Notes for Translation Studies Class

Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. Whereas interpreting undoubtedly antedates writing, translation began only after the appearance of written literature; there exist partial translations of the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (ca. 2000 BCE) into Southwest Asian languages of the second millennium BCE.

Translators always risk inappropriate spill-over of source-language idiom and usage into the target-language translation. On the other hand, spill-overs have imported useful source-language calques and loanwords that have enriched the target languages. Indeed, translators have helped substantially to shape the languages into which they have translated.

Due to the demands of business documentation consequent to the Industrial Revolution that began in the mid-18th century, some translation specialties have become formalized, with dedicated schools and professional associations.

Because of the laboriousness of translation, since the 1940s engineers have sought to automate translation (machine translation) or to mechanically aid the human translator (computer-assisted translation). The rise of the Internet has fostered a world-wide market for translation services and has facilitated language localization.

Translation studies deal with the systematic study of the theory, the description and the application of translation.

Etymology

The word translation derives from the Latin translatio (which itself comes from trans- and fero, the supine form of which is latum, together meaning "to carry across" or "to bring across"). The modern Romance languages use words for translation derived from that source or from the alternative Latin traduco ("to lead across"). The Germanic (except Dutch) and Slavic languages likewise use calques of these Latin sources.

The Ancient Greek term for translation, μετάφρασις (metaphrasis, "a speaking across"), has supplied English with metaphrase (a "literal," or "word-for-word," translation) — as contrasted with paraphrase ("a saying in other words", from μετάφρασις, paraphrasis). Metaphrase corresponds, in one of the more recent terminologies, to "formal equivalence"; and paraphrase, to "dynamic equivalence.

Strictly speaking, the concept of metaphrase — of "word-for-word translation" — is an imperfect concept, because a given word in a given language often carries more than one meaning; and because a similar given meaning may often be represented in a given language by more than one word. Nevertheless, "metaphrase" and "paraphrase" may be useful as ideal concepts that mark the extremes in the spectrum of possible approaches to translation. “At the very beginning, the translator keeps both the [s]ource [l]anguage... and [t]arget [l]anguage... in mind and tries to translate carefully. But it becomes very difficult for a translator to decode the whole text... literally; therefore he takes the help of his own view and endeavours to translate accordingly.”

A secular icon for the art of translation is the Rosetta Stone. This trilingual (hieroglyphic-Egyptian, demotic-Egyptian, ancient-Greek) stele became the translator’s key to decryption of Egyptian hieroglyphs by Thomas Young, Jean-François Champollion and others.

In the United States of America, the Rosetta Stone is incorporated into the crest of the Defense Language Institute.

Theory

Discussions of the theory and practice of translation reach back into antiquity and show remarkable continuities. The ancient Greeks distinguished between metaphrase (literal translation) and paraphrase. This distinction was adopted by English poet and translator John Dryden (1631–1700), who described translation as the judicious blending of these two modes of phrasing when
selecting, in the target language, "counterparts," or equivalents, for the expressions used in the source language:

When [words] appear . . . literally graceful, it was an injury to the author that they should be changed. But since... what is beautiful in one [language] is often barbarous, nay sometimes nonsense, in another, it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words: 'tis enough if he choose out some expression which does not vitiate the sense

Dryden cautioned, however, against the license of "imitation", i.e., of adapted translation: “When a painter copies from the life... he has no privilege to alter features and lineaments...”

This general formulation of the central concept of translation — equivalence — is as adequate as any that has been proposed since Cicero and Horace, who, in 1st-century-BCE Rome, famously and literally cautioned against translating "word for word" (verbum pro verbo).

Despite occasional theoretical diversity, the actual practice of translation has hardly changed since antiquity. Except for some extreme metaphrasers in the early Christian period and the Middle Ages, and adapters in various periods (especially pre-Classical Rome, and the 18th century), translators have generally shown prudent flexibility in seeking equivalents — "literal" where possible, paraphrastic where necessary — for the original meaning and other crucial "values" (e.g., style, verse form, concordance with musical accompaniment or, in films, with speech articulatory movements) as determined from context.

In general, translators have sought to preserve the context itself by reproducing the original order of sememes, and hence word order — when necessary, reinterpreting the actual grammatical structure, for example, by shifting from active to passive voice, or vice versa. The grammatical differences between "fixed-word-order" languages. (e.g. English, French, German) and "free-word-order" languages. (e.g., Greek, Latin, Polish, Russian) have been no impediment in this regard. The particular syntax (sentence-structure) characteristics of a text's source language are adjusted to the syntactic requirements of the target language.

