever smelled or tasted the meaning of “cheese” or of “apple.” There is no *signatum* without *signum*. The meaning of the word “cheese” cannot be inferred from a nonlinguistic acquaintance with cheddar or with camembert without the assistance of the verbal code. An array of linguistic signs is needed to introduce an unfamiliar word. Mere pointing will not teach us whether “cheese” is the name of the given specimen, or of any box of camembert, or of camembert in general or of any cheese, any milk product, any food, any refreshment, or perhaps any box irrespective of contents. Finally, does a word simply name the thing in question, or does it imply a meaning such as offering, sale, prohibition, or malediction? (Pointing actually may mean malediction; in some cultures, particularly in Africa, it is an ominous gesture.)

For us, both as linguists and as ordinary word-users, the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign, especially a sign “in which it is more fully developed” as Peirce, the deepest inquirer into the essence of signs, insistently stated (Dewey, 1946: 91). The term “bachelor” may be converted into a more explicit designation, “unmarried man,” whenever higher explicitness is required. We distinguish three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols. These three kinds of translation are to be differently labeled:

1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.

The intralingual translation of a word uses either another, more or less synonymous, word or resorts to a circumlocution. Yet synonymy, as a rule, is not complete equivalence: for example, “every celibate is a bachelor, but not every bachelor is a celibate.” A word or an idiomatic phrase-word, briefly a code-unit of the highest level, may be fully interpreted only by means of an equivalent combination of code-units, i. e., a message referring to this code-unit: “every bachelor is an unmarried man, and every unmarried man is a bachelor,” or “every celibate is bound not to marry, and everyone who is bound not to marry is a celibate.”

Likewise, on the level of interlingual translation, there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages. The English word “cheese” cannot be completely identified with its standard Russian heteronym “сыр,” because cottage cheese is a cheese but not a сыр. Russians say: *принеси сыру и творогу* “bring cheese and [sic] cottage cheese.” In standard Russian, the food made of pressed curds is called сыр only if ferment is used.

Most frequently, however, translation from one language into another substitutes



messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages in some other language. Such a translation is a reported speech; the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.

Equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics. Like any receiver of verbal messages, the linguist acts as their interpreter. No linguistic specimen may be interpreted by the science of language without a translation of its signs into other signs of the same system or into signs of another system. Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability; widespread practice of interlingual communication, particularly translating activities, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science. It is difficult to overestimate the urgent need for and the theoretical and practical significance of differential bilingual dictionaries with careful comparative definition of all the corresponding units in their intention and extension. Likewise, differential bilingual grammars should define what unifies and what differentiates the two languages in their selection and delimitation of grammatical concepts.

Both the practice and the theory of translation abound with intricacies, and from time to time attempts are made to sever the Gordian knot by proclaiming the dogma of untranslatability. “Mr. Everyman, the natural logician,” vividly imagined by B. L. Whorf, is supposed to have arrived at the following bit of reasoning: “Facts are unlike to speakers whose language background provides for unlike formulation of them”(Whorf, 1956: 235). In the first years of the Russian revolution there were fanatic visionaries who argued in Soviet periodicals for a radical revision of traditional language and particularly for the weeding out of such misleading expressions as “sunrise” or “sunset.” Yet we still use this Ptolemaic imagery without implying a rejection of Copernican doctrine, and we can easily transform our customary talk about the rising and setting sun into a picture of the earth’s rotation simply because any sign is translatable into a sign in which it appears to us more fully developed and precise.

A faculty of speaking a given language implies a faculty of talking about this language. Such a “metalinguistic” operation permits revision and redefinition of the vocabulary used. The complementarity of both levels—object-language and metalanguage—was brought out by Niels Bohr: all well-defined experimental evidence must be expressed in ordinary language, “in which the practical use of every word stands in complementary relation to attempts of its strict definition”(Bohr, 1948: 317f.).

All cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language. Whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loan-words or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions. Thus in the newborn literary language of the Northeast Siberian Chukchees, “screw” is rendered as “rotating nail,” “steel” as “hard iron,” “tin” as “thin iron,” “chalk” as “writing soap,” “watch” as “hammering heart.” Even seemingly contradictory circumlocutions, like



“electrical horse-ear” (электрическая конка), the first Russian name of the horseless street ear, or “flying steamship” (*jena paragot*), the Koryak term for the airplane, simply designate the electrical analogue of the horse-ear and the flying analogue of the steamer and do not impede communication, just as there is no semantic “noise” and disturbance in the double oxymoron—“cold beef-and-pork hot dog.”

