Lingua Inglese 3
Lecture 1

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Different Theories of Translation

- **Mock criteria** (T. Savory 1968)
    1. A translation must give the words of the original
    2. A translation must give the ideas of the original
    3. A translation should read like an original work
    4. A translation should read like a translation
    5. A translation should reflect the style of the original
    6. A translation should possess the style of the translator
    7. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original
    8. A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator
    9. A translation may add to or omit from the original
    10. A translation may never add to or omit from the original
    11. A translation of verse should be in prose
    12. A translation of verse should be in verse

Different Theories of Translation

- No commonly accepted paradigm
    - Content-oriented criteria
    - Form-oriented criteria
    - Reader-response oriented criteria

- St. Jerome: "non verbum de verbum exprimere, sed sensum de sensu"

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Translation Studies

- The growth of the discipline of Translation Studies reflects the need to acknowledge that translation is not a straighforward task, and it poses several difficulties

- The relative **autonomy** of translation, the textual features and operations or strategies that distinguish it from the foreign text, and from texts initially written in the translating language is a key factor

- The history of the field can be imagined as a set of changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text, or the translator's actions and two other categories, i.e. **equivalence** and **function**

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What is Equivalence?

- A variable notion defining the relation between the translation and the foreign text:
- Accuracy
- Adequacy
- Correctness
- Correspondence
- Fidelity
- Identity
- Is perfect equivalence always possible?
  Hardly so. A crucial notion is that of **negotiation**

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What is Function?

- A variable notion defining the relationship between the translated text and the receiving language and culture
- The potentiality of the translation to produce several effects
  - Communication of a content
  - Production of a response comparable to the one of the source text in its own culture
  - Social, economic and political effects, e.g. the emergence of languages, literary movements and national literatures

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Related Factors

- The changing importance of particular theoretical notions, autonomy, equivalence or function is determined by various factors:
  - Linguistic
  - Literary
  - Cultural
  - Social
  - Theory of Language and Textuality
  - Language Use

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Two Perspectives on Language

- **Instrumental** → language as communication, expressive of thought and meaning, where meanings are either based on reference to empirical reality or derived from a primarily linguistic context

  - *Translation as communication of objective info. Prominence of equivalence with respect to function.*

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Two Perspectives on Language (2)

- **Hermeneutic** → language as interpretation, where meanings shape reality and are viewed in relation to the changing cultural and social context

  - *Translation as interpretation. The target language is seen as inscribed in the foreign text, explaining it on the basis of social functions*

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Translation as a Bridge between Different Cultures

- Jakobson "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation"
- Empirical Semantics → no-one can understand a word, unless he has a non-linguistic acquaintance with it.
  - Ex. The word "cheese" can only be understood with reference to external reality
- But how can we have a non-linguistic acquaintance with *gods*, *freedom* and *unicorns*?
  - These words do not have referents in reality, so in such a view we cannot understand their meaning

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Translation as a Bridge between Different Cultures (2)

- No-one can understand the word *cheese*, unless he has an acquaintance with the meaning assigned to it in the English linguistic code

- A linguistic sign is always a pairing of *signans* and *signatum*, i.e. the meaning of any term cannot be understood without reference to the verbal code

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How do we understand meaning?

■ The meaning of a linguistic sign is a translation into some further alternative sign, "an entity standing for another entity" leading to an **endless chain of signs**

■ The interpretative process is a never-ending one, and can be progressively refined

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How do we understand meaning? (2)

■ The key notion is *interpretant* (Ch. S. Peirce), a sort of medium comparationis, enabling to understand the meaning of a given sign, through the substitution with a different sign or group of signs

■ From a lexical point of view an *interpretant* could be a synonym, a sign of a different semiotic system, an index, a definition, a description etc.

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3 Types of Interpretation of a Verbal Sign

- It may be translated into another sign in the same language (INTRALINGUAL TRANSLATION) through rewording
- It may be translated into another sign in a different language (INTERLINGUISTIC TRANSLATION)
- It may be interpreted by recourse to signs of a different semiotic system (INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION)

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Intralingual Translation

- **Intralingual** Translation uses another word to express the same content.

- But is complete synonymy possible?

- A synonym is a word or expression which means the same as another word or expression (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary 1987)
  - *Bachelor* can be turned into *celibate*

- Even if the two words denote the same content, they have different connotations
  - Bachelor: unmarried man
  - Celibate: a person who lives in abstention from sexual intercourse

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Interlingual Translation

- No full equivalence between code units

- Let us consider the French word *bois*
  - English: *wood*, *timber* (wood used as a building material), *forest*
  - Italian*: legno, bosco, legname, foresta*
  - German: *holz*, *wald*. But *wald* also corresponds to *forest*, *foresta* e *forêt*
  - In addition a very thick forest in French is called *selve*, while in Italian not only does the term *selva* reminds to Dante, but it can be a forest with a vast underwood

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Segmentation in Different Languages

albero	arbre	baum	tree
legno	bois	holz	timber
bosco		wald	wood
foresta	forêt		forest

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Segmentation in Different Languages (2)

- No complete identification among words in different codes

- Cultural relativity: Eskimo a variety of quality of 'white' to classify *snow* in response to the salience of the concept in the culture

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Intersemiotic Translation

- Intersemiotic Translation involves the interpretation of verbal signs, by means of different semiotic signs

- Translating a novel into a film, i.e. *The Lord of the Rings*

- Translating a portrait into a novel and the into a film, i.e. *Girl with a pearl earring*

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Translation as Interpretation

- Translation, however, is not just a matter of words, but is about texts → we can always rely on a context

- According to Jakobson, translation involves recoding and transmitting a message in another language, leading to two equivalent messages in different codes

- The linguist acts as an **interpreter**

- Close scrutiny of mutual translatability between languages is required, i.e. what unifies and differentiate languages from a grammatical point of view

- A precious device in this respect is the **metalinguistic function** of language, which helps us talking about language

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Differences in Languages

- Against Untranslatabiliy

- Terminological deficiency cannot be an unsurmountable obstacle to translation, since the gap can be filled by loan-words, semantic shifts and neologisms

- Lexical meaning can also supply for lack of identical grammatical categories.

- The grammatical pattern of a language can be used as a guide to the elements which must be translated, i.e. it alludes to the segmentation of a culture

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Examination of Linguistic Differences

- From an abstract point of view, on a cognitive plan language minimally depends on grammatical categories, because the metalinguistic function helps us recode our experience in a different language.

- But in poetry and verbal mythology grammatical categories play a crucial role

- In poetry every relation from each linguistic point of view must be carefully established and balanced, through confrontation, juxtaposition of differences and similarities in syntax, morphology and phonemic system to make the gist and core function of a text more visible

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