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Volume 11

Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet

Comparative Stylistics of French and English

COMPARATIVE STYLISTICS

OF FRENCH AND ENGLISH

A METHODOLOGY FOR TRANSLATION

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Envoi

Seul survivant de notre fraternelle équipe, c'est à moi que revient l'honneur de souhaiter bon vent et heureux atterrage à cette traduction, fruit du travail d'orfèvre de mon collègue, J. C. Sager. Grâce à lui et à ses disciples, puisse la stylistique du français et de l'anglais connaître un nouveau printemps dans ce siècle qui vient, où l'échange des idées reposera pour une grande part sur le travail des traducteurs.

Jean-Paul Vinay
Victoria, C.B., 30 septembre 1995
en la fête de Saint-Jérôme

have travelled 5,000 kilometres, or 3.000 miles, to verify our hypothesis and again find the situation in its pure state, as it were. The journey was definitely worth it! So we leave Le Havre, Rouen, and the meanders of the Seine to follow this dual carriageway, the sober arrangement of a long double ribbon amid the green surroundings. Here we find no blatant posters or flashy bill boards dazzling us: the car moves as its own constant rhythm. And here, before our delighted eyes, the desired translations pass us by :

> PRIORITÉ A DROITE — DÉFENSE DE DOUBLER — RALENTIR TRAVAUX — RALENTIR ÉCOLE — DÉFENSE DE DOUBLER — CHAUSSÉE GLISSANTE SUR 3 KILOMÈTRES — SORTIE DE CAMIONS — PASSAGE DE TROUPEAUX — FIN DE LA DOUBLE PISTE

And we are already at the St-Cloud tunnel, here is the Seine and the Bois de Boulogne; Paris, at last!

Jean-Paul Vinay & Jean Darbelnet
Montréal-Brunswick-Paris, July 1954

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Even translators all too often claim that translation is an art. This assertion, though partly true, tends nevertheless to place an arbitrary limitation on the nature of our object of investigation. Translation is, in fact, an exact discipline, with its own methods and particular problems, and it is in this perspective that we want to study it in this book. We believe that it would be a great disservice to translation were we summarily to range it among the arts — perhaps as the eighth art. If we did that, we would deny translation one of its intrinsic properties, namely its place within the framework of linguistics; and we would further deprive it of such methodologies as are currently available in phonology and morphology, which precursors, such as Charles Bally, had already applied in the field of stylistics over fifty years ago. We must not forget that linguistics is undoubtedly the most exact of human sciences, as Trager & Smith imply when they say:

> It is probably true that in linguistics, because of the extremely formal and handable nature of the data, the greatest progress in organisation on the proper levels has been made. (Trager & Smith 1951:81)

The attribution of translation to the arts is founded on the fact that it is possible to compare several translations of the same original, rejecting some as poor and praising others for their fidelity and natural flow. For a given text there would therefore not be a single translation, but a choice; translators weighing several alternatives before proposing their solutions. And if there is a stage of selection, it is the result of an artistic process, art involving essentially a free choice.

But it is also possible to tackle the problem from the other end and say that, if there is no single translation of a given passage, this lack of uniformity among translations is not the result of an inherent characteristic of the disci-

pline, but rather of an incomplete exploration of the circumstances of translation. We are probably justified to assume that, with a better understanding of the rules governing the transfer from one language to another, we would arrive at an ever-increasing number of unique solutions. If we had a quantitative criterion for measuring the depth of exploration of a text, we might even be able to give percentages for the cases which still escape full identity.

Instead of commenting on difficulties, by readily speaking of 'treason' and in this way pushing translation out of the field of the human sciences, we prefer to follow the principle of a systematic exploration of both the text to be translated and its proposed translation. Once this is done, we should be able to prove that the use of translation skills at a professional level is properly an art, related to the art of writing, which governs the production of the original text. In other words, translation becomes an art once its basic skills have been mastered. The experience of correcting translation papers for competitive examinations should convince anyone that, in general, success comes with methodical approaches and methods are learnt from practitioners with experience in an often thankless profession who know that being bilingual is not enough to embark on this career.

The methods proposed in this book cannot only be applied to professional translation; they are equally valid in other uses of translation. These are essentially of three types: translation used in education, in professional practice, both well-known areas, to which we add here the use of translation in linguistic research.

Translation in education can serve both for language acquisition, where it is variously frowned upon or praised, and for confirmation of knowledge acquisition. Translation into the foreign language, also called prose composition or thème, allows checking whether learners have assimilated the words and expressions of the foreign language and translation out of the foreign language, also called version, can show that learners are capable of grasping and expressing the sense and the nuances of a foreign text.

Outside education, translation is used for making known what has been said or written in a foreign language. Consequently translators themselves do not translate in order to understand, but to make others understand. They have understood the text before translating it.

Translation can be given a third role. A thoughtful comparison of two languages allows a more effective identification of the characteristics and the behaviour of each. In this respect it is not the sense of an expression that

matters but the way a language chooses to present it. To what extent, for example, does language reveal the situation underlying the utterance? A simple sentence like "He went north to Berlin", taken from a novel, defies literal translation into French. While we may regret this, it is more useful to realise, upon reflection, that French does not feel the need to add the directional indication represented by "north". Intuitive in concrete situations, French allows the reader a greater freedom to reconstitute the contextual environment. Given his point of departure, Vienna or Munich for example, the traveller in question cannot help but going north. The same happens with "up in your room" which is simply translated by "*dans votre chambre*" and can be considered a matter of gains and losses of information (**4.2.2**).

This is not the only problem which can be resolved by the admission that there are gains and losses. The comparison of French and English in the last example has permitted us to isolate characteristic features of French, and by contrast also features of English, which would remain hidden to the linguist working with a single language. We observe therefore that, besides leading to understanding and aiding understanding, translation can be an object of research into the mechanisms of one language in relation to another. Thus translation allows us to clarify certain linguistic phenomena which otherwise would remain undiscovered. In this sense translation is an auxiliary discipline to linguistics.

We hope that translation focused in this way will also confirm the usefulness of translation in education and in the formation of professional translators. But to the extent that it has a place in language teaching it is necessary to delimit its role with respect to the study of grammar and vocabulary. Since translation is essentially a comparative discipline, it follows that its objects of study, namely the two languages involved, must be assumed to be known. In schools one cannot expect a very profound knowledge of a foreign language, but it is now recognised that exercises in translation from and into the foreign language are only useful if they occur in areas previously explored by other methods.

Professional translators must know all the nuances of the foreign language and have a full command of all the resources of their first language. They must be utterly familiar with the grammar and the vocabulary. This book is intended for people who have a sound knowledge of both contemporary French and English. Its purpose is not to explain details of grammar or vocabulary but to examine how the constituent parts of a system function

when they render ideas expressed in the other language. On the basis of this detailed examination of language a theory of translation can be developed which is based both on linguistic structures and the psychology of language users. We find confirmation of this view in the observations made by J. Bélanger in his review of *Les ressources stylistiques du français contemporain*:

> Lorsqu'ils traduisent (the anglicists) font plus ou moins consciemment de la stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais. Les registres d'expression des deux langues coïncident exactement sur peu de points, en dépit des apparences. (Bélanger 1950:348)

This book is therefore supplementary to grammar and the lexicon from which it draws its substance. It should also permit a synthesis of concepts which often remain scattered. It offers professional translators valuable support for the classification of already existing and new knowledge.

In order to achieve this goal we must:

a. attempt to follow the way our mind works consciously or subconsciously when it moves from one language to another and record its progress. While there are always occasions in which shortcuts are preferable, it is equally true that a carefully traced network of paths assists the journey of the mind from one language to the other.
b. study the mechanisms of translation on the basis of clear and searching examples in order to derive working methods of translation and beyond these methods discover the mental, social and cultural attitudes which inform them.

It must, however, also be pointed out that it is not the intention of this book to provide a list of recipes whose application automatically leads to a mechanism for translation. With experience translators can develop automatic reflexes which make it unnecessary to consider the detailed meaning of a text. Such skills are, however, only developed with regular professional practice. Nor are we referring here to computational linguistics which is concerned with automatic translation, a topic we shall discuss further (**1.4.1.4; 4.2.2**). Nevertheless the interest in the automation of the translation process is not unimportant and cannot be ignored by translators. We have sometimes found ourselves faced with a difficult text after a long and tiring day. In such cases a 'mechanical' application of translation procedures would permit us to obtain

a first draft, which would then only need re-reading to correct the inevitable rigidity of such a method.

As observed above, we do not believe in unique solutions. But we are convinced that a confrontation of the two stylistic systems of French and English permits us to sketch rough guidelines and sometimes to draw up quite precise ones. This contrastive analysis and the translation methods identified here are not simply clever inventions. It is a matter of leading translators to identify the difficulties which they encounter, to classify them into ad hoc categories, and to find systematic solutions to translation problems beside others for which a solution has already been proposed. We are thinking, for example, of the translation of '*école maternelle*' by '*Motherly School*', which could have been avoided if account had been taken of the fact that in English 'motherly' is a purely affective word, whereas 'maternelle' can be both intellectual and affective. We hope to show that the contrast between intellectual and affective meaning permits us to pinpoint the differences between many faux amis.

Since books are written in one language — the original of this book was written in French — the authors naturally used English as a starting point for many comparison and examples. But the comparison of the two languages proceeds in both directions and the stylistic observations as well as the methods of translation are as valid for English as for French native speakers. This fact justifies and motivates the English edition which sees itself neither as a 'thème' nor a 'version' but as an independent parallel text. For this reason the expressions 'source language (SL)' and 'target language (TL)' are both applied to English and to French respectively and exemplification is given in both translation directions, so that French and English speakers will find this book equally useful. Where examples are divided into columns, the left hand column always gives the source language and the right hand column the target language translation (cf. the note on SL and TL in the glossary).