When a target language has lacked terms that are found in a source language, translators have borrowed those terms, thereby enriching the target language. Thanks in great measure to the exchange of calques and loanwords between languages, and to their importation from other languages, there are few concepts that are "untranslatable" among the modern European languages.

Generally, the greater the contact and exchange that have existed between two languages, or between those languages and a third one, the greater is the ratio of metaphrase to paraphrase that may be used in translating among them. However, due to shifts in ecological niches of words, a common etymology is sometimes misleading as a guide to current meaning in one or the other language. For example, the English actual should not be confused with the cognate French actuel ("present", "current"), the Polish aktualny ("present", "current," "topical," "timely," "feasible"), the Swedish aktuell ("topical", "presently of importance") or the Russian актуальный ("urgent", "topical").

The translator’s role as a bridge for "carrying across" values between cultures has been discussed at least since Terence, the 2nd-century-BCE Roman adapter of Greek comedies. The translator's role is, however, by no means a passive, mechanical one, and so has also been compared to that of an artist.

The main ground seems to be the concept of parallel creation found in critics such as Cicero. Dryden observed that "Translation is a type of drawing after life..." Comparison of the translator with a musician or actor goes back at least to Samuel Johnson’s remark about Alexander Pope playing Homer on a flageolet, while Homer himself used a bassoon.

If translation be an art, it is no easy one. In the 13th century, Roger Bacon wrote that if a translation is to be true, the translator must know both languages, as well as the science that he is to translate; and finding that few translators did, he wanted to do away with translation and translators altogether.

The translator of the Bible into German, Martin Luther, is credited with being the first European to posit that one translates satisfactorily only toward his own language. L.G. Kelly states that
since Johann Gottfried Herder in the 18th century, "it has been axiomatic" that one translates only toward his own language.

Compounding the demands on the translator is the fact that no dictionary or thesaurus can ever be a fully adequate guide in translating. The British historian Alexander Tytler, in his Essay on the Principles of Translation (1790), emphasized that assiduous reading is a more comprehensive guide to a language than are dictionaries. The same point, but also including listening to the spoken language, had earlier, in 1783, been made by the Polish poet and grammarian Onufry Andrzej Kopczyński.

The translator’s special role in society is described in a posthumous 1803 essay by "Poland's La Fontaine", the Roman Catholic Primate of Poland, poet, encyclopaedist, author of the first Polish novel, and translator from French and Greek, Ignacy Krasicki:

“[T]ranslation . . . is in fact an art both estimable and very difficult, and therefore is not the labour and portion of common minds; [it] should be [practiced] by those who are themselves capable of being actors, when they see greater use in translating the works of others than in their own works, and hold higher than their own glory the service that they render their country.”

Other traditions

Due to Western colonialism and cultural dominance in recent centuries, Western translation traditions have largely replaced other traditions. The Western traditions draw on both ancient and medieval traditions, and on more recent European innovations.

Though earlier approaches to translation are less commonly used today, they retain importance when dealing with their products, as when historians view ancient or medieval records to piece together events which took place in non-Western or pre-Western environments. Also, though heavily influenced by Western traditions and practiced by translators taught in Western-style educational systems, Chinese and related translation traditions retain some theories and philosophies unique to the Chinese tradition.

Ancient Near East

The traditions of translating material among Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Syriac, Anatolian and Hebrew go back several millennia. An early example of a bilingual document is the 1274 BCE Treaty of Kadesh.

Orient

There is a separate tradition of translation in South, Southeast and East Asia (primarily of texts from the Indian and Chinese civilizations), especially connected with the rendering of religious — particularly Buddhist — texts and with the governance of the Chinese empire. Classical Indian translation is characterized by loose adaptation, rather than the closer translation more commonly found in Europe, and Chinese translation theory identifies various criteria and limitations in translation.

In the East Asian Sinosphere (sphere of Chinese cultural influence), more important than translation per se has been the use and reading of Chinese texts, which also had substantial influence on the Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese languages, with substantial borrowings of vocabulary and writing system. Notable is the Japanese Kanbun, a system for glossing Chinese texts for Japanese speakers.

Though Indianized states in Southeast Asia often translated Sanksrit material into the local languages, the literate elites and scribes more commonly used Sanskrit as their primary language of culture and government.

Islamic world

Translation of material into Arabic expanded after the creation of Arabic script in the 5th century, and gained great importance with the rise of Islam and Islamic empires. Arab translation initially focused
primarily on politics, rendering Persian, Greek, even Chinese and Indic diplomatic materials into Arabic. It later focused on translating classical Greek and Persian works, as well as some Chinese and Indian texts, into Arabic for scholarly study at major Islamic learning centres, such as the Al-Karauine, Al-Azhar and Al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad. In terms of theory, Arabic translation drew heavily on earlier Near Eastern traditions as well as more contemporary Greek and Persian traditions.

