

Carmen – Lidia Nistor

THE IMPACT OF SUBJECTIVITY IN CULTURAL MEDIATION



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ISBN 978-973-0-42517-8

Brăila, 2025

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ABSTRACT

The present research is aimed to develop a perspective through which translation is assimilated not only to linguistics or its sub-branch of applied linguistics, but also to cultural studies. The paper will make a demonstration of the multiple roles assumed by a responsible translator and the multiple resources offered by interdisciplinarity in decoding the originality of each national culture in its own rights and assets. At the same time, objectivity of analysts, linguists and scholars of any training, is expected not to exclude subjectivity. This can be ranked as a principle, in its major consequences, as long as a cultural transfer – the translation itself – integrates personal views with community mentality, individual tastes with fashions and trends of the day, without relegating the approach and work of a translator-mediator to vocabulary and grammar exclusively. This research paper begins and ends with a communication-oriented belief to the effect that any text is a configuration arranged along diverse dimensions – functional, pragmatic, thematic – at the surface level and also behind its lines.

PRESENTATION OF THE PAPER

The challenging and compelling itinerary of the word and of any cultural illustration behind the word, among languages, represents the focus of the present dissertation. It is an attempt to decode some of the intricate courses that accompany such a complex manipulation of the source language and the target language.

Structured into four chapters, the paper starts by briefly introducing the realm of translatology. Chapter 1 dwells upon such issues as the cultural drift in translating, the place taken by a translator's subjectivity, the action of the mediator, the European framework for construing mediation, norms for a professional who is both objective and subjective in his activity.

Chapter 2 tackles the process of mediation from philosophy to cultural theory, regarded both from a philosophical stand and cultural (un)translatability.

Chapter 3 deals with the mediator's status, focusing on the challenges, tasks, skills and roles needed for this role. This chapter also probes into quality control and accountability, as well as readership for translations, since a target audience is an important aspect to be studied in such an endeavour.

Chapter 4 is an application on quotes, uncovering mediating efforts for the trendy collections of motivational and inspirational messages.

The final conclusions show that readers, writers, interpreters, mediators and communicators create new intercultural links, practically a union of target and source texts according to each individual mediator's subjective experiences.

ARGUMENT

In an academic setting, translation is often taught as mediation. Along my MA studies, I have become aware about the rightfulness of this opening and of the ideas displayed further down in my personal argumentation related to my thematic interests.

The readers of a translated text are expected to associate what they get in their native language and culture with what they should know about the origins of the text in its initial culture. In other words, mediation occurs when the mediator possesses a bilingual and, consequently, bicultural know-how. I have grown much interested in the homologizing operation of establishing equivalence, when trying to give birth to a word, an image, a certain rhythm or phrase. I have found myself not just translating words, but re-creating a complex web of meanings, connotations, at the same time inspecting, contrasting and modelling two cultures.

For my future activities in teaching language and culture and doing translation work, I must be committed in full awareness to a responsibility in dealing with (a) cultural differences, (b) the threat of mishandling meanings out of ignorance, (c) cases of untranslatability, (d) cultural taboos, and probably some other ‘hard nuts to crack’.

In order to accomplish my future professional goals, I will have to show a critical ability to analyse in discourse all its grammatical, stylistic and rhetorical features. This kind of understanding has given me the required enthusiasm in the present intellectual undertaking.

The impact of subjectivity in cultural mediation

*“Mediation is a tool that helps to ‘bridge the gap’ between differences,
and this requires knowing and respecting
the culture of people that you meet.”*

Alessandra Sgubini

CHAPTER 1: PRELIMINARIES TO THE TOPIC OF MEDIATING ACTIVITIES

1.1. The cultural drift in translating

Language is an interpretation of culture and personality of its speakers. It has an impact on the way the speakers regard and understand the world. This assumption has a far-reaching meaning for the latest research on cultural mediation. It has been long taken for granted that translation deals only with language.

Translation is more than an interlinguistic process. It is not just the replacement of the source text with target language text. In practice the translation includes cultural and educational nuances that can harmonize the preferences and mindsets of recipients. Translations cannot be produced in a political or cultural vacuum and are never isolated from the context in which the texts are enclosed¹.

While bilingualism transfers information and ideas from culture to culture, the translator is the mediator of cultures whose duty is to systematize and generalize the whole process. The translation practice itself is an intercultural activity. From an intercultural perspective the role of the translator is being the intercultural expert able to mediate between cultures. "Translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language"².