This first chapter has three objectives. It presents the main concepts on which our observations are based. Secondly it lists and explains the methods of translation identified for the purpose of this comparative analysis. Finally we round up this study by showing how translators can prepare themselves for their job by obtaining the information which relates to the situation and which is relevant to the interpretation and understanding of the source text.

The comparative study of English and French is covered in three major chapters which correspond to the three aspects of the written language: the

lexicon, the syntactic **structure** and the **message**. The appendix contains excerpts from texts and their translation together with an interpretation of the choices made with reference to the methods explained in Chapter One and illustrated in the rest of the book.

1.2 Basic concepts

Before identifying the processes which permit the movement from one language to another, it is useful to propose and define the concepts that we shall be using throughout the book.

1.2.1 *The linguistic sign*

An utterance consists of **signs**. Signs originate from the vocabulary and are modified by the grammar, the intonation, etc. Together they give the utterance a global meaning, here called **message**, which is the reason for the utterance. Beside the signs we must distinguish the mode of expression. Signs are intentionally used by speakers; the mode, by contrast, is the involuntary disclosure of the speakers' social status, their characters and their mood of the moment. Attentive readers or listeners will note the mode at the same time as they process the signs. In the same way as a good textual analysis will identify the mode as well as the signs, a translation must consider both. The study of mode is supported by the background information translators need for handling texts which do not form part of their daily routine.

The utterance corresponds to one or several situations. The **situation** is the reality evoked by the words. It is well-known that it is dangerous to translate without paying attention to the context. Going even further, we would say that the context does not acquire its full meaning until we reconstruct in our minds the situation it describes. This is mainly a matter of **metalinguistic information** (4.8 ff.).

'Sign' is a complex concept. According to F. de Saussure's definition the sign is the inseparable union of a concept and its written or spoken linguistic form. The conceptual part of the sign is its **signified** (*signifié*) and the linguistic part is its **signifier** (*signifiant*). When, in a given context, a word has an exact counterpart in another language, there is practically only one signified for two signifiers. For example: 'knife' and '*couteau*' in the context of:

'*couteau de table* : table knife'. But the signified of two signifiers, though normally considered interchangeable, may not coincide completely. This is the case with 'bread' and '*pain*'. English bread has neither the same appearance nor the same importance as food as French bread.

Translators must take careful note of the purely formal aspects of signs; for example the difference between 'booksellers' and 'bookseller's', 'it please' and 'it pleases', '*j'en doute*' and '*je m'en doute*'; but we restate here that such previous knowledge is taken for granted in this book. Since we assume translators to have a thorough command of the signifiers of the languages they work with, they are principally concerned with the conceptual aspect of signs, which orient them, as we have shown, towards a given situation. The linguistic sign is therefore a double-sided psychic entity, which can be represented, as in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1960), by Figure 1.1. The two vertical arrows with inverse directions express the interaction of the two halves of the sign in the continuum of language and thought which constitutes the message and which can only be subdivided into sections by a difficult and arbitrary analysis.

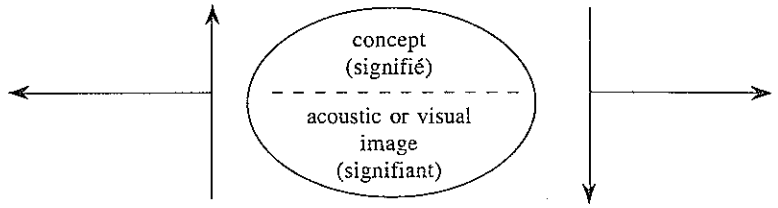


Figure 1.1. The dual nature of the linguistic sign

The work of translators is concerned with this interaction: from signifier to signified in the process of comprehension of the message; and from signified to signifier in the target language in the process of translation. This interaction does not only operate vertically — inside the sign as one might say — but also from sign to sign, horizontally, in the development of the message, in such a way that the totality of the message is larger than the simple sum of its constituent signs. For this reason we have added horizontal arrows to F. de Saussure's vertical ones, because as translators we are primarily concerned with the message, and it is only for practical and pedagogical reasons that we study signs independently of messages.

The signifier only rarely defines the signified as a whole. In most cases it represents only a part of the signified. This fact has been noted by Darmesteter in his little book on *La vie des mots*:

> Le nom n'a pas pour fonction de définir la chose, mais seulement d'en éveiller l'image. Et, à cet effet, le moindre signe, le plus imparfait, le plus incomplet suffit, du moment qu'il est établi, entre les gens parlant la même langue, qu'un rapport existe entre le signe et la chose signifiée. (Darmesteter 1895:43)

In consequence, though synonyms are usually defined as words having almost identical signifieds, their signifiers evoke different aspects of the signified. So, to repeat one of Darmesteter's examples, '*vaisseau*' stresses the form, '*bâtiment*' the structure and '*navire*' the floating capacity of the object named. This, at least, was the initial state of the difference between these words.

What is true inside a language is equally true between variants of the same language and dialects. In the example below, two signifiers refer to the same object but one characterises it negatively the other positively.

keyless watch (UK) : stem-winder (US)

With time, speakers, who do not usually think etymologically, no longer relate the words to their initial association and so consider these words synonyms. It is quite normal to forget the etymology of words and it is even inevitable and necessary so that a word can identify completely with the things it represents.

Given these conditions it would be surprising if between languages all words invariably were to evoke the same facets of the things they designate.

armoured car : fourgon bancaire

In this example the French term refers to the usage whereas the US term refers to the physical aspect of the vehicle. Equally:

équipe de dépannage : wrecking crew

The theory of **modulation**, explained in section **1.4.1.6**, is based on this fact.

1.2.2 *Meaning and sense*

The distinction between meaning and sense also originates in a differentiation about signs made by Saussure. The **meaning** is the sense of a sign in a given

context. Its **sense** is what contrasts one sign with another in language and not in an utterance. The example used by Saussure is '*mouton*'. This sign has the same signifier as 'sheep' in the context of the first example:

Le berger garde ses moutons. : The shepherd guards his sheep.
Le chef a préparé un gigot de mouton. : The cook prepared a mutton stew.

In the second example the French word does not have the same sense because it designates the meat of this animal. A third sense, not identified by Saussure, refers to the wool as trimming for clothes (in English 'mouton').

1.2.3 *Langue and parole*

This opposition is also of Saussurian origin. **Langue** refers to the words and expressions generally available to speakers, quite independent of the use they make of them. Once we actually speak or write, these words belong to **parole**. This difference is important because most items of langue undergo a slight transformation when they are used in parole. The langue, in its turn, evolves according to its usage in parole. The parole precedes langue and the realisations of parole pass into the realm of langue. Langue corresponds to our traditional notions of the grammar and the lexicon; parole lives in the written or spoken stylistic manifestations which characterise every utterance. Messages belong entirely to parole. The writer of a message uses the resources of langue in order to say something personal and unpredictable which is then an act of parole. One recognises immediately that numerous translation difficulties result from parole rather than langue. A further distinction is founded in the fact that sense belongs to langue and meaning to parole.

1.2.4 *Servitude and option*

To the extent that language is something we acquire, it is a complex of **servitudes** to which we have to submit; e.g. the gender of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, the agreement between words are unalterable facts of the linguistic system. Within these limits it is possible to choose from among existing resources, a freedom given us by parole. For example, it is a fact of the French language that there is a form called '*l'imparfait du subjonctif*'. It is no longer in general use, and since it is no longer obligatory it has become an **option**. Today this form is considered obsolete.

Translators must therefore distinguish between the servitudes imposed upon writers and the options they have freely chosen. For the three levels on which we shall carry out our analysis, the lexicon, the syntactic structure and the message, the distinction between servitude and option is important. In the analysis of the SL translators must pay particular attention to the options. In the TL they must take account of the servitudes which limit their freedom of action and must also be able to choose from among the available options to express the nuances of the message.

1.2.5 *Overtranslation*

Mistaking a servitude for an option can lead to **overtranslation.** If, for example, we translate '*aller chercher*' by 'to go and look for' instead of 'to fetch', we act as if '*aller chercher*' were an accidental combination of two independent words, whereas it is a fixed expression and as such a servitude. French simply has to use two words for expressing what English can do with one. There is an example of overtranslation in the following passage from a book about the French Resistance movement to the German occupation of France during the Second World War in which the author relies too heavily on information translated inadequately from French.

> The striking miners were given food by the occupation authorities, but they were not won over. It went so far that the families of the strikers were compelled to go to the City Hall to look for the soup which their men had refused. (H.L Brooks, *Prisoners of Hope*, New York, 1942)

"To go to look for" is a case of overtranslation. It should have read: "to get the soup" or "for the soup" or even better "for the food".

Overtranslation consists principally of seeing two units when there is only one (**1.3**).

1.2.6 *Language and stylistics*

We have already observed that translators are more concerned with questions of options than with servitudes. We could also say that grammar is the domain of servitudes whereas options belong to the domain of stylistics, or at least to a certain type of stylistics, namely that which Bally has treated in his *Traité de stylistique française* (1951). In fact, from our point of view and that of Bally himself (1952; see also: Malblanc 1963), it is possible to consider two types of

stylistics. One seeks to isolate the means of expression of a given language by contrasting the affective with the intellectual elements. This is **internal stylistics**. The other seeks to identify the expressive means of two languages by contrasting them. We call this external comparative stylistics or **comparative stylistics**. For example, the predominance of pronominal verbs in French does not strike us unless we contrast English with French. Through such comparisons we can, for example, also note the preference of English for the passive voice. By contrast, the study of pejorative words can be made within a single language without reference to any other. Though translators are mainly concerned with external stylistics, they must not ignore the fact of internal stylistics. Bally, who worked primarily on the latter, nevertheless understood the importance of the former. It lies at the root of his *Linguistique générale et linguistique française* (1944), and A. Malblanc has applied it in his study of the comparative stylistics of French and German (1944 & 1963).