Arabic translation efforts and techniques are important to Western translation traditions due to centuries of close contacts and exchanges. Especially after the Renaissance, Europeans began more intensive study of Arabic and Persian translations of classical works as well as scientific and philosophical works of Arab and oriental origins. Arabic and, to a lesser degree, Persian became important sources of material and perhaps of techniques for revitalized Western traditions, which in time would overtake the Islamic and oriental traditions.

Fidelity vs. transparency

Fidelity (or faithfulness) and transparency, dual ideals in translation, are often at odds. A 17th-century French critic coined the phrase "les belles infidèles" to suggest that translations, like women, can be either faithful or beautiful, but not both.

Faithfulness is the extent to which a translation accurately renders the meaning of the source text, without distortion.

Transparency is the extent to which a translation appears to a native speaker of the target language to have originally been written in that language, and conforms to its grammar, syntax and idiom.

A translation that meets the first criterion is said to be "faithful"; a translation that meets the second, "idiomatic". The two qualities are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The criteria for judging the fidelity of a translation vary according to the subject, type and use of the text, its literary qualities, its social or historical context, etc.

The criteria for judging the transparency of a translation appear more straightforward: an unidiomatic translation "sounds wrong"; and, in the extreme case of word-for-word translations generated by many machine-translation systems, often results in patent nonsense.

Nevertheless, in certain contexts a translator may consciously seek to produce a literal translation. Translators of literary, religious or historic texts often adhere as closely as possible to the source text, stretching the limits of the target language to produce an unidiomatic text. A translator may adopt expressions from the source language in order to provide "local colour".

In recent decades, prominent advocates of such "non-transparent" translation have included the French scholar Antoine Berman, who identified twelve deforming tendencies inherent in most prose translations, and the American theorist Lawrence Venuti, who has called upon translators to apply "foreignizing" translation strategies instead of domesticating ones.

Many non-transparent-translation theories draw on concepts from German Romanticism, the most obvious influence being the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher. In his seminal lecture "On the Different Methods of Translation" (1813) he distinguished between translation methods that move "the writer toward [the reader]", i.e., transparency, and those that move the "reader toward [the author]", i.e., an extreme fidelity to the foreignness of the source text. Schleiermacher favoured the latter approach; he was motivated, however, not so much by a desire to embrace the foreign, as by a nationalist desire to oppose France's cultural domination and to promote German literature.

Current Western translation practice is dominated by the dual concepts of "fidelity" and "transparency". This has not always been the case, however; there have been periods, especially in pre-Classical Rome and in the 18th century, when many translators stepped beyond the bounds of translation proper into the realm of adaptation.

Adapted translation retains currency in some non-Western traditions. The Indian epic, the Ramayana, appears in many versions in the various Indian languages, and the stories are different in each. Similar
Examples are to be found in medieval Christian literature, which adjusted the text to local customs and mores.

Equivalence

The question of fidelity vs. transparency has also been formulated in terms of, respectively, "formal equivalence" and "dynamic [or functional] equivalence". The latter expressions are associated with the translator Eugene Nida and were originally coined to describe ways of translating the Bible, but the two approaches are applicable to any translation.

"Formal equivalence" corresponds to "metaphrase", and "dynamic equivalence" to "paraphrase".

"Dynamic equivalence" (or "functional equivalence") conveys the essential thoughts expressed in a source text — if necessary, at the expense of literality, original sememe and word order, the source text's active vs. passive voice, etc.

By contrast, "formal equivalence" (sought via "literal" translation) attempts to render the text literally, or "word for word" (the latter expression being itself a word-for-word rendering of the classical Latin verbum pro verbo) — if necessary, at the expense of features natural to the target language.

There is, however, no sharp boundary between functional and formal equivalence. On the contrary, they represent a spectrum of translation approaches. Each is used at various times and in various contexts by the same translator, and at various points within the same text — sometimes simultaneously. Competent translation entails the judicious blending of functional and formal equivalents.

Common pitfalls in translation, especially when practiced by inexperienced translators, involve false equivalents such as "false friends" and false cognates.

Dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence are terms for methods of translation coined by Eugene Nida. The two terms have often been understood as fundamentally the same as sense-for-sense translation (translating the meanings of phrases or whole sentences) and word-for-word translation (translating the meanings of individual words in their more or less exact syntactic sequence), respectively, and Nida did often seem to use them this way. But his original definition of dynamic equivalence was rhetorical: the idea was that the translator should translate so that the effect of the translation on the target reader is roughly the same as the effect of the source text once was on the source reader.

