



# The Unit of Translation

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# Systematic Approaches

## Definition

- The linguistics level at which ST is recodified in TL
- The element used by the translators when working on the ST: individual word, group, clause, sentence, the whole text.

## Linguistic sign (Ferdinand De Saussure)

- Signifier: sound-image or word
- Signified: concept
- Sign is arbitrary, can only derive meaning from contrast with other signs in the same system (language)

- Vinay and Darbelnet

Word  $\neq$  unit of translation



semantic field

# Lexicological Unit

- It contains lexical elements grouped together to form a single elements of thought
- E.g
- Spanish – English

## **Brote**

- a (botanical) shoot;  **echar brotes** to sprout, put out shoots
- b (of rebellion, violence) outbreak
- c (of an illness) outbreak

# The unit of thought

- A translator needs to consider the whole structure and its politeness function in context before translating
- Restructuring → most likely to occur
- Translation units will vary according to the linguistic structure involved.

- Spanish ST

DEBIDO AL BROTE DE FIEBRE AFTOSA, ROGAMOS A  
LOS SEÑORES PASAJEROS DE LOS VUELOS CON  
ORIEGIN EN EL REINO UNIDO O FRANCIA,  
DESINFECTEN SU CALZADO EN LAS ALFOMBRAS

## English TT

[Due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, we ask ladies-and-gentlemen passengers of flight with origin in the United Kingdom or France, that they disinfect their footwear on the carpets.]

Due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, all passengers arriving from the United Kingdom or France are kindly requested to disinfect their footwear on the special carpets provided.

Sehubungan dengan menyebarnya penyakit sapi gila, seluruh penumpang yang datang dari Inggris Raya atau Perancis dimohon untuk mensterilkan alas kaki menggunakan karpet khusus yang tersedia.



# The unit of translation as a prelude to analysis

- Division of ST and TT into the units of translation is of particular importance in Vinay and Darbelnet's work as a prelude to analysis of changes in translation
- ST → UT division → UT translating → UT of TL → arrange into proper sentence

## Travelling from Heathrow?

There are easy to follow instructions on the larger self-service touch screen ticket machines

# Analysis

- There are/
- [easy to follow/instructions]
- [on the/larger/self-service/touch screen/ticket/machines]

# TRANSLATION AT DIFFERENT LEVEL

Baker

- Examines at different levels → levels of equivalence
  - Word
  - Collocation and idiom
  - Grammar
  - Thematic and information structure
  - Cohesion and pragmatics

## Newmark

- Using a part of Halliday's scale
- Focus on the sentence as the 'natural' unit of translation
- Transposition and rearrangements → Functional Sentence Perspective

# Translation at Different Level

- Halliday's systemic analysis of English grammar is based on hierarchical **rank** scale.
- Example:

Morpheme → arrive - *ing*

Word → *arriving*

Clause → the whole example

Sentence → the whole example

Halliday's focus : on the clause as a representation of meaning in a communicative context

Newmark's focus : on the sentence

- Newmark (1988:165): rearrangements or recastings must respect **Functional Sentence Perspective**.

a form of analysis of sentence and information sentence.

- Important : syntactic device, but communication is driven forward primarily by “communicative dynamism” (context independent & contribute most new information). Most often focused towards the end of a sentence
- New info. : in the rheme
- Old & given info. : in the theme

# Rearrangement

It acknowledged the issue of childhood, as a complex, involving reality, which now merits specific consideration. Children are fragile beings. However, their autonomy should not be misconceived.

It acknowledged that childhood is a complex, involving reality, and that it merits now a specific consideration. The child is a fragile being, but his autonomy should not therefore be disregarded.



- A translator working with the sentence as the translation unit would need to pay particular care to preserving the features of the STs.
- Newmark considers paragraph and text as higher units of translation.

→ The TT must perform the purpose

E.g.:

- advertisement, poetry : translated at the level of text (or culture)
- Medicines & foodstuffs : must carry instructions and warning notices

Example : (warning notices on medicines)

Keep out of reach of children

- ❖ Texts are not isolated but function within their own sociocultural and ideological environment. At the intertextual level, texts are influenced reworkings of earlier texts.

# Summary

- The unit of translation : the linguistic unit which the translator uses when translating.
- Individual word and group → clause & sentence → text & intertextual levels.
- Newmark : all lengths of language can be used as units of translation in the course of translation activity. The function of the whole texts and references to extratextual features is also important.