To return to the distinction between servitude and options, we can state that internal stylistics, which predominantly studies expression forms, is dominated by options, whereas external stylistics is concerned with both servitudes and options. Many characteristic features of a language are servitudes. For example, **supplementation** of French prepositions (**3.3.3**) stems from a servitude of French which limits the autonomy of prepositions.

1.2.7 *Levels of language*

If at all possible, translators must preserve the tone of the text they translate. In order to do this, they must separate the elements which constitute the tone with respect to a whole range of stylistic characteristics which we call the levels of language.

It is easy to distinguish the different tones of such broad categories of language as written language, spoken language, technical language etc.; it is more difficult to establish a structure of tonality. While tone is not entirely a matter of the level of language used, it derives many stylistic effects from the level. The level can be identified independently of the message inasmuch as it is expressed by concrete signs: special words, a particular syntax, word order, etc.. During text analysis it could be annotated in the margins of a text, similar to the way the key and the time of a piece of music are marked.

We adopt here Saussure's terminology in Bally's (1951) interpretation, but with two new distinctions: that between (i) accepted usage and vernacular, and (ii) aesthetic and functional, hence utilitarian concerns.

The system of tonality is one of oppositions. A certain term is administrative in tone because, by an association of memory, we can oppose it to a general language term indicating the same thing, for example: 'deceased/dead'; it presupposes an option and consequently the existence of stylistic variants.

Beside the opposition among words regarding their effect, another one can be established concerning 'common' words which, being deprived of tonality, constitute what we call the common language. As its name indicates, this form of language is present in all the horizontal and vertical categories presented in the table below. The difference between accepted usage and the vernacular may vary according to the periods and the circumstances, but it is undeniable that even in our present period of linguistic relaxation, a French educated speaker is unlikely to say "*Je vous cause*". This expression gives the text a certain tone which a translation into English must try to replicate, if only by compensation; for example, by using 'me' instead of 'I', or "It don't matter". The fact that "*Je m'en rappelle*" has become less clear in its tonal attribution bears witness to the fluctuation in these demarcation lines, but does not deny their existence.

Our second distinction recognizes aesthetic in contrast to utilitarian concerns. Starting from familiar language which represents the lower limit of what is accepted usage, expression can be progressively refined to reach by stages the levels of written, literary, and poetic language. In reverse order one moves to ordinary language and argot. In parallel to this vertical axis there is a horizontal axis which at the level of the written language encompasses the different **functional specialisations**, i.e. the language of a special subject. The specialisations respond to practical necessities and not an aesthetic intention: this is the main difference between these two axes.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">Aesthetic tonality</td><td colspan="4">functional specialisation</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">common

language</td><td>poetic language
literary language
written language</td><td>Admin.</td><td>Legal</td><td>Science</td><td>etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>accepted usage</td><td>ordinary language

argot</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="2">jargons</td></tr>
<tr><td>vernacular</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1.2. Levels of language

We locate jargons, i.e. languages which are both familiar and specialized, e.g. the languages of certain trades and certain French *Grandes Écoles*, beside ordinary language and argots. We retain Bally's (1951) observation that jargons differ from argot to the extent that they are comprehensible only to the members of that speech community.

If for example we have to translate the message : "Hello, John! How are you today?" we have to know at which level to place it. Only then will we know how to translate such exclamation as "*Bonjour!*", "*Tiens!*", "*Bonjour, Jean!*", "*Salut!*", etc., and only then can we decide whether we have to preserve the name or whether we can omit it, opt for a polite form of address which fits the chosen level, etc. It is the lack of understanding of levels which is the principal cause of error among foreigners, for example, when addressing someone in the familiar form or using courtesy forms to a social superior which are suitable for an inferior.

In the analysis carried out in this book, we proceed synchronically, citing as far as possible forms and corresponding texts originating from the same period of the language, without, however, expressing any normative judgements. Translators seldom have the opportunity to make such judgements, but must rather proceed with great prudence when the text they work on exhibits weaknesses of style. Can they or must they be omitted in translation? Our position is that of a preference for a generally accepted norm which may risk remaining a little behind the current evolution of the language. We prefer to attribute the extreme cases of '*français avancé*' or of 'progressive English' to the domain of specialists, and technical writers, and observe a norm which we shall not discuss further.

1.3 Units - planes

Now that the relevant linguistic concepts have been identified and defined, it seems appropriate to focus on the work of translators, examining the units they work with, the different planes of language at which these units operate, and finally, the methods which allow the **transfer** from one language to another.

1.3.1 *Translation units*

For any science, one of the essential and often the most controversial preliminary step is defining the units with which to operate. This is equally true of translation, where until recently attention was concentrated on words, as if these segments of the utterance were so obvious that they did not require definition. But we only have to glance through the pages of the main linguistic journals over the last twenty years to see that nothing is less clearly defined than the concept 'word'; some linguists, notably Delacroix, have gone so far as describing the word as a "*nébuleuse intellectuelle*", or even refused to consider it as having any concrete existence at all.

It is obvious that, despite its apparent convenience, the word on its own is unsuitable for consideration as the basis for a unit of translation. It is unlikely, however, that this concept can be abandoned altogether: after all, in written language utterances are divided into words by blank spaces and dictionaries are compiled on the principle of such units as words. But even in written language, the limits of a word are not always very clear. There is first of all the capricious use of the hyphen: the French write '*face à face*', but '*vis-à-vis*', '*bon sens*', but '*non-sens*' and '*contresens*', '*portefeuille*', but '*porte-monnaie*', '*tout à fait*', but '*sur-le-champ*'. These irregularities are just as common in English, with the added complication that there is variance in the use of the hyphen between British English and American English, which uses hyphens more sparingly. The following sentence would seem ludicrous to a British reader without a hyphen, yet its absence is perfectly normal to an American.

His face turned an ugly brick(-)red.	: Son visage prit une vilaine couleur rouge brique.

Observing spoken language utterances, we note that, at least in French, the beginnings and endings of words merge into one another. The units we distinguish aurally are not words but syllables and phonetic groups which may be longer or shorter than words and whose boundaries do not always coincide with the boundaries of words. French in particular has very few phonological features which allow a clear distinction of one word from another. We are therefore faced with the problem of defining units, something de Saussure spent a lot of time researching:

> Language then has the strange, striking characteristic of not having entities that are perceptible at the outset and yet of not permitting us to doubt that they exist and that their functioning constitutes it. (Saussure (transl. Wade Bakin) 1960:149)

What makes us hesitate about adopting the word as a unit is that the double structure of the sign then no longer seems clear to us, and the signifier takes on a more important role than the signified. Translators, let us remind ourselves, start from the meaning and carry out all translation procedures within the semantic field. They therefore need a unit which is not exclusively defined by formal criteria, since their work involves form only at the beginning and the end of their task. In this light, the unit that has to be identified is a unit of thought, taking into account that translators do not translate words, but ideas and feelings.

For the purpose of this book we shall consider the following terms to be equivalent: **unit of thought**, **lexicological unit**, and **unit of translation**. For us, these terms convey the same concept, but with emphasis on different points of view. The units of translation we postulate here are lexicological units within which lexical elements are grouped together to form a single element of thought. It would be more correct to say: the unit of translation is the predominant element of thought within such a segment of the utterance. There may be superposition of ideas within the same unit. For example, "to loom" conveys both the idea of a ghost hanging in mid-air and, at the same time, that of imminence or threat, but, whether seen as a single lexical item in a dictionary or from the point of view of the morpho-syntactic structure in which the word might occur, the two ideas cannot be separated. They are superimposed. It is what Bally refers to as an accumulation of meanings. In such cases the translation may be able to retain only one signified, preferably that which in the context has priority. This is the reason why it is almost impossible to fully translate poetry.

We could define the unit of translation as the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually. With such a definition we clearly touch upon what separates the stylistic analysis proposed in the following chapters from structural analysis. Given that translators have to be concerned more with semantics than structure, it is obviously preferable to have a unit whose definition originates in a distinction of meaning rather than in syntactic functions.

According to the particular role they play in the message, several types of units of translation can be recognised:

a. **Functional units**, i.e. units whose elements have the same syntactic function, e.g.:

Il habite	: He lives
Saint-Sauveur,	at Saint-Sauveur,
à deux pas,	a short distance away
en meublé,	in furnished rooms
chez ses parents.	with his parents

b. **Semantic units**, i.e. units of meaning, e.g.:

sur-le-champ	: immediately (cf. on the spot)
le grand film	: the main feature
avoir lieu	: to happen (cf. to take place)
prendre place	: to sit (or: to stand)

c. **Dialectic units**, i.e. expressing a reasoning, e.g.:

en effet	: really
puisque, aussi, bien	: since, however, also, well

d. **Prosodic units**, i.e. units whose elements have the same intonation:

You don't say!	: Ça alors!
You're telling me!	: Vous ne m'apprenez rien!
You bet!	: Je vous crois!

The last three categories constitute units of translation. Unless they are very short, functional units may contain more than a single unit of thought.

If we now look at the relationship between units of translation and words within a text, three different cases can arise:

a. **Simple units**

These units correspond to a single word. It is obviously the simplest case and listed here in first place because it is widely used and also because it enables us to give a better definition of the remaining two. In the following sentences there are as many units as there are words and each word can be replaced individually without changing the sentence structure.