Function vs. form

As Nida himself wrote in the glossary of The Theory and Practice of Translation, dynamic equivalence is the "quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors."[1] Nida tended to use the term so that "the response of the receptor" was mostly semantic — the target reader took the meaning of the text to be such that the source reader would have taken the source text to mean the same thing — which led to critical accusations that this was just sense-for-sense translation in new guise. But if "response" is taken in its full extension, dynamic equivalence could include not only what Aristotle (in the Rhetoric) calls logos (meaning and structure) but ethos (the reader's assumption about the text's authority) and pathos (how the reader feels about the text).

In later years he distanced himself from the former term and preferred the term "functional equivalence". The term "functional equivalence" suggests not just that the equivalence is between the function of the source text in the source culture and the function of the target text (translation) in the target culture, but that "function" can be thought of as a property of the text. It is, however, possible to think of functional equivalence too in the larger (dynamic/intercultural) context as about more than the structure of texts — as about how people interact in cultures.

The terms "dynamic equivalence" and "formal equivalence" were originally coined to describe ways of translating the Bible, but the two approaches are applicable to any translation.

Theory and practice
Because dynamic equivalence eschews strict adherence to the grammatical structure of the original text in favor of a more natural rendering in the target language, it is sometimes used when the readability of the translation is more important than the preservation of the original grammatical structure. Thus a novel might be translated with greater use of dynamic equivalence so that it may read well, while in diplomacy or in some business settings people may insist on formal equivalence because they believe that fidelity to the grammatical structure of the language equals greater accuracy.

Formal equivalence is often more goal than reality, if only because one language may contain a word for a concept which has no direct equivalent in another language. In such cases a more dynamic translation may be used or a neologism may be created in the target language to represent the concept (sometimes by borrowing a word from the source language).

The more the source language differs from the target language, the more difficult it may be to understand a literal translation. On the other hand, formal equivalence can sometimes allow readers familiar with the source language to see how meaning was expressed in the original text, preserving untranslated idioms, rhetorical devices (such as chiastic structures in the Hebrew Bible), and diction.

Bible translation

Translators of the Bible have taken various approaches in rendering it into English, ranging from an extreme use of formal equivalence, to extreme use of dynamic equivalence.

A predominant use of formal equivalence

- King James Version (1611)
- Young's Literal Translation (1862)
- Lexham English Bible (2011, 2012)
- Revised Version (1885)
- American Standard Version (1901)
- Revised Standard Version (1952)
- New King James Version (1982)
- English Standard Version (2001)
- Douay-Rheims
- Green's Literal Translation (1985)

Moderate use of dynamic equivalence

- New International Version
- Holman Christian Standard Bible called "optimal equivalence"
- New American Bible
- New English Translation
- Modern Language Bible

Extensive use of dynamic equivalence or paraphrase or both

- New Jerusalem Bible
- New English Bible
- Revised English Bible
- Good News Bible (formerly "Today's English Version")
- Complete Jewish Bible
- New Living Translation
- God's Word Translation
- Contemporary English Version
Extensive use of paraphrase

- The Living Bible (1971)

Back-translation

A "back-translation" is a translation of a translated text back into the language of the original text, made without reference to the original text.

Comparison of a back-translation with the original text is sometimes used as a check on the accuracy of the original translation, much as the accuracy of a mathematical operation is sometimes checked by reversing the operation. But while useful as approximate checks, the results of such reverse operations are not always precisely reliable.[25] Back-translation must in general be less accurate than back-calulation because linguistic symbols (words) are often ambiguous, whereas mathematical symbols are intentionally unequivocal.

In the context of machine translation, a back-translation is also called a "round-trip translation."

When translations are produced of material used in medical clinical trials, such as informed-consent forms, a back-translation is often required by the ethics committee or institutional review board.

Mark Twain provided humorously telling evidence for the frequent unreliability of back-translation when he issued his own back-translation of a French translation of his short story, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”. He published his back-translation in a single 1903 volume together with his English-language original, the French translation, and a “Private History of the 'Jumping Frog’ Story”. The latter included a synopsized adaptation of his story that Twain stated had appeared, unattributed to Twain, in a Professor Sidgwick’s Greek Prose Composition (p. 116) under the title, “The Athenian and the Frog”; the adaptation had for a time been taken for an independent ancient Greek precursor to Twain’s “Jumping Frog” story.

When a historic document survives only in translation, the original having been lost, researchers sometimes undertake back-translation in an effort to reconstruct the original text. An example involves the novel The Saragossa Manuscript by the Polish aristocrat Jan Potocki (1761–1815), who wrote the novel in French and anonymously published fragments in 1804 and 1813–14. Portions of the original French-language manuscript were subsequently lost; however, the missing fragments survived in a Polish translation that was made by Edmund Chojecki in 1847 from a complete French copy, now lost. French-language versions of the complete Saragossa Manuscript have since been produced, based on extant French-language fragments and on French-language versions that have been back-translated from Chojecki’s Polish version.