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the verb to mediate means “to work with opposing sides in an argument or dispute in order to get an agreement (US)”, “to get (something, such as a settlement or agreement) by working with opposing sides in a dispute”, or “to have an

¹ Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (eds.) *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and CrossCultural Texts*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995, p. 3

² Newmark, P. (1981) *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, p. 7

effect or influence in causing (something) to happen”³. If we apply all these meanings to the conception of the current duty of the translator we can notice that maybe his most important role is to be an agent that intermediates between two cultures by trying to reconcile all the differences that can stand as barriers in communication.

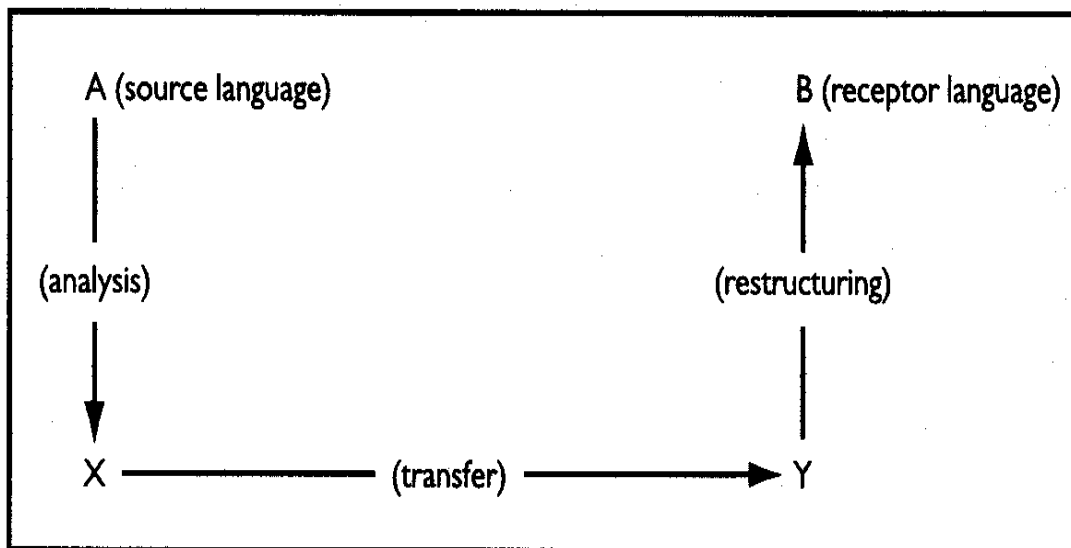
The notion of “culture” is defined by Samovar and Porter (1997) as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving”⁴. The term ‘culture’ refers to values, customs, beliefs, and social life. A real fact is that each community has its own culture; one can be more materialistic, another can be just living on daily hunting. The individual is in one way or the other a construct of his culture, and much of his behaviour, values, and goals are culturally determined. Society and culture are clearly reflected in one’s language.

This definition of culture is a good starting point in analyzing the relationship between culture and translation practice. One of the challenges that a translator faces is that he should avoid being influenced by a particular cultural background, including the impact of subjectivity while translating. Several connections to what a specific culture is are made when translating; this is known as the cross-cultural side of translations. Nida enunciated that “it is almost inevitable that translators be affected by their own personal set of values”. The total impartiality and objectivity is very difficult to achieve. In the era of unsettling globalizing forces, this can happen also among the different groups or subcultures of the same society, not only between two different societies. An example about the cross-cultural misunderstanding is to address people by names. Some people prefer to be addressed by the first name, while others feel offended. Nida presented Chomsky and TT figure of the translation process.⁵

³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com

⁴ Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (eds.). (1997). *Intercultural Communication*. New York: Wadsworth / Peter Lang.

⁵ Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating. With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: Brill, p. 33



(source E. Nida⁶)

As an answer to the extent of subjectivity in translation, it can be said that humans do not live in the world's manifestations of objectivity; they are not alone in their social activity. It is quite a fantasy to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language. For example, in English one description of a winter manifestation is "snow", while in Romanian there are more options than just "zăpadă", if we think only of "omăt" or "nea". We can consider another instance: in English there are "fingers" and "toes", while in Romanian one and the same word, "degete", is used. Our own world view is involuntarily shaped by our native tongue, and this makes it difficult to immediately understand distinctions that speakers of other languages make. However, both understanding and translation are achievable in a successful manner.