Il gagne cinq mille dollars.	: He earns five thousand dollars.
Elle reçoit trois cents francs.	: She receives three hundred francs.

b. **Diluted units**

These units extend over several words which together form a lexicological unit, because the whole group of words expresses a single idea. We take our examples from both languages:

simple soldat	: private
tout de suite	: immediately
au fur et à mesure que	: as
poser sa candidature à	: to apply for
in so far as	: dans la mesure où
to report progress	: tenir (quelqu'un) au courant
nooks and crannies	: des recoins

c. **Fractional units**

These units consist of only a fraction of a word, which means that the speaker is therefore still aware of the constituent elements of the word, e.g.:

Two units	*One unit*
relever quelqu'un qui est tombé	: relever une erreur [spot, point out]
recréation	: récréation
brunette [in French one can say "petite brune"]	: brunette [in English it is one unit because one can say one "a tall brunette"]
re-cover [recouvrir]	: recover [recouvrer]

In English wordstress can reveal the difference between single and multiple units, e.g. 'black 'bird vs. 'black-bird.

The identification of units of translation also depends upon another classification in which the degree of cohesion between the elements is taken into account. Unfortunately, this involves a variable criterion and the categories we shall try to establish are, above all, fixed points between which we may expect to find intermediary cases which are more difficult to classify.

a. **Unified groups**, in contrast to one-word units, refer to highly coherent units of two or more words such as idioms. The unity of meaning is very clear and is often marked by a syntactic characteristic such as the omission of an article before a noun. In general, even the least experienced translators can detect this kind of unit without any difficulty.

à bout portant	: point-blank
mettre à pied	: to dismiss

avoir le pas sur	: to take precedence over
avoir lieu	: to take place
s'en prendre à	: to blame
faire fausse route	: to go astray
l'échapper belle	: to have a narrow escape

b. **Affinity groups** are units whose elements are more difficult to detect and in which the cohesion between the words is less evident. We identify five separate types:

i. Phrases of Intensity

focused around a noun:

un hiver rigoureux	: a severe winter
un bombardement intense	: severe shelling
un refus catégorique	: a flat denial
une connaissance approfondie	: a thorough knowledge
d'une importance capitale	: of paramount importance
une majorité écrasante	: an overwhelming majority
une souveraineté pleine et entière	: a full and undiminished sovereignty
une pluie diluvienne	: a downpour

focused around an adjective, a past participle, or a verb:

grièvement blessé	: seriously injured
sourd comme un pot	: stone deaf
diamétralement opposés	: poles apart
formellement interdit	: strictly prohibited
entièrement revu et corrigé	: completely revised
battre à plate couture	: to beat hollow
s'ennuyer à mourir	: to be bored to death
savoir pertinemment	: to know for a fact
réfléchir mûrement	: to give careful consideration
s'amuser royalement	: to enjoy oneself immensely

Such groupings exist in both languages, but they can only rarely be translated literally. For example, English has its own special tendency to reinforce an adjective, e.g.:

Drink your coffee while it is nice and hot.	: Buvez votre café bien chaud.
He was good and mad.	: Il était furieux.

a great big truck	: un énorme camion

The reinforcement of 'big' by 'great' is reminiscent of children's language.

Certain English adjectives are intensified by another adjective, e.g.:

stone deaf	: sourd comme un pot
stark mad	: complètement fou
stark naked	: nu comme un ver
dead tired	: éreinté
dripping wet	: ruisselant

ii. Verbal phrases

In these cases a verb followed by a noun (e.g. *faire une promenade*) corresponds, in principle, to a simple verb (e.g. *se promener*) of the same family as the noun:

faire une promenade	: to take a walk
prendre note	: to take note
remettre sa démission	: to tender one's resignation
induire en tentation	: to lead into temptation
apporter un changement	: to make a change
mettre un terme à	: to put an end to
pousser un soupir	: to heave a sigh
pousser un cri	: to utter a cry
porter un jugement sur	: to pass judgement on

The simple verb without its associated complement may be quite rare, e.g. the case of 'heave', or not occur at all. Groups formed by a noun and verb with a single meaning within the sentence should also be considered as units of thought. The verb does not necessarily have a literal correspondent.

subir un échec	: to suffer a setback
remporter un succès	: to score a success
franchir une distance	: to cover a distance
faire un somme	: to take a nap
faire des vers	: to write poetry
dresser une liste	: to draw up a list
percevoir un droit	: to charge a fee
établir un certificat	: to make out a certificate
suivre un cours	: to take a course
passer un examen	: to take an exam

Many simple English verbs correspond to French verbal phrases (see **3.3.1.1**), e.g:

passer au crible	: to sift
mettre en danger	: to endanger
fermer à clef	: to lock
faire bon accueil à	: to welcome
interjeter appel	: to appeal
faire écho à	: to echo
donner de la bande [navire]	: to list (naut.)
mettre en italique	: to italicize
faire une génuflexion	: to genuflect

iii. Many French **adjectival** and **adverbial phrases** (**3.3.1.2, 3.3.1.3, 3.4.3.3**) form units in the same way, as their English counterparts do in the form of single words, e.g.:

sans condition	: unconditionally
d'un air de reproche	: reproachfully
d'un oeil (air) critique	: critically
à plusieurs (maintes) reprises	: repeatedly
à juste titre	: deservedly

iv. Many units consist of a noun and an adjective, but without the intensification noted above. The adjective is often an everyday word which acquires a more technical meaning, e.g.:

les grands magasins	: department stores
sa bonne volonté	: his willingness
un haut fourneau	: a blast furnace
du fer blanc	: tin
un petit pain	: a roll
une petite voiture	: a wheel-chair
un simple soldat (milit.)	: a private
la vitesse acquise (phys.)	: the momentum
une longue-vue (opt.)	: a telescope

v. Beyond these easily defined units, translators are faced with a maze of phrases in which they have to try and identify the lexicological units. Dictionaries give numerous examples of these, but there are no complete lists, and all for good reason. The following examples have been selected at random to illustrate the variety of these units.

un immeuble de rapport	: block of flats [for rent]
le régime des pluies	: the rainfall
mettre en chantier	: to lay down
mettre au point	: to overhaul, perfect, clarify
gagner du temps	: to save time
chercher à gagner du temps	: to stall, to play for time

The translation of a word usually depends upon its context. A unit of translation provides a limited context; it forms a syntactic unit where one element determines the translation of the other. For example, in '*régime des pluies*', '*régime*' corresponds to 'fall'. On the other hand, the context is created by the usage, and it is unlikely that these words should recur in the same order with a different meaning association. At the same time, the unit of translation is anchored in the system of the language, for it is also a memory association (**2.4.1**).

The distinction we have made between unified groups and affinity groups does not exclude their combination within complex units. For example, in an affinity group '*bonne*' and '*volonté*' give '*bonne volonté* : good will'. But good will is useless unless it manifests itself. There is therefore affinity of meaning between the affinity group 'bonne volonté' and the verb phrase '*faire preuve de*'. This gives us '*faire preuve de bonne volonté*' which, in the appropriate context can be simply translated as 'to be co-operative'. The same applies to the idiom '*à huis clos*' which forms an affinity group when connected with '*délibérer*' or '*siéger*', e.g.:

délibérer/siéger à huis clos	: to hear a case in camera

1.3.2 *The three planes of external stylistics*

The three-way division of the subject matter of translation has been mentioned in several previous sections. It seems appropriate to discuss these planes in greater depth.

1.3.2.1 *The lexicon*

The first plane is occupied by the signs considered in their own right, i.e. disregarding the messages in which they normally appear. The repertoire of signs, or the **lexicon**, is examined by substituting units of translation within the syntactic framework of a comparable structure. It is not our purpose to

explain the contents of the SL and the TL lexicon separately, each lexicon having its own structure (see: Martinet 1960). Our aim is to draw out certain lexical categories from their juxtaposition, in order to define the units of translation more sharply. The parallels between SL and TL are sometimes striking and we can usefully exploit them. At other times, the two languages clearly differ and translators must analyse their differences if they want to understand and bridge them. We are here naturally more interested in the differences than in the similarities. The more two languages are alike in structure and civilisation, the greater the risk of confusing the meanings of their respective lexicons, as we see, for example, in the problem caused by faux amis (**2.2.2** ff.). But even words not burdened with coincidental and misleading resemblances present semantic differences which translator must be wary of. For example, the American usage of 'street' can convey the idea of the French '*chaussée*', as well as that of '*rue*', e.g.:

Do not walk in the street.	: Ne marchez pas sur la chaussée.
Ne marchez pas sur. la chaussée.	: Do not walk on the roadway.[UK]
Do not walk on the street.	: Ne marchez pas dans la rue.

Within certain syntactic structures units of translation can be interchanged, giving paradigmatic sequences in vertical order such as:

We could hear a noise	: On entendait un bruit
– a bang	– une détonation
– a thud	– un bruit sourd
– a hiss, etc.	– un sifflement, etc.

The semantic components of a word can also be arranged on a vertical axis. For example:

casquette	: connotation of headwear
	: connotation of a social class [during a certain historical period]
	: connotation of occupation [manual work, hunting, etc.]