Similarly, when historians suspect that a document is actually a translation from another language, back-translation into that hypothetical original language can provide supporting evidence by showing that such characteristics as idioms, puns, peculiar grammatical structures, etc., are in fact derived from the original language.

For example, the known text of the Till Eulenspiegel folk tales is in High German but contains puns that work only when back-translated to Low German. This seems clear evidence that these tales (or at least large portions of them) were originally written in Low German and translated into High German by an over-metaphrastic translator.

Similarly, supporters of Aramaic primacy — of the view that the Christian New Testament or its sources were originally written in the Aramaic language — seek to prove their case by showing that difficult passages in the existing Greek text of the New Testament make much better sense when back-translated to Aramaic: that, for example, some incomprehensible references are in fact Aramaic puns that do not work in Greek.

Due to similar indications, it is assumed that the 2nd century Gnostic Gospel of Judas, which survives only in Coptic, was originally written in Greek.
Translators

A competent translator shows the following attributes:

- a very good knowledge of the language, written and spoken, from which he is translating (the source language);
- an excellent command of the language into which he is translating (the target language);
- familiarity with the subject matter of the text being translated;
- a profound understanding of the etymological and idiomatic correlates between the two languages; and
- a finely tuned sense of when to metaphrase ("translate literally") and when to paraphrase, so as to assure true rather than spurious equivalents between the source- and target-language texts.

A competent translator is not only bilingual but bicultural. A language is not merely a collection of words and of rules of grammar and syntax for generating sentences, but also a vast interconnecting system of connotations and cultural references whose mastery, writes linguist Mario Pei, "comes close to being a lifetime job."

The complexity of the translator's task cannot be overstated; one author suggests that becoming an accomplished translator — after having already acquired a good basic knowledge of both languages and cultures — may require a minimum of ten years' experience. Viewed in this light, it is a serious misconception to assume that a person who has fair fluency in two languages will, by virtue of that fact alone, be consistently competent to translate between them.

The translator's role in relation to a text has been compared to that of an artist, e.g., a musician or actor, who interprets a work of art. Translation, like other arts, inescapably involves choice, and choice implies interpretation. English-language novelist Joseph Conrad advised his niece and Polish translator Aniela Zagórska:

[D]on't trouble to be too scrupulous... I may tell you (in French) that in my opinion "il vaut mieux interpréter que traduire" ["it is better to interpret than to translate"].... Il s'agit donc de trouver les équivalents. Et là, ma chère, je vous prie laissez vous guider plutôt par votre tempérament que par une conscience sévère.... [It is, then, a question of finding the equivalent expressions. And there, my dear, I beg you to let yourself be guided more by your temperament than by a strict conscience....]

A translator may render only parts of the original text, provided he indicates that this is what he is doing. But a translator should not assume the role of censor and surreptitiously delete or bowdlerize passages merely to please a political or moral interest.

Translation has served as a school of writing for many authors. Translators, including monks who spread Buddhist texts in East Asia, and the early modern European translators of the Bible, in the course of their work have shaped the very languages into which they have translated. They have acted as bridges for conveying knowledge between cultures; and along with ideas, they have imported from the source languages, into their own languages, loanwords and calques of grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary.

Interpreting

Interpreting, or "interpretation," is the facilitation of oral or sign-language communication, either simultaneously or consecutively, between two, or among more, speakers who are not speaking, or signing, the same language.

The term "interpreting," rather than "interpretation," is preferentially used for this activity by Anglophone translators, to avoid confusion with other meanings of the word "interpretation."

Unlike English, many languages do not employ two separate words to denote the activities of written and live-communication (oral or sign-language) translators. Even English does not always make the distinction, frequently using "translation" as a synonym for "interpreting."

Interpreters have sometimes played crucial roles in history. A prime example is La Malinche, also known as Malintzin, Malinalli and Doña Marina, an early-16th-century Nahua woman from the
Mexican Gulf Coast. As a child she had been sold or given to Maya slave-traders from Xicalango, and thus had become bilingual. Subsequently given along with other women to the invading Spaniards, she became instrumental in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, acting as interpreter, adviser, intermediary and lover to Hernán Cortés.

Nearly three centuries later, in the United States, a comparable role as interpreter was played for the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–6 by Sacagawea. As a child, the Lemhi Shoshone woman had been kidnapped by Hidatsa Indians and thus had become bilingual. Sacagawea facilitated the expedition’s traverse of the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean. Four decades later, in 1846, the Pacific would become the western border of the United States.

**Internet**

Web-based human translation is generally favored by companies and individuals that wish to secure more accurate translations. In view of the frequent inaccuracy of machine translations, human translation remains the most reliable, most accurate form of translation available. With the recent emergence of translation crowdsourcing, translation-memory techniques, and internet applications, translation agencies have been able to provide on-demand human-translation services to businesses, individuals, and enterprises.

While not instantaneous like its machine counterparts such as Google Translate and Yahoo! Babel Fish, web-based human translation has been gaining popularity by providing relatively fast, accurate translation for business communications, legal documents, medical records, and software localization. Web-based human translation also appeals to private website users and bloggers.

**Computer-assisted translation**

Computer-assisted translation (CAT), also called "computer-aided translation," "machine-aided human translation" (MAHT) and "interactive translation," is a form of translation wherein a human translator creates a target text with the assistance of a computer program. The machine supports a human translator.

Computer-assisted translation can include standard dictionary and grammar software. The term, however, normally refers to a range of specialized programs available to the translator, including translation-memory, terminology-management, concordance, and alignment programs.

With the Internet, translation software can help non-native-speaking individuals understand web pages published in other languages. Whole-page-translation tools are of limited utility, however, since they offer only a limited potential understanding of the original author's intent and context; translated pages tend to be more humorous and confusing than enlightening.

Interactive translations with pop-up windows are becoming more popular. These tools show one or more possible equivalents for each word or phrase. Human operators merely need to select the likeliest equivalent as the mouse glides over the foreign-language text. Possible equivalents can be grouped by pronunciation.

**Sworn translation**

Sworn translation, also called "certified translation," is translation performed by someone authorized to do so by local regulations. Some countries recognize declared competence. Others require the translator to be an official state appointee.

**Machine translation**

Machine translation (MT) is a process whereby a computer program analyzes a source text and, in principle, produces a target text without human intervention. In reality, however, machine translation typically does involve human intervention, in the form of pre-editing and post-editing.

With proper terminology work, with preparation of the source text for machine translation (pre-editing), and with reworking of the machine translation by a human translator (post-editing), commercial machine-translation tools can produce useful results, especially if the machine-translation system is integrated with a translation-memory or globalization-management system.
Unedited machine translation is publicly available through tools on the Internet such as Google Translate, Babel Fish, Babylon, and StarDict. These produce rough translations that, under favorable circumstances, "give the gist" of the source text.

Also, companies such as Ectaco produce pocket devices that provide machine translations.

Relying exclusively on unedited machine translation, however, ignores the fact that communication in human language is context-embedded and that it takes a person to comprehend the context of the original text with a reasonable degree of probability. It is certainly true that even purely human-generated translations are prone to error; therefore, to ensure that a machine-generated translation will be useful to a human being and that publishable-quality translation is achieved, such translations must be reviewed and edited by a human.

Claude Piron writes that machine translation, at its best, automates the easier part of a translator's job; the harder and more time-consuming part usually involves doing extensive research to resolve ambiguities in the source text, which the grammatical and lexical exigencies of the target language require to be resolved.[46] Such research is a necessary prelude to the pre-editing necessary in order to provide input for machine-translation software, such that the output will not be meaningless.

Literary translation

Translation of literary works (novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc.) is considered a literary pursuit in its own right. For example, notable in Canadian literature specifically as translators are figures such as Sheila Fischman, Robert Dickson and Linda Gaboriau, and the Governor General's Awards annually present prizes for the best English-to-French and French-to-English literary translations.

Other writers, among many who have made a name for themselves as literary translators, include Vasily Zhukovsky, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, Robert Stillerand Haruki Murakami.

History

The first important translation in the West was that of the Septuagint, a collection of Jewish Scriptures translated into early Koine Greek in Alexandria between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE. The dispersed Jews had forgotten their ancestral language and needed Greek versions (translations) of their Scriptures.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Latin was the lingua franca of the western learned world. The 9th-century Alfred the Great, king of Wessex in England, was far ahead of his time in commissioning vernacular Anglo-Saxon translations of Bede's Ecclesiastical History and Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. Meanwhile the Christian Church frowned on even partial adaptations of St. Jerome's Vulgate of ca. 384 CE, the standard Latin Bible.

In Asia, the spread of Buddhism led to large-scale ongoing translation efforts spanning well over a thousand years. The Tangut Empire was especially efficient in such efforts; exploiting the then newly invented block printing, and with the full support of the government (contemporary sources describe the Emperor and his mother personally contributing to the translation effort, alongside sages of various nationalities), the Tanguts took mere decades to translate volumes that had taken the Chinese centuries to render.

Large-scale efforts at translation were undertaken by the Arabs. Having conquered the Greek world, they made Arabic versions of its philosophical and scientific works. During the Middle Ages, some translations of these Arabic versions were made into Latin, chiefly at Córdoba in Spain. Such Latin translations of Greek and original Arab works of scholarship and science helped advance the development of European Scholasticism.

The broad historic trends in Western translation practice may be illustrated on the example of translation into the English language.

The first fine translations into English were made in the 14th century by Geoffrey Chaucer, who adapted from the Italian of Giovanni Boccaccio in his own Knight's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde;
began a translation of the French-language *Roman de la Rose*; and completed a translation of Boethius from the Latin. Chaucer founded an English poetic tradition on *adaptations* and translations from those earlier-established literary languages.\textsuperscript{[49]}

The first great English translation was the *Wycliffe Bible* (ca. 1382), which showed the weaknesses of an underdeveloped English prose. Only at the end of the 15th century did the great age of English prose translation begin with Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*—an adaptation of Arthurian romances so free that it can, in fact, hardly be called a true translation. The first great Tudor translations are, accordingly, the *Tyndale New Testament* (1525), which influenced the *Authorized Version* (1611), and Lord Berners' version of Jean Froissart's *Chronics* (1523–25).

Meanwhile, in Renaissance Italy, a new period in the history of translation had opened in Florence with the arrival, at the court of Cosimo de' Medici, of the Byzantine scholar Georgius Gemistus Pletho shortly before the fall of Constantinople to the Turks (1453). A Latin translation of Plato's works was undertaken by Marsilio Ficino. This *and* Erasmus' Latin edition of the *New Testament* led to a new attitude to translation. For the first time, readers demanded rigor of rendering, as philosophical and religious beliefs depended on the exact words of Plato, Aristotle and Jesus.

Non-scholarly literature, however, continued to rely on *adaptation*. France's *Pléiade*, England's Tudor poets, and the Elizabethan translators adapted themes by Horace, Ovid, Petrarch and modern Latin writers, forming a new poetic style on those models. The English poets and translators sought to supply a new public, created by the rise of a middle class and the development of printing, with works such as the original authors *would have written*, had they been writing in England in that day.

The Elizabethan period of translation saw considerable progress beyond mere paraphrase toward an ideal of stylistic equivalence, but even to the end of this period, which actually reached to the middle of the 17th century, there was no concern for verbal accuracy.

In the second half of the 17th century, the poet John Dryden sought to make Virgil speak "in words such as he would probably have written if he were living and an Englishman". Dryden, however, discerned no need to emulate the Roman poet's subtility and concision. Similarly, Homer suffered from Alexander Pope's endeavor to reduce the Greek poet's "wild paradise" to order.

Throughout the 18th century, the watchword of translators was ease of reading. Whatever they did not understand in a text, or thought might bore readers, they omitted. They cheerfully assumed that their own style of expression was the best, and that texts should be made to conform to it in translation. For scholarship they cared no more than had their predecessors, and they did not shrink from making translations from translations in third languages, or from languages that they hardly knew, or—as in the case of James Macpherson's "translations" of Ossian—from texts that were actually of the "translator's" own composition.

The 19th century brought new standards of accuracy and style. In regard to accuracy, observes J.M. Cohen, the policy became the text, the whole text, and nothing but the text", except for any bawdy passages and the addition of copious explanatory footnotes. In regard to style, the Victorians' aim, achieved through far-reaching metaphorical(literality) or *pseudo-*metaphrase, was to constantly remind readers that they were reading a *foreign* classic. An exception was the outstanding translation in this period, Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1859), which achieved its Oriental flavor largely by using Persian names and discreet Biblical echoes and actually drew little of its material from the Persian original.

In advance of the 20th century, a new pattern was set in 1871 by Benjamin Jowett, who translated Plato into simple, straightforward language. Jowett's example was not followed, however, until well into the new century, when accuracy rather than style became the principal criterion.

**Modern translation**

As languages change, texts in an earlier version of a language – either original texts or old translations – may be difficult for more modern readers to understand. Texts may thus be translated into more
modern language, called a **modern translation** (sometimes **modern English translation** or **modernized translation**).

This is particularly done either for literature from classical languages (such as Latin or Greek), most prominently the Bible (see Modern English Bible translations), or for literature from an earlier stage of the same language, such as the works of William Shakespeare (which is largely understandable to a modern audience, but presents some difficulties), or *The Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer (which is not generally understandable to modern readers). Modern translation is applicable to any language with a long literary history; for example in Japanese, *The Tale of Genji* (11th century) is generally read in modern translation – see *Genji*: modern readership.