Referring to culture, Goodenough stated his beliefs as follows: "As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. To one who

⁶ Nida, E. A. (1964). *Toward a Science of Translating. With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: Brill, p. 30

knows their culture, these things and events are also signs signifying the cultural forms or models of which they are material representation."⁷ This approach suggests that culture is seen as a totality of knowledge and model for perceiving things, as an immediate connection between culture and behavior and events, and it also mentions the culture's dependence on norms.

1.2. The place taken by a translator's subjectivity

The term "intercultural communication" has been limited by some authorities in the field, and it refers only to communication among individuals from different nationalities⁸.

In contrast, other authorities have expanded the notion of intercultural communication to encompass inter-ethnic, inter-religious, inter-regional communication, including communication among individuals of different sexual orientations⁹. What counts as intercultural communication depends partly on what one considers representing a culture, and the definition of culture itself is quite contestable.

Every time a translation is made, there is a cross-cultural comparison that passes through a linguistic filter, and the languages, cultures and societies are compared. A translator should not only be bilingual, but also bicultural. The cultural factor has a crucial role because the context in which the translation comes to a life of its own remains incomplete without a connection to the culture itself. German functionalism regards translation as an intercultural process in which two parts are involved: the production of the source text in a source communicative situation and the production of the target text in a target communicative situation.¹⁰ Translating a text actually means to transfer the linguistic and cultural parallels into the target language. The linguistic and cultural parallels are explored and handled in order to suit the audience or the reader.

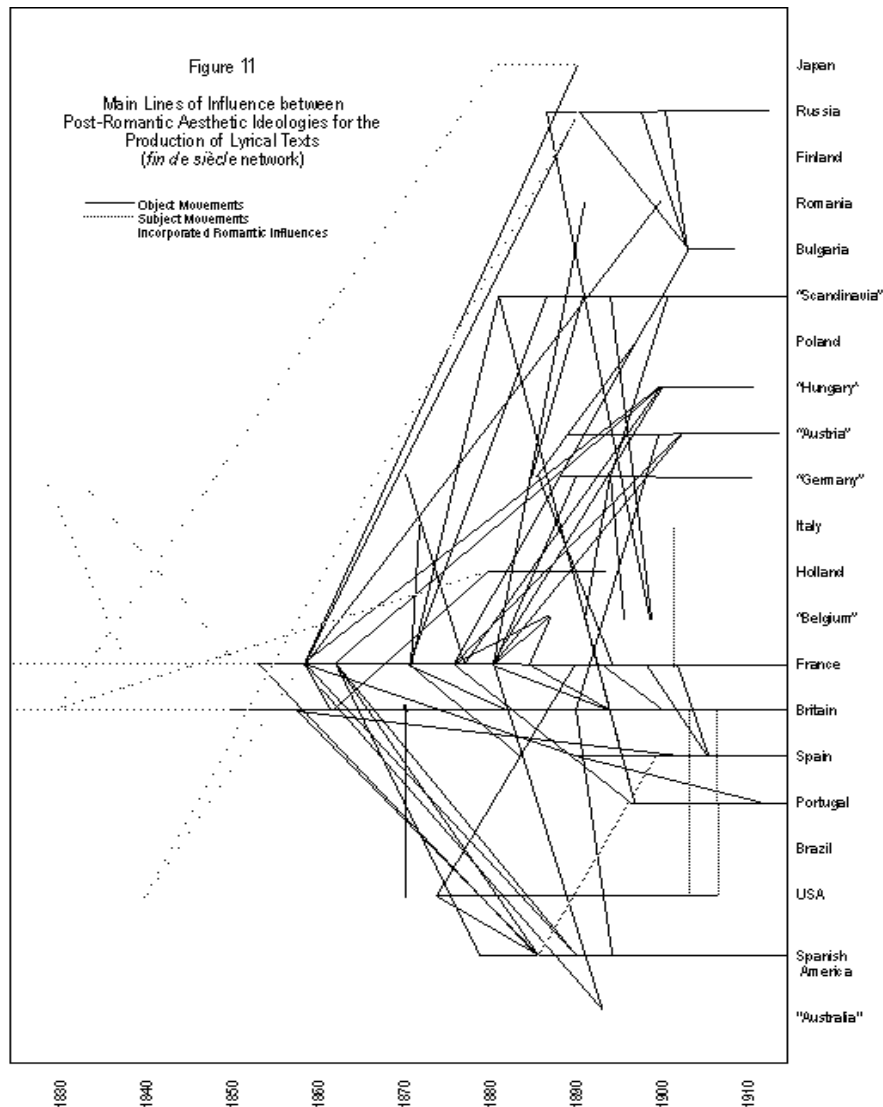
The following image illustrates the evolution of intercultural.