1.3.2.2 *Syntactic structures*

Units of translation can also be arranged on a horizontal plane, i.e. in the sequence of the syntactic structure of the utterance, so as to emphasise the

idea of an ordered entity. At each stage of the flow of the utterance, the meaning of a unit of translation is dependent on particular **markers**, on variations in form (morphology) and on a certain order (syntax). At this stage we will not detain ourselves with morphological comparisons, however interesting that may be, because the formal behaviour of signifiers (for example, the fact that English adjectives are invariable), will not teach us anything as far as translation is concerned. We shall concentrate our analysis on meaning, addressing ourselves to the dichotomy of lexis and syntax which for J. Perrot, is the most important concern of linguistics:

> ....car l'usage de la langue comme moyen de communication implique la connexion de deux fonctions: il y a communication d'énoncés... relatifs à des notions. (Perrot 1953:21)

1.3.2.3 *The message*

The third plane, that of the **message**, is the encompassing framework into which the utterance fits. Each message is an individual entity. It arises from parole and only when it comes to choosing a particular linguistic system does it depend upon the structure of a language with its limits and servitudes. At the plane of the message speakers determine the point of view, expressed by the **tone**, the choice of register, the layout of paragraphs and the choice of connectors which punctuate their development. Metalinguistic information completely surrounds the message, since a message is the individual reflection of a situation, an extralinguistic phenomenon. In our study of a text, we therefore encounter certain factors which can be explained neither by considerations of a lexical nor a syntactic nature because they originate from a higher level of reality, which is less accessible, yet essential, and which some linguisticians refer to as "context", without ever completely defining it. This is exactly what G. Galichet wanted to convey in his very dense and profound book, *Physiologie de la langue française*, which has provided us with numerous suggestions and from which we have taken the following typical extract:

> Dans la phrase, les mots se déterminent les uns les autres; une sélection s'opère ainsi entre leurs diverses significations possibles. Et l'acceptation ainsi sélectionnée se module de certaines nuances que les mots se communiquent, déteignant ainsi... les uns sur les autres, nuances qu'imprime souvent aussi l'ensemble de la phrase. Ces nuances peuvent modifier considérablement la signification lexicale du mot. C'est dire qu'en fin de compte un mot n'a pas de sens en soi: il n'a de sens que dans et par un contexte. (Galichet 1958:40)

en compen: abrenger

The planes upon which the three main aspects of this book are based are summarized graphically in Figure 1.3

Planes:	I	II	III
METALINGUISTIC INFORMATION	units of thought (monemes)	phrases and molecules	tone, links emphasis 'context'
BORDERS OF STYLISTICS	LEXICON	STRUCTURE	MESSAGE
MICROLINGUISTICS	units of translation vocabulary	morphology and syntax grammar	sentences paragraphs composition

Figure 1.3. The three planes of the utterance

1.4 A methodology for translation

1.4.1 *Methods of translation*

After establishing the theoretical principles of comparative stylistics, it is time to describe the methods translators use.

In the process of translating, translators establish relationships between specific manifestations of two linguistic systems, one which has already been expressed and is therefore given, and the other which is still potential and adaptable. Translators are thus faced with a fixed starting point, and as they read the message, they form in their minds an impression of the target they want to reach. The initial steps they take can be characterised as follows:

- to identify the units of translation;
- to examine the SL text; this consists of evaluating the descriptive, affective, and intellectual content of the units of translation;
- to reconstitute the situation which gave rise to the message;
- to weigh up and evaluate the stylistic effects, etc.

But translators cannot leave it at that; all these reflections upon the SL text as a whole and its units must lead to a target language message. Going through these processes in their mind translators search for a solution. In some cases the discovery of the appropriate TL unit or sentence is very sudden, almost like a flash, so that it appears as if reading the SL text had automatically revealed the TL message. In such a case translators still have to go over the text to ensure that none of the elements from the SL have been omitted before the process is finished.

But it is precisely this process which we have yet to describe in detail. At first the different methods or procedures seem to be countless, but they can be condensed to just seven, each one corresponding to a higher degree of complexity. In practice, they may be used either on their own or combined with one or more of the others.

1.4.1.1 *Direct and oblique translation*

Generally speaking, translators can choose from two methods of translating, namely direct, or literal translation and **oblique** translation. In some translation tasks it may be possible to transpose the source language message element by element into the target language, because it is based on either (i) parallel categories, in which case we can speak of structural parallelism, or (ii) on parallel concepts, which are the result of metalinguistic parallelisms. But translators may also notice gaps, or **'lacunae'** (**2.2.1.5**), in the TL which must be filled by corresponding elements (**4.3.7**ff.), so that the overall impression is the same for the two messages.

It may, however, also happen that, because of structural or metalinguistic differences, certain stylistic effects cannot be transposed into the TL without upsetting the syntactic order, or even the lexis. In this case it is understood that more complex methods have to be used which at first may look unusual but which nevertheless can permit translators a strict control over the reliability of their work: these procedures are called oblique translation methods. In the listing which follows, the first three procedures are direct and the others are oblique.

1.4.1.2 *Procedure 1: Borrowing*

To overcome a lacuna, usually a metalinguistic one (e.g. a new technical process, an unknown concept), borrowing is the simplest of all translation methods. It would not even merit discussion in this context if translators did

not occasionally need to use it in order to create a stylistic effect. For instance, in order to introduce the flavour of the SL culture into a translation, foreign terms may be used, e.g. such Russian words as 'roubles', 'datchas' and 'aparatchik', 'dollars' and 'party' from American English, Mexican Spanish food names 'tequila' and 'tortillas', and so on. In a story with a typical English setting, an expression such as 'the coroner spoke' is probably better translated into French by borrowing the English term 'coroner', rather than trying to find a more or less satisfying equivalent title from amongst the French magistrature, e.g.: "*Le coroner prit la parole*".

Some well-established, mainly older borrowings are so widely used that they are no longer considered as such and have become a part of the respective TL lexicon. Some examples of French borrowings from other languages are '*alcool*', '*redingote*', '*paquebot*', '*acajou*', etc. In English such words as 'menu', 'carburettor', 'hangar', 'chic' and expressions like 'déjà vu', 'enfant terrible' and 'rendez-vous' are no longer considered to be borrowings. Translators are particularly interested in the newer borrowings, even personal ones. It must be remembered that many borrowings enter a language through translation, just like semantic borrowings or faux amis, whose pitfalls translators must carefully avoid (**2.2.2** ff.).

The decision to borrow a SL word or expression for introducing an element of local colour is a matter of style and consequently of the message.

1.4.1.3 *Procedure 2: Calque*

A calque is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements. The result is either

i. a lexical calque, as in the first example, below, i.e. a calque which respects the syntactic structure of the TL, whilst introducing a new mode of expression; or
ii. a structural calque, as in the second example, below, which introduces a new construction into the language, e.g.:

English-French calque

Compliments of the Season!	: Compliments de la saison!
Science-fiction	: Science-fiction

As with borrowings, there are many fixed calques which, after a period of time, become an integral part of the language. These too, like borrowings,

may have undergone a semantic change, turning them into faux amis. Translators are more interested in new calques which can serve to fill a lacuna, without having to use an actual borrowing (cf. '*économiquement faible*', a French calque taken from the German language). In such cases it may be preferable to create a new lexical form using Greek or Latin roots or use conversion (cf. "*l'hypostase*"; Bally, 1944:257 ff.). This would avoid awkward calques, such as:

French calque	*English source*
thérapie occupationnelle	: occupational therapy
Banque pour le Commerce et le Développement	: Bank for Commerce and Development
les quatre Grands	: the four great powers
le Premier Français	: The French Premier
Le mariage est une association à cinquante-cinquante.	: Matrimony is a fifty-fifty association.

(*Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, October 1955)

l'homme dans la rue (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 1955)	: the man in the street [instead of 'l'homme de la rue' or 'le Français moyen']
compagnon de route (*Le Monde*, March 1956)	: fellow-traveller
La plupart des grandes décisions sur le Proche-Orient ont été prises à un moment où Sir Winston Churchill affectait de considérer comme "vide" la "chaise" de la France sur la scène internationale. (*Le Monde*, March 1956)	: Most major decision regarding the Near-East were taken when Churchill pretented that the chair occupied by France on the international scene was empty. [instead of: 'la place' or 'le fauteuil']

1.4.1.4 *Procedure 3: Literal Translation*

Literal, or word for word, translation is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically apropriate TL text in which the translators'

task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL.

I left my spectacles on the table downstairs.	: J'ai laissé mes lunettes sur la table en bas.
Where are you?	: Où êtes-vous?
This train arrives at Union Station at ten.	: Ce train arrive à la gare Centrale à 10 heures.

In principle, a literal translation is a unique solution which is reversible and complete in itself. It is most common when translating between two languages of the same family (e.g. between French and Italian), and even more so when they also share the same culture. If literal translations arise between French and English, it is because common metalinguistic concepts also reveal physical coexistence, i.e. periods of bilingualism, with the conscious or unconscious imitation which attaches to a certain intellectual or political prestige, and such like. They can also be justified by a certain convergence of thought and sometimes of structure, which are certainly present among the European languages (cf. the creation of the definite article, the concepts of culture and civilization), and which have motivated interesting research in General Semantics.

In the preceding methods, translation does not involve any special stylistic procedures. If this were always the case then our present study would lack justification and translation would lack an intellectual challenge since it would be reduced to an unambiguous transfer from SL to TL. The exploration of the possibility of translating scientific texts by machine, as proposed by the many research groups in universities and industry in all major countries, is largely based on the existence of parallel passages in SL and TL texts, corresponding to parallel thought processes which, as would be expected, are particularly frequent in the documentation required in science and technology. The suitability of such texts for automatic translation was recognised as early as 1955 by Locke & Booth. (For current assessments of the scope of applications of machine translation see: Hutchins & Somers 1992, Sager 1994.)

If, after trying the first three procedures, translators regard a literal translation unacceptable, they must turn to the methods of oblique translation. By unacceptable we mean that the message, when translated literally

i. gives another meaning, or
ii. has no meaning, or

iii. is structurally impossible, or
iv. does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL, or
v. has a corresponding expression, but not within the same register.