Modern translation often involves literary scholarship and textual revisions, as there is frequently not a single canonical text. This is particularly noteworthy in the case of the Bible and Shakespeare, where modern scholarship can result in significant changes to the text.

Modern translation meets with opposition from some traditionalists; in English this is most significant in some people preferring the Authorized King James Version of the Bible to modern translations, and to reading Shakespeare in the original (c. 1600) text, rather than in modern translation.

An opposite process is found in translating modern literature into classical language, particularly for the goal of extensive reading – see List of Latin translations of modern literature for examples.

**Poetry**

Poetry presents special challenges to translators, given the importance of a text's formal aspects, in addition to its content. In his influential 1959 paper "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", the Russian-born linguist and semiotician Roman Jakobson went so far as to declare that "poetry by definition [is] untranslatable".

In 1974 the American poet James Merrill wrote a poem, "Lost in Translation", which in part explores this idea. The question was also discussed in Douglas Hofstadter's 1997 book, *Le Ton beau de Marot*; he argues that a good translation of a poem must convey as much as possible of not only its literal meaning but also its form and structure (meter, rhyme or alliteration scheme, etc.).

**Sung texts**

Translation of a text that is sung in vocal music for the purpose of singing in another language — sometimes called "singing translation" — is closely linked to translation of poetry because most vocal music, at least in the Western tradition, is set to verse, especially verse in regular patterns with rhyme. (Since the late 19th century, musical setting of prose and free verse has also been practiced in some art music, though popular music tends to remain conservative in its retention of stanzaic forms with or without refrains.) A rudimentary example of translating poetry for singing is church hymns, such as the Germanchorales translated into English by Catherine Winkworth.

Translation of sung texts is generally much more restrictive than translation of poetry, because in the former there is little or no freedom to choose between a versified translation and a translation that dispenses with verse structure. One might modify or omit rhyme in a singing translation, but the assignment of syllables to specific notes in the original musical setting places great challenges on the translator. There is the option in prose sung texts, less so in verse, of adding or deleting a syllable here and there by subdividing or combining notes, respectively, but even with prose the process is almost like strict verse translation because of the need to stick as closely as possible to the original prosody of the sung melodic line.

Other considerations in writing a singing translation include repetition of words and phrases, the placement of rests and/or punctuation, the quality of vowels sung on high notes, and rhythmic features of the vocal line that may be more natural to the original language than to the target language. A sung translation may be considerably or completely different from the original, thus resulting in a contrafactum.

Translations of sung texts — whether of the above type meant to be sung or of a more or less literal type meant to be read — are also used as aids to audiences, singers and conductors, when a work is
being sung in a language not known to them. The most familiar types are translations presented as subtitles or surtitles projected during opera performances, those inserted into concert programs, and those that accompany commercial audio CDs of vocal music. In addition, professional and amateur singers often sing works in languages they do not know (or do not know well), and translations are then used to enable them to understand the meaning of the words they are singing.

**Religious texts**

An important role in history has been played by translation of religious texts. Buddhist monks who translated the Indian sutras into Chinese often skewed their translations to better reflect China's distinct culture, emphasizing notions such as filial piety.  

One of the first recorded instances of translation in the West was the rendering of the Old Testament into Greek in the 3rd century BCE. The translation is known as the "Septuagint", a name that refers to the seventy translators (seventy-two, in some versions) who were commissioned to translate the Bible at Alexandria, Egypt. Each translator worked in solitary confinement in his own cell, and according to legend all seventy versions proved identical. The Septuagint became the source text for later translations into many languages, including Latin, Coptic, Armenian and Georgian.

Still considered one of the greatest translators in history, for having rendered the Bible into Latin, is Saint Jerome, the patron saint of translation. For centuries the Roman Catholic Church used his translation (known as the Vulgate), though even this translation at first stirred controversy.

The period preceding, and contemporary with, the Protestant Reformation saw the translation of the Bible into local European languages — a development that contributed to Western Christianity's split into Roman Catholicism and Protestantism due to disparities between Catholic and Protestant versions of crucial words and passages. Lasting effects on the religions, cultures and languages of their respective countries have been exerted by such Bible translations as Martin Luther's into German, Jakub Wujek's into Polish, and the King James Bible's translators' into English.

A famous mistranslation of the Bible is the rendering of the Hebrew word קֶרֶן (keren), which has several meanings, as "horn" in a context where it actually means "beam of light". As a result, for centuries artists have depicted Moses the Lawgiver with horns growing out of his forehead; an example is Michelangelo's famous sculpture. Some Christians with anti-Semitic feelings have used such depictions to spread hatred of the Jews, claiming that they were devils with horns.