⁷ Goodenough, Ward H. 1964. "Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics" in D. Hymes (ed). *Language in Culture and Society. A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology*. New York: Harper & Row, 36

⁸ Gudykunst, W. B. (2003). Intercultural communication: Introduction. In W.B. Gudykunst (ed.), *Cross-cultural and intercultural communication*, 163–166. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

⁹ Martin, J. N. & Nakayama, T. K. (2007). *Intercultural communication in contexts*, 4th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill

¹⁰ Nord, Ch. (1991). *Text Analysis in Translation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, p. 7



(source Pym¹¹)

Catford (1965) stated that “Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language”¹². The role of the translator in mediating original ideas across cultural and national boundaries places him/ her in the unique position for

¹¹ Pym, Anthony. 2000. *Negotiating the frontiers: translators and intercultures in Hispanic history*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, p. 193

¹² Catford, J. C. (1965) *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: an essay on applied linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press, p. 25

understanding a range of development issues. Translations can also have a critical consequence in politics and can act as an agent for reconciliation or social integration. Translations can therefore have a noticeable effect on how global and human rights issues can be transmitted and broadcasted.

The translation process is a communicative act and Mayoral et al. (1988) define the figure of the translator as “a decoder of the source language as well as an encoder of the target language,” and at the same time “a receptor of the message in the source culture as well as a source of the message in the target culture.”¹³

1.3.The action of the mediator

What is a cultural mediator? Or who is a mediator? *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* says that the mediator is “the language user not concerned to express his/her own meanings, but simply to act as an intermediary between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly –normally (but not exclusively) speakers of different languages”¹⁴

The communicative aim in such events is to facilitate communication between others or help them resolve a certain situation (conflict, problem, etc.) which requires deeper understanding of something said or written. In this case a mediator should act as:

- a social actor that monitors the development of interaction and operates when some type of intervention is required for helping the communicative process and/or to influence the fallout
- a facilitator in social conjunctures during which two or more parties interacting are experiencing a communication mishap or when there is a communication gap between them
- a meaning negotiator acting as a meaning-making agent especially when he/she interferes in situations that need require reconciliation or compromise of meanings.

¹³ Mayoral, R., Kelly, D. & Gallardo, N. (1988). “Concept of Constrained Translation. Non-linguistic Perspectives of Translation”. *Meta*, p. 357

¹⁴ Sophie Bailly, Sean Devitt, Marie-José Gremmo, Frank Heyworth, Andy Hopkins, Barry Jones, Mike Makosch, Philip Riley, Gé Stoks and John Trim (eds.), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, A Guide for Users*, Language Policy Division, Strasbourg, 2001, p. 87-88

In order to play his/ her role adequately, the mediator is required to depict and create meanings through speech or writing for the audience with a different linguistic or cultural background. In such circumstances his/ her role is the one of an arbitrator of meaning.

An interesting fact, contributing to a translator's success, is the clear distinction between *inter*-cultural and *intra*-cultural mediation (or mediator, implicitly). The latter indicates the acts performed by all of us in our daily life. As we take part at social events, we are involved in interpreting the social and culturally-situated reality in our attempt to convey the connotation that we embody for each other. For example, imagine that two people attend a lecture about cloning. If they are unfamiliar with the topic, it is very likely that the meanings each listener envisages, on the basis of what is being said, are different. In order to have a substantial conversation later, the two participants will have to negotiate their connotations and also perhaps involve someone else that is present and who has some more insight into the topic. In a case like this, all the participants are intracultural mediators, but the two have equal status, given their lack of expertise, whereas the third, who figures as the 'expert', is granted a position of greater power in meaning creation.

One may think of a wide range of examples from daily life, when someone claims or is offered the role of mediator while watching a TV show with others, listening to radio programmes, reading the newspaper or a magazine. People mediate all the time in the same language and quite frequently also across different languages, or across different 'linguistic cultures'. Each time a social actor relays and interprets information or fills in an information gap for someone with limited or no knowledge of the language in which the source message is conveyed and/or the cultural norms that determines the message, he/ she holds or is positioned in the role of intercultural mediator.