To clarify these ideas, consider the following examples:

He looked at the map.	: Il regarda la carte.
He looked the picture of health.	: *Il paraissait l'image de la santé.
	: Il avait l'air en pleine forme.

While we can translate the first sentence literally, this is impossible for the second, unless we wish to do so for an expressive reason (e.g. in order to characterise an Englishman who does not speak very good conversational French). The first example pair is less specific, since '*carte*' is less specific than 'map'. But this in no way renders the demonstration invalid.

If translators offer something similar to the second example, above, e.g.: "*Il se portait comme un charme*", this indicates that they have aimed at an equivalence of the two messages, something their "neutral" position outside both the TL and the SL enables them to do. Equivalence of messages ultimately relies upon an identity of situations, and it is this alone that allows us to state that the TL may retain certain characteristics of reality that are unknown to the SL.

If there were conceptual dictionaries with bilingual signifiers, translators would only need to look up the appropriate translation under the entry corresponding to the situation identified by the SL message. But such dictionaries do not exist and therefore translators start off with words or units of translation, to which they apply particular procedures with the intention of conveying the desired message. Since the positioning of a word within an utterance has an effect on its meaning, it may well arise that the solution results in a grouping of words that is so far from the original starting point that no dictionary could give it. Given the infinite number of combinations of signifiers alone, it is understandable that dictionaries cannot provide translators with ready-made solutions to all their problems. Only translators can be aware of the totality of the message, which determines their decisions. In the final analysis, it is the message alone, a reflection of the situation, that allows us to judge whether two texts are adequate alternatives.

1.4.1.5 *Procedure 4: Transposition*

The method called transposition involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the messsage. Beside being a special translation procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language. For example: "*Il a annoncé qu'il reviendrait*", can be re-expressed by transposing a subordinate verb with a noun, thus: "*Il a annoncé son retour*". In contrast to the first expression, which we call the base expression, we refer to the second one as the transposed expression. In translation there are two distinct types of transposition: (i) obligatory transposition, and (ii) optional transposition.

The following example has to be translated literally (procedure 3), but must also be transposed (procedure 4):

Dès son lever...	: As soon as he gets / got up...
As soon as he gets up...	: Dès son lever...
	: Dès qu'il se lève...

In this example, the English allows no choice between the two forms, the base form being the only one possible. Inversely, however, when translating back into French, we have the choice between applying a calque or a transposition, because French permits either construction.

In contrast, the two following phrases can both be transposed:

Après qu'il sera revenu...	: After he comes back...
Après son retour...	: After his return...

From a stylistic point of view, the base and the transposed expression, do not necessarily have the same value. Translators must, therefore, choose to carry out a transposition if the translation thus obtained fits better into the utterance, or allows a particular nuance of style to be retained. Indeed, the transposed form is generally more literary in character.

A special and frequently used case of transposition is that of **interchange (3.3.2.1)**.

1.4.1.6 *Procedure 5: Modulation*

Modulation is a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view. This change can be justified when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the TL.

As with transposition, we distinguish between free or optional modulations and those that are fixed or obligatory. A classical example of an obligatory modulation is the phrase, "The time when...", which must be translated as, "*Le moment où...*". The type of modulation which turns a negative SL expression into a positive TL expression is more often than not optional, even though this is closely linked with the structure of each language, e.g.:

It is not difficult to show...	: Il est facile de démontrer...

The difference between fixed and free modulation is one of degree. In the case of fixed modulation, translators with a good knowledge of both languages freely use this method, as they will be aware of the frequency of use, the overall acceptance, and the confirmation provided by a dictionary or grammar of the preferred expression.

Cases of free modulation are single instances not yet fixed and sanctioned by usage, so that the procedure must be carried out anew each time. This, however, is not what qualifies it as optional; when carried out as it should be, the resulting translation should correspond perfectly to the situation indicated by the SL. To illustrate this point, it can be said that the result of a free modulation should lead to a solution that makes the reader exclaim, "Yes, that's exactly what you would say". Free modulation thus tends towards a unique solution, a solution which rests upon an habitual train of thought and which is necessary rather than optional. It is therefore evident that between fixed modulation and free modulation there is but a difference of degree, and that as soon as a free modulation is used often enough, or is felt to offer the only solution (this usually results from the study of bilingual texts, from discussions at a bilingual conference, or from a famous translation which claims recognition due to its literary merit), it may become fixed. However, a free modulation does not actually become fixed until it is referred to in dictionaries and grammars and is regularly taught. A passage not using such a modulation would then be considered inaccurate and rejected. In his M.A. thesis, G. Panneton, from whom we have borrowed the term modulation, correctly anticipated the results of a systematic application of transposition and modulation:

> La transposition correspondrait en traduction à une équation du premier degré, la modulation à une équation du second degré, chacune transformant l'équation en identité, toutes deux effectuant la résolution appropriée. (Panneton: 1946)

1.4.1.7 *Procedure 6: Equivalence*

We have repeatedly stressed that one and the same situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural methods. In such cases we are dealing with the method which produces equivalent texts. The classical example of equivalence is given by the reaction of an amateur who accidentally hits his finger with a hammer: if he were French his cry of pain would be transcribed as, "Aïe!", but if he were English this would be interpreted as, "Ouch!". Another striking case of equivalences are the many onomatopoeia of animal sounds, e.g.:

cocorico	: cock-a-doodle-do
miaou	: miaow
hi-han	: heehaw

These simple examples illustrates a particular feature of equivalences: more often than not they are of a syntagmatic nature, and affect the whole of the message. As a result, most equivalences are fixed, and belong to a phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, nominal or adjectival phrases, etc. In general, proverbs are perfect examples of equivalences, e.g.:

Il pleut à seaux/ des cordes.	: It is raining cats and dogs.
Like a bull in a china shop.	: Comme un chien dans un jeu de quilles.
Too many cooks spoil the broth.	: Deux patrons font chavirer la barque.

The method of creating equivalences is also frequently applied to idioms. For example, "To talk through one's hat" and "as like as two peas" cannot be translated by means of a calque. Yet this is exactly what happens amongst members of so-called bilingual populations, who have permanent contact with two languages but never become fully acquainted with either. It happens nevertheless, that some of these calques actually become accepted by the other language, especially if they relate to a new field which is likely to become established in the country of the TL. For example, in Canadian French the idiom "to talk through one's hat" has acquired the equivalent "*parler à travers son chapeau*". But the responsibility of introducing such calques into a perfectly organised language should not fall upon the shoulders of translators: only writers can take such liberties, and they alone should take credit or blame for success or failure. In translation it is advisable to use traditional forms of expression, because the accusation of using Gallicisms,

Anglicisms, Germanisms, Hispanisms, etc. will always be present when a translator attempts to introduce a new calque.

1.4.1.8 *Procedure 7: Adaptation*

With this seventh method we reach the extreme limit of translation: it is used in those cases where the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TL culture. In such cases translators have to create a new situation that can be considered as being equivalent. Adaptation can, therefore, be described as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence. Let us take the example of an English father who would think nothing of kissing his daughter on the mouth, something which is normal in that culture but which would not be acceptable in a literal rendering into French. Translating, "He kissed his daughter on the mouth" by "*Il embrassa sa fille sur la bouche*", would introduce into the TL an element which is not present in the SL, where the situation may be that of a loving father returning home and greeting his daughter after a long journey. The French rendering would be a special kind of overtranslation. A more appropriate translation would be, "*Il serra tendrement sa fille dans ses bras*", unless, of course, the translator wishes to achieve a cheap effect. Adaptations are particularly frequent in the translation of book and film titles, discussed in detail in section 4.8, e.g.:

Trois hommes et un couffin.	: Three men and a baby. [film]
Le grand Meaulne.	: The Wanderer. [book title]

The method of adaptation is well known amongst simultaneous interpreters: there is the story of an interpreter who, having adapted "cricket" into "*Tour de France*" in a context referring to a particularly popular sport, was put on the spot when the French delegate then thanked the speaker for having referred to such a typically French sport. The interpreter then had to reverse the adaptation and speak of cricket to his English client.

The refusal to make an adaptation is invariably detected within a translation because it affects not only the syntactic structure, but also the development of ideas and how they are represented within the paragraph. Even though translators may produce a perfectly correct text without adaptation, the absence of adaptation may still be noticeable by an indefinable tone, something that does not sound quite right. This is unfortunately the impression given only too often by texts published by international organizations, whose members, either through ignorance or because of a mistaken insistence

on literalness, demand translations which are largely based on calques. The result may then turn out to be pure gibberish which has no name in any language, but which René Etiemble quite rightly referred to as "*sabir atlantique*", which is only partly rendered by the equivalent 'Mid-Atlantic jargon'. Translations cannot be produced simply by creating structural or metalinguistic calques. All the great literary translations were carried out with the implicit knowledge of the methods described in this chapter, as Gide's preface to his translation of *Hamlet* clearly shows. One cannot help wondering, however, if the reason the Americans refused to take the League of Nations seriously was not because many of their documents were un-modulated and un-adapted renderings of original French texts, just as the "*sabir atlantique*" has its roots in ill-digested translations of Anglo-American originals. Here, we touch upon an extremely serious problem, which, unfortunately, lack of space prevents us from discussing further, that of intellectual, cultural, and linguistic changes, which over time can be effected by important documents, school textbooks, journals, film dialogues, etc., written by translators who are either unable to or who dare not venture into the world of oblique translations. At a time when excessive centralization and lack of respect for cultural differences are driving international organizations into adopting working languages sui generis for writing documents which are then hastily translated by overworked and unappreciated translators, there is good reason to be concerned about the prospect that four fifths of the world will have to live on nothing but translations, their intellect being starved by a diet of linguistic pap.

1.4.1.9 *Application of the seven methods*

The following chapters show that these seven methods are applied to different degrees at the three planes of expression, i.e. lexis, syntactic structure, and message, to be discussed in chapters two to four. For example, borrowing may occur at the lexical level — '*bulldozer*', '*réaliser*', and '*stopover*' are French lexical borrowings from English; borrowing also occurs at the level of the message, e.g. '*O.K*', and '*Five o'clock*'. This range of possibilities is illustrated in Table 1, where each procedure is exemplified for each plane of expression.

It is obvious that several of these methods can be used within the same sentence, and that some translations come under a whole complex of methods so that it is difficult to distinguish them; e.g., the translation of 'paper weight'

Table 1. Summary of the seven translation procedures (Methods in increasing order of difficulty)

		LEXIS	STRUCTURES	MESSAGE
1. Borrowing	F:	*Bulldozer*	*science-fiction*	*Five o' Clock Tea*
	E:	Fuselage	à la mode	Bon voyage
2. Calque	F:	*économique-ment faible*	*Lutetia Palace*	*Compliments de la Saison*
	E:	Normal School (C.E.)	Governor General	Take it or leave it
3. Literal	F:	*encre*	*Le livre est sur la table.*	*Quelle heure est-il?*
Transl.	E:	ink	The book is on the table.	What time is it?
4. Transposition	F:	*Expéditeur*	*Depuis la revalorisation du bois*	*Défense de fumer*
	E:	From	As timber becomes more valuable	No smoking
5. Modulation	F:	*Peu profond*	*Donnez un peu de votre sang*	*Complet*
	E:	Shallow	Give a pint of your blood	No vacancies
6. Equivalence	F:	(Mil.) *la soupe*	*Comme un chien dans un jeu de quilles*	*Château de cartes*
	E,UK:	(Mil.) Tea	Like a bull in a china shop	Hollow triumph
	E,US:	chow		
7. Adaptation	F:	*Cyclisme*	*En un clin d'oeil*	*Bon appétit!*
	E,UK:	Cricket	Before you could	
	US:	Baseball	say Jack Robinson.	US. Hi!

by 'presse-papiers' is both a fixed transposition and a fixed modulation. Similarly, the translation of PRIVATE (written on a door) by DÉFENSE D'ENTRER is at the same time a transposition, a modulation, and an equivalence. It is a transposition because the adjective 'private' is transformed into a nominal expression; a modulation because a statement is converted into a warning (cf. Wet paint : Prenez garde à la peinture, though 'peinture fraîche' seems to be gaining ground in French-speaking countries); and finally, it is an equivalence since it is the situation that has been translated, rather than the actual grammatical structure.

1.4.2 *Documentation*

The degree of difficulty which provides the ordering sequence for Table 1, listing all translation methods, is based on the growing need to consider metalinguistic information. Literal translation and transposition presuppose a solid knowledge of the linguistic structures of both languages; the successful application of the methods of modulation, equivalence and adaptation require translators to have additional experience. They must be able to locate a text in its social environment and be informed about the current state of literature, science, politics etc. of both language communities which are reflected in the texts they are asked to translate. This knowledge can be supported by appropriate techniques of documentation.

Documentation is an indispensable support for translators which is, however, useful only to the extent that it has been personally collected. This means that a translator's work is never done, that it starts again with every new text, and that lack of direct and regular contact with the countries of the two languages can lead to serious misinterpretations and inappropriate TL expressions. Documentation is of two major types:

a. *General documentation*
This is concerned with placing the language in its social setting.

Travel abroad was at one time considered the classical means of acquiring a language. This was not perceived as remedying a shortcoming of teaching, but rather as a recognition that it is easier to teach the forms of a language than its usage which is dependent on metalinguistic information. Travel permits a constant adjustment to the situation, which formal grammar teaching cannot achieve.

Human contacts provide the necessary context for the emanation of messages; they motivate them and give them their meaning. As part of their training and ongoing formation, translators collect pairs of equivalents and adaptations which they can use in their professional work. They will also see all around them news headlines, posters and notices and film titles typical of the nature of the language.

A substitute for travel are documentaries and other films which capture the spirit of a place or a people in natural settings. In both French and English considerable attention must be paid to regional variations in the language. Canadian French, for example, has created words for objects and phenomena unknown in France, (e.g. the words '*poudrerie*' for 'blizzard' since snow storms are common occurrences in Canada but rare in France) and there are words of French customs and traditions which are not used in Canada. When dialogues are written in contemporary colloquial language, they serve as examples of current usage and provide ready-made situation-conditioned utterances which are difficult to identify in dictionaries. Older films or films set in a historical period can even provide evidence of the evolution of a language. Specialised books on customs and traditions, specially when they are written with a keen sense of observation, are equally important for translators. Phrase books are equally very useful as are specialised vocabularies with contextual examples which alone can illustrate the use of a word in its context. (Cf. the excellent *Vocabulaire de géomorphologie*, by H. Baulig, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1956 and the more recent *Vocabulaire de l'éditique*, Walton on the Naze: GnoufGnouf 1990).

Finally there is the documentation which in the United States is called 'realia', i.e. photographs, drawings and other objects which have a direct relationship with a particular text or author. The associated meaning and power of explanation of some of these items is undeniable. The visual bilingual dictionary by J.-C. Corbeil and A. Archambault (*Dictionnaire thématique visuel français-anglais*, Montréal: Québec-Amérique, 1987) was created in this perspective. Without personal experience or a photograph it is impossible to imagine what an English country lane looks like or the campus of an American university, or even these strange combinations of chemist shops and ironmongers called 'drugstores'.

Clippings from newspapers and magazines, e.g. photographs, drawings, advertisements, caricatures etc., are the simplest way of associating a text with a situation. There are however some pitfalls. The deliberate or uncon-

scious imitation of American magazines we find in the French press, tends to vitiate the presentation of some messages and some are, of course, translations. It is, however, relatively easy to identify texts which have been translated from English by their use of the false comparative, artificial prestigious allusions, certain uses of emphasis and an unusual verbosity.

It is regrettably often the case that a translator's client is responsible for the awkward effects of a closely calqued translation which could have been avoided by a judicious use of transposition or modulation.

b. *Parallel texts*

Though we can always learn from other translations, translators should be suspicious of the, normally unconscious, influence an original can exert. Even if the target language terminology is flawless, it is always possible that parts of the metalinguistic attitudes of the SL have discoloured the TL text, especially in official international documents where the pressure on closeness of structures is great.

The advantage of parallel documentation lies in the fact that it can yield monolingual elements which correspond to an identical situation. In principle, translators must assume that writers' intentions are fully covered and recoverable from the language of the message and its metalinguistic background, except in cases of cultural contamination. (For example, a French-Canadian text may contain English-Canadian metalinguistic information, even if the author himself does not know English.)

Research into parallel texts can be carried out along two lines:

a. Comparison of texts dealing with identical or parallel situations.
Examples:

- Shipwreck of an ocean liner:
  Edouard Peisson, *Parti de Liverpool*, Paris: Grasset 1934;
  W.C.Wade, *The Titanic, End of a Dream*, New York: Rawson 1979.
- Description of a tropical storm:
  Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie*, Paris: Flammarion 1972;
  Richard Hughes, *A High Wind in Jamaica*, London: Chatto 1960.
- War situations:
  Ernest Hemingway, *Men at War*, New York: Crown 1942;
  Henri Barbusse, *Le feu*, Paris: LFG 1988.
- Descriptions of Venice:
  John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, London: Allen 1892;
  Marcel Proust, *La fugitive*, Paris: Gallimard 1954.

b. comparable stylistic features as revealed in source texts and their translations, e.g. John Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens*, and the translation produced by Marcel Proust.

1.4.3 *Terminology and key words*

So far we have considered the support translators can derive from the environment of the text to be translated. Another type of support, provided this time from inside the text, has also to be considered, namely the terminology. Every text is dominated by a number of key words which are usefully identified at the outset. This is self-evident in a technical text. For example, in text 5 (in the Appendix) the terms of naval construction can be separately identified. But the need for identification of key words in a text applies equally to general language words which play a major role in the articulation of ideas expressed in a text, e.g.:

> Une averse de soleil tombait sur ce désert blanc, éclatant et glacé, l'allumait d'une flamme aveuglante et froide; aucune vie n'apparaissait dans cet océan de monts; aucun mouvement dans cette solitude démesurée; aucun bruit n'en troublait le profond silence. (Maupassant)

We identify the four dominant impressions of cold, light, vastness and immobility. We can also single out the key words which create this effect:

cold:	*glacé, froid*
light:	*averse de soleil, blanc, éclatant, allumer, flamme aveuglante*
vastness:	*désert, océan de monts, démesurée*
immobility:	*désert, aucune vie, aucun mouvement, solitude, aucun bruit, le profond silence*

Once translators understand the mood of this text, the quality of the translation depends less on the literal rendering of each word than on an equivalent effect, even if the words which create it do not correspond to each other. We propose:

> The sun shone fiercely over this frozen desert of glittering ice and snow, now ablaze with a blinding, inhuman light. The mountains stretched away in their emptiness and showed no sign of life. Nothing stirred in this boundless solitude. The silence lay unbroken.

As a second example we have chosen an essay by Hugh MacLennan, The Challenge to Prose, published in the *Mémoires de la Societé royale du*

Canada, June 1955.

> Today the current of communication between serious writers and serious readers must seep through a variety of blockages. Some of the channels are fouled by a lot of extremely foolish criticism. Some have been clogged by unnecessarily obscure language. All, to a greater or less degree, have been hampered by the strange conditions within the book trade.

The idea of obstacle is conveyed through 'to seep through', 'blockages', 'fouled', 'clogged', 'hampered'. These words do not have to be translated literally. It is not even necessary to preserve the same image if the analysis has identified the chief idea and its way of expression. We could, for example, use a river as an image to make the same point.

> Entre les écrivains sérieux et leurs lecteurs, les communications ressemblent aujourd'hui à un fleuve dont le lit est étranglé ou engorgé par toutes sortes d'obstacles. Une critique souvent absurde, une langue inutilement obscure sont autant d'entraves à l'échange des idées. À des degrés divers, c'est la situation anormale de la librairie qui est responsable de cet état de choses.

This method is more useful to students than to professional translators who do not have the time to undertake the kind of written analysis we have performed here. We believe, however, that translators carry out this form of analysis subconsciously if their training has made them aware of this approach to textual analysis.

In general this form of analysis is yet another demonstration of the principle that the requirements of rendering meaning override those of form and that translators must free themselves from formal constraints in order to retain meaning. The full capture of the terminology or key words of a text is the most efficient way of dealing with texts because this method systematises the process of going from words to thought and from thought to words.

1.4.4 *Segmentation*

In section **1.3.1** we have tried to explain the importance of units of translation and given the term 'segmentation' to the division of a text into its units of translation. We can distinguish between segmentation and neutralisation (*démontage*) which reduces the SL text to a neutral language whose semantic elements are simply annotated with respect to their structural functions. This technique has its place in a study of comparative syntax, but exceeds the needs of translators.

Segmentation also permits translators to verify that every unit has been translated. It is especially needed in cases of complex sentences, where the SL and the TL units can be numbered in order to control their full correspondence. We demonstrate this technique in the following examples.

1	Fortunato,	1	Fortunato
2	lorgnant	2	kept darting
3	la montre	4	longside glances at
4	du coin de l'oeil,	3	the watch,
5	ressemblait à	5	like
6	un chat	6	a cat
7	à		
8	qui	7-8	who,
9	l'on		
10	présente	9-10	presented with
11	un poulet	12	a whole
12	tout entier.	11	chicken
			and
13	Comme il sent qu'	13	suspecting that
14	on se moque de lui,	14	she is being made fun of,
15	il,		
16	n'	15-7	dares
17	ose	16	not
18	y porter la griffe,	18	reach out for it,
19	et	19	and
20	de temps en temps,	20	at times
21	il détourne les yeux	21	looks away
22	pour		
23	ne pas		
24	s'exposer à		
25	la tentation;	22-5	to resist temptation,
26	mais	28	all the while
27	il se lèche les babines	27	licking her chops
28	à tout moment,		
29	et	29	and
30	il a l'air de	30	wanting to
31	dire à	31	tell
32	son maître:	32	her master
33	"Que	33	how
34	votre plaisanterie	36	mean
35	est	34-5	he is.
36	cruelle!" (Mérimée)		

Considering its length, this passage offers a great variety of units of translation which serve as basis of translation. The analysis identifies the following morpho-syntactic groups:

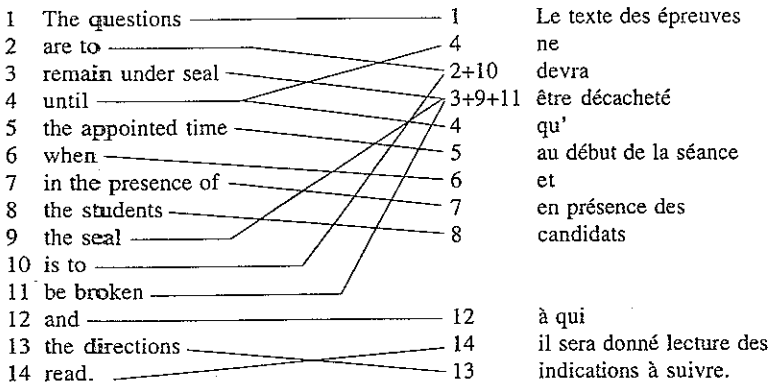
a. prepositional verbs:
   ressembler à, se moquer de, s'exposer à, succomber à
b. unified groups:
   du coin de l'oeil, de temps en temps, à tout moment,
   avoir l'air de
c. affinity groups:

lorgner du coin de l'oeil	*porter sa griffe sur*
tout entier	*se lécher les babines*
détourner les yeux	*s'exposer à la tentation*

Without any loss of meaning the French units | *ne pas* | *s'exposer à* | *la tentation* | have been merged into a single unit [resist temptation].

Such a verification is especially useful when literal translation methods have to be put aside in favour of oblique procedures.

In the next example the lines connecting the units permit tracing their movement in oblique translation and verifying their full preservation in the TL. The numbering permits us to show the concentrations achieved in the French translation, which is shorter because the translator has been able to rethink the message instead of following step by step the sequence of the SL text.



Notes

a. '*devra*' covers both 'are to' and 'is to';
b. '*être décacheté*' renders both 'to remain under seal' and 'the seal (is to) be broken';
c. '*et*' conveys 'when' which introduces an apposition with a coordinating function, in the sense of 'when... and then';
d. '*à qui*' which replaces 'and' is a modulation which changes the coordination into subordination;
e. '*ne que*' replaces 'until';
f. French is more explicit when it says:

texte des épreuves	for:	questions
début de la séance	for:	appointed hour
candidats	for:	students
donner lecture	for:	read.

1.5 Further Reading

This short listing of recent writings concentrates on translation studies, leaving the discussion of the three levels of expression to the other chapters.

For general reference the new dictionary of linguistics by Dubois (1994) is strongly recommended.

For general questions of linguistics and language analysis in section 1.1, the following titles may provide a wider background: Beneveniste (1974), Hjelmslev (1966), Jakobson (1956), Lyons (1977), Martinet (1966). For further reading on French stylistics see Sumpf (1971) and Guiraud (1980).

The selection of books dealing specifically with translation problems is limited to books written in English or French and to those which make explicit reference to the work of Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, and which we can therefore consider to follow the same or a similar orientation in translation studies.

Contrary to all expectations, books on translation written in English seem to be produced by monolingual speakers or at least by people who dislike reading other languages. So it is not surprising that only exceptionally do we find a full discussion, rather than a passing reference, to this book in English publications, while the opposite is certainly not true. The result is that until recently Vinay and Darbelnet were almost completely ignored by English-speaking writers in the United States and are only cursorily referred to in Great Britain. It must, however, also be observed that concern with translation in the English-speaking world has only very recently turned to applied aspects.

English books:
In his applications-oriented books Newmark (1981, 1988 & 1991) gives full explanations of the methods of transposition and modulation. Nida, whose principal concern is Bible translation, nevertheless refers to the authors in Brislin (1976).
In his many German books, Wilss makes numerous references to the work of Vinay & Darbelnet; here we cite only the English version of one of his fundamental works, i .e. Wilss (1982). Bell (1991) and Sager (1993) present and discuss the seven methods of translation.

Among recent books written in English brief references can be found in: House (1977), Bassnet-McGuire (1980), Snell-Hornby (1988), Gutt (1991), Robinson (1991), Hervey (1992).

French books:
Books referring to Vinay & Darbelnet fall into two groups. There are a number of course books, some of which, for example Gouadec (1974), cite several pages virtually verbatim. Others which are substantially inspired by Vinay & Darbelnet are Sparer & Larose (1978) and Chuquet & Paillard (1987). Grellet (1991) and Ballard (1992) advise students to study the 7 methods. Guillemin-Flescher (1981) explains the methodological principles underlying the analyses.

Jean Delisle (1980) fully recognises the influence Vinay & Darbelnet have had on the teaching and evolution of theories of translation. In his book of 1990 he traces the historical evolution of SCFA and fully adopts its principle in (1993).

Georges Mounin (1963 & 1976) seems to have been the first French linguist to fully recognise the important contribution made to the theory of translation by the approach chosen by the authors. The *Grande Encyclopédie Larousse* (1976) discusses the seven methods of translation in some detail in the article '*Traduction*' written by J.-R. Ladmiral. Of particular relevance to the background to translation is Clas & Safair (1992). Other more theoretically oriented references are Duneton (1972 & 1978, 2nd ed.), Margot (1975), Seleskovich & Lederer (1984), Garnier (1985) and Tatilon (1986).

Among recent French books brief references are to be found in: Ladmiral (1979), Pergnier (1980), Kocourek (1982), Lederer (1990).

verbatim [illegible]

CHAPTER 2

The lexicon

2.1 Concrete and abstract levels of expression

The linguistic formulation of a text can be realised at the level of abstract expression by means of abstract words or at the level of concrete expression by means of concrete words. Abstract words often refer to generic concepts and tend towards the characteristics of mathematical symbols and consequently appeal to the intellect rather than the senses. Concrete words refer to physical objects or actions which are associated with physical movement. For example, the English words listed below are more concrete than their French counterparts:

dress rehearsal	: répétition générale
way station	: arrêt intermédiaire
unveil (a statue)	: inaugurer
unseat (a member of parliament)	: invalider
He swam across the river	: Il traversa la rivière à la nage.

In the last example, which will be discussed again under the heading of interchange, the word 'nage' which is in no way less concrete than 'swim', is subordinated to the abstract word '*traverser*'. In other words, the English sentence is organised around a concrete word whereas the French sentence is organised around an abstract word.

By concrete expression we mean a level at which the linguistic realisation mirrors concrete reality. The level of abstract expression shows reality in a more general light. It should not be necessary to point out that these four terms, which we have explained here, must not be taken absolutely; every word is already an abstraction, but abstraction has its degrees. In the same way as the French 'grincement' is more concrete than the French '*son*' or the English 'sound', the English 'scrub' is more concrete, because it refers