No lack of grammatical device in the language translated into makes impossible a literal translation of the entire conceptual information contained in the original. The traditional conjunctions “and,” “or” are now supplemented by a new connective—“and/or”—which was discussed a few years ago in the witty book *Federal Prose—How to Write in and/or for Washington* (Masterson & Phillips, 1948: 40f.). Of these three conjunctions, only the latter occurs in one of the Samoyed languages (Bergsland, 1949: 374f.). Despite these differences in the inventory of conjunctions, all three varieties of messages observed in “federal prose” may be distinctly translated both into traditional English and into this Samoyed language. Federal prose: (1) John and Peter, (2) John or Peter, (3) John and/or Peter will come. Traditional English: (3) John and Peter or one of them will come. Samoyed: John and/or Peter both will come, (2) John and/or Peter, one of them will come.

If some grammatical category is absent in a given language, its meaning may be translated into this language by lexical means. Dual forms like Old Russian брата are translated with the help of the numeral: “two brothers.” It is more difficult to remain faithful to the original when we translate into a language provided with a certain grammatical category from a language devoid of such a category. When translating the English sentence “She has brothers” into a language which discriminates dual and plural, we are compelled either to make our own choice between two statements “She has two brothers”—“She has more than two” or to leave the decision to the listener and say: “She has either two or more than two brothers.” Again in translating from a language without grammatical number into English one is obliged to select one of the two possibilities—“brother” or “brothers” or to confront the receiver of this message with a two-choice situation: “She has either one or more than one brother.”

As Boas neatly observed, the grammatical pattern of a language (as opposed to its lexical stock) determines those aspects of each experience that must be expressed in the given language: “We have to choose between these aspects, and one or the other must be chosen” (Boas, 1938: 132f.). In order to translate accurately the English sentence “I hired a worker,” a Russian needs supplementary information, whether this action was completed or not and whether the worker was a man or a woman, because he must make his choice between a verb of completive or noncompletive aspect—нанял or нанимал—and between a masculine and feminine noun—работника or работницу. If I ask the utterer of the English sentence whether the worker was male or female, my question may be judged irrelevant or indiscreet, whereas in the Russian version of this sentence an answer to this question is obligatory. On the other hand, whatever the choice of Russian grammatical forms to



translate the quoted English message, the translation will give no answer to the question of whether I “hired” or “have hired” the worker, or whether he/she was an indefinite or definite worker (“a” or “the”). Because the information required by the English and Russian grammatical pattern is unlike, we face quite different sets of two-choice situations; therefore a chain of translations of one and the same isolated sentence from English into Russian and vice versa could entirely deprive such a message of its initial content. The Geneva linguist S. Karcevski used to compare such a gradual loss with a circular series of unfavourable currency transactions. But evidently the richer the context of a message, the smaller the loss of information.

Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey. Each verb of a given language imperatively raises a set of specific yes-or-no questions, as for instance: is the narrated event conceived with or without reference to its completion? Is the narrated event presented as prior to the speed event or not? Naturally the attention of native speakers and listeners will be constantly focused on such items as are compulsory in their verbal code.

In its cognitive function, language is minimally dependent on the grammatical pattern because the definition of our experience stands in complementary relation to metalinguistic operations—the cognitive level of language not only admits but directly requires recoding interpretation, i. e., translation. Any assumption of ineffable or untranslatable cognitive data would be a contradiction in terms. But in jest, in dreams, in magic, briefly, in what one would call everyday verbal mythology and in poetry above all, the grammatical categories carry a high semantic import. In these conditions, the question of translation becomes much more entangled and controversial.

Even such a category as grammatical gender, often cited as merely formal, plays a great role in the mythological attitudes of a speech community. In Russian the feminine cannot designate a male person, nor the masculine specify a female. Ways of personifying or metaphorically interpreting inanimate nouns are prompted by their gender. A test in the Moscow Psychological Institute (1915) showed that Russians, prone to personify the weekdays, consistently represented Monday, Tuesday and Thursday as males and Wednesday, Friday and Saturday as females, without realizing that this distribution was due to the masculine gender of the first three names (понедельник, вторник, четверг) as against the feminine gender of the others (среда, пятница, суббота). The fact that the word for Friday is masculine in some Slavic languages and feminine in others is reflected in the folk traditions of the corresponding peoples, which differ in their Friday ritual. The widespread Russian superstition that a fallen knife presages a male guest and a fallen fork a female one is determined by the masculine gender of нож “knife” and the feminine of вилка “fork” in Russian. In Slavic and other languages where “day” is masculine and “night” feminine, day is represented by poets as the lover of night. The Russian painter Repin was baffled as to why Sin had been depicted as a woman by German artists; he did not realize that “sin” is