From a textual and discursive point of view, Hatim and Mason (1990) assert that the translator mediates both in the sense that he/ she "reads in order to produce" and "decodes in order to re-encode," and also in the sense that he/ she mediates between cultures, given the fact that he/ she tries "to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of the transfer of meaning."¹⁵ Thence, for a translator it seems to be crucial to have a bilingual ability and a bicultural vision. Toury (1995) presents a descriptivist opinion that seems to favour the role of the translator as a cultural mediator. According to Toury, despite the "explanatory power with respect to translational phenomena" of disciplines such as Linguistics, Text Linguistics, Pragmatics, or Contrastive

¹⁵ Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1990). *Discourse and the Translator*. London: Longman, p. 223-224

Textology, “being a translator cannot be reduced to the mere generation of utterances which would be considered ‘translations’ within any of these disciplines.”¹⁶ He also favours the idea that “Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance” and that “Consequently, ‘translatorship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role.”¹⁷ But what happens when the references to be translated do not exist in the target culture? Santamaria (2001) suggests that in this case the translator must provide them a symbolic value.¹⁸

Continuing on the same line, Castro-Paniagua (2000) suggests that “a translator should be an ethnographer.” In his view, the translator will have to interpret correctly both the semantic information, and also the inherent cultural codes. According to him “the translator must adequately transmit and adapt [the] message across cultures,” so as he/ she “need[s] to have a deep knowledge of the cultural frames [he or she] will be handling.”¹⁹

1.4. The European framework for construing mediation

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages recommends that mediation should be partially synonymous with professional translation and interpretation. According to the CEFR²⁰:

Oral mediation is construed to be synonymous with

- simultaneous interpretation (at conferences, meetings)
- consecutive interpretation (speeches, guided tours)
- informal interpretation (e.g., in social and transactional situations for friends, family, clients, or in the message of signs, menus, notices)

Written mediation is construed to be synonymous with

- exact translation (of legal and scientific texts)
- literary translation
- summarizing gist (within L1 or between L1 and L2)

¹⁶ Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, p. 53

¹⁷ Idem

¹⁸ Santamaria, L. (2001). Función y traducción de los referentes culturales en subtitulación. In L. Lorenzo *et al.* (Eds.), *Traducción subordinada (II): El subtitulado* (pp. 237-248). Vigo: University of Vigo, p. 246

¹⁹ Castro-Paniagua, F. (2000). *English-Spanish Translation, Through a Cross-Cultural Interpretation Approach*. New York: University Press of America, p. 24

²⁰ Sophie Bailly, Sean Devitt, Marie-José Gremmo, Frank Heyworth, Andy Hopkins, Barry Jones, Mike Makosch, Philip Riley, Gé Stoks and John Trim (Ed.), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, A Guide for Users*, Language Policy Division, Strasbourg, 2001, p. 88

- paraphrasing

Not only is mediation a spoken, written and interactive activity, but it is also an activity that may imply almost exclusively the visual mode of communication (e.g., pictures, charts, etc.). Moreover whether it is the source or the target text, it may involve more than two modes of communication, either written or spoken, complemented by visual and acoustic support. An example of a multimodal text is a website advertisement of a restaurant, where the advertisement consists of a verbal text accompanied by music, plus photos of the restaurant and the specific details. Suppose that person A sees the advertisement, and describes the place to person B and recommends that they book a table. This would be the case of mediating multimodal source text to monomodal target text. Another example is the instance below:



(source internet²¹)

²¹ <http://www.emigrareaustralia.info/articol/dor-de-romania-un-text-care-doare>

Think of person A seeing the following image and not understanding what's funny about it. He asks his Romanian friends who are laughing to explain it. One of them takes the role of oral mediator and explains what the humorous element is. In all the cases where humour is involved, one may also have to serve as an inter-cultural mediator, since most of the times humour is culturally specific. This particular photo will have a different impact for different cultures, Romanians will see in it a way of mockery about team-building.

Another example is the translation of the English phrase “snap, crackle, pop”. It can be adapted to Romanian but it won't have the same impact as it has for a native speaker, or at least for a person who is familiar with the old TV advertising campaign for a children's breakfast cereal. As the milk is poured onto the cereal, it makes the sound 'snap crackle pop'. It is a famous advertising slogan in the UK. More or less the equivalent is the Romanian commercial to Antrefrig p  t   when it says “Ficat! Ficat!” In both cases what is needed constitutes a mediation of the translations, and it also is a need to translate by using the cultural background, being, therefore, to a certain extent, exploring subjective responses. Ultimately, some people may be fond of the commercials or not.

According to the CEFR²², mediation is the process of establishing equivalent meanings, and it may involve the following:

Planning = expanding background knowledge, locating supports, preparing a glossary, considering interlocutors' needs

Execution = examining or processing input and formulating the last block simultaneously in real time, noting possibilities and best equivalences, bridging gaps

Evaluation = checking coherence of two versions, checking consistency of usage

Repair = clarifying by consulting dictionaries, thesaurus, consulting experts, resources

Cultural and social knowledge shapes meaning in communication besides role relationships and expectations. Culture shows the way individuals think, act and interact and is “a filter which restricts the way we perceive, what we see, hear, or feel”²³ In communication in general, as well as in translating and interpreting, transmission of messages has a possibility to

²² Sophie Bailly, Sean Devitt, Marie-Jos   Gremmo, Frank Heyworth, Andy Hopkins, Barry Jones, Mike Makosch, Philip Riley, G   Stoks and John Trim (eds.), Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: *Learning, teaching, assessment, A Guide for Users*, Language Policy Division, Strasbourg, 2001, p. 88

²³ Kondo, Masaomi and Tebble, Helen. 1997. "Intercultural Communication, Negotiation, and Interpreting". In Conference Interpreting: *Current Trends in Research*, Yves Gambier, Daniel Gile, Christopher Taylor (eds). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 152

flourish if the receiver shares that cultural and social knowledge. If not, the assertion does not make sense to the beneficiaries as it does “not correspond to any reality they had experienced.”²⁴ In such cases, the interpreter may need to intercede actively, by changing the original speech, adding explanations or omitting certain parts and act as a “cultural mediator” rather than a neutral or invisible agent. Offering various illustrations of circumstances in which cultural differences are outstanding, Kondo (1990) claims that the interpreter cannot and, even more, should not be expected to block the gap arising from cultural differences of the parties and that he could be regarded as “overstepping himself as an interpreter” if he attempted to do so, which might even cause him to get into trouble depending on the situation.²⁵

The impact of cultural mediation can be better seen when discussing the institutional terms and the interpreter’s role as “scrupulous translator” vs. “cultural mediator”. Despite the need to take into account the expectations of different kinds of public, “it is appropriate to attempt a degree of cultural mediation, and recognize the importance of a solid cultural background.”²⁶

1.5. Norms for a subjective professional

There are also some aspects on cultural mediation and translation, which could certainly be valid for interpreting as well. Anthony Pym, who reflects on the problematic with regard to training, claims that “our training programmes should progressively be oriented to the production of intercultural mediators, people who are able to do rather more than just translate.”²⁷ Ritva Leppihalme also underlines the necessity of “what is implied by the socio-cultural and intertextual elements” and “extralinguistic knowledge of the source language culture” in her book which deals with the intercultural aspect of translation.²⁸

²⁴ Reeves, Nigel B. R. 1994. “Translating and Interpreting as Cultural Intermediation – Some Theoretical Issues Reconsidered”. In *Literary Studies East and West, Translation and Interpreting: Bridging East and West*, Selected Conference Papers, Richard K. Seymour & C.C. Liu (eds). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p. 42

²⁵ Kondo, Masaomi. 1990. “What Conference Interpreters Should Not Be Expected to Do”. *The Interpreters’ Newsletter* 3: 59-65

²⁶ Marrone, Stefano. 1993. “Quality: A Shared Objective”. *The Interpreters’ Newsletter* No. 5, 35-39.

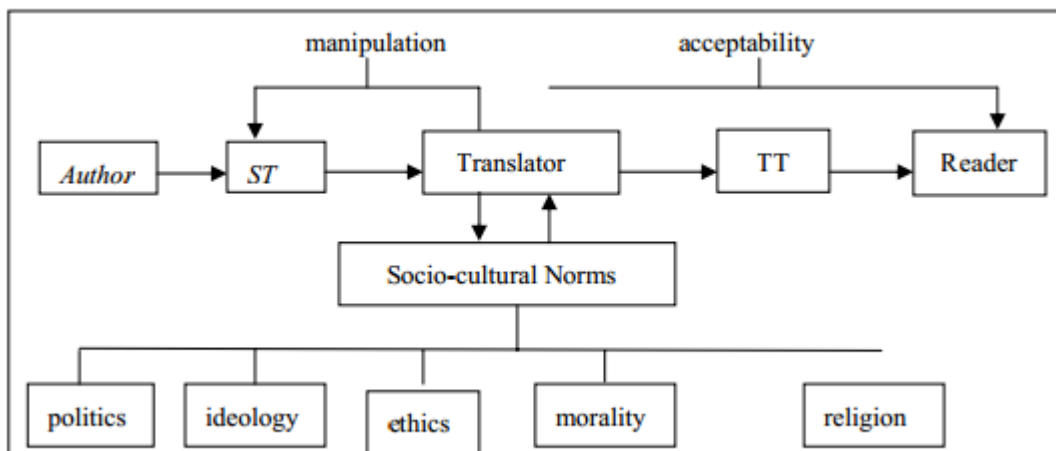
²⁷ Pym, Anthony. 2000. *Negotiating the frontiers: translators and intercultures in Hispanic history*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, p. 190

²⁸ Leppihalme, Ritva. 1997. *Culture Bumps: an empirical approach to the translation of allusions*. Clevedon/Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, p. 20

It is important for translators and interpreters to have background knowledge about the cultures they are mediating for, including traditions, customs, geography, history, popular culture, and even behavior patterns.

In its philosophical meaning, subjectivity refers to the essential quality of the subject, the peculiar features displayed in his definite activities. In other words, subjectivity is the externalization of the subject's innate capacity in his definite activities, the distinctive ability that the subject possesses to change, influence and control his objects actively and to enable the objects to serve the subject. The connotation of subjectivity includes three basic aspects: firstly, starting from the subject and making the object serve the subject; secondly, an objectified function, that is the subject's distinctive characteristic in the objectified liaison between the subject and the object; and thirdly, the externalization of the subject's elemental capacity. Norms are social and cultural restraints in nature. All of them represent instructions necessary to be followed; they impose constraints on the translator establishing the "translational behavior". In a social-cultural context, the translator's decision-making is unavoidably constrained by these criteria. Therefore, on the basis of the analysis of the term subjectivity in its philosophical sense, it can be said that the translator's subjectivity can be summarized as the translator's subjective enterprise manifested in the translation process on the prerequisite of being appropriately aware of the socio-cultural criteria to attain the target of translation. In a socio-cultural context, the accord between the subjectivity of the translator and the socio-cultural norms can be illustrated in the following table.

Table 1. The relationship between the subjectivity of the translator and the socio-cultural norms



The table²⁹ illustrates the fact that there is no direct dialogical relationship between the translator and the author. The relationship between the translator and the source text is manipulating and being manipulated. Regarding the relationship between the translator and the reader, it can be observed that the translator has to presume the reader's expectations, a fact that also demonstrates the translator's subjectivity. Furthermore, it can be observed that there is a mutual relationship between the translator and the socio-cultural criteria. These socio-cultural norms tend to contribute and constrict the translator's style; and in the same time the translator can expand his subjectivity in the translation process.

Regarding the subjectivity of the translator bound by specific socio-cultural principles, it can be said that the translation should respect certain guidelines.

In recent translation studies, the discussion of social-cultural norms constraining the translator's style in the translation process has been seldom mentioned and the connection between the subjectivity of the translator and the social-cultural criteria has been largely ignored so far. "Toury tends to overemphasize the pure academic research on norms while neglecting their practical values."³⁰

A series of specific socio-cultural norms are imposed on the translator, and - through the translation strategies adopted by the translator - the subjectivity of the translator is shown. These socio-cultural norms consist of politics, morality, religion, ideology, ethics, etc.

Politics, as a socially active and politically crucial element, is one of the very important pressures on the translator's behavior. It cannot be denied that the political factors govern the context in which translations occur. There is no doubt that politics limits the translator's ideological arena, and translators strive to have a little freedom in their dealing with politics, in case they do want to have their translations accepted by the public.

Politics makes it quite clear what topics can be translated from foreign cultures at a given historical time to meet the needs of social development and political stability of the target culture. Therefore, a form of power should not be underestimated, the power of the political influence on the shaping of the translator's activity. The question that appears here is "to what extent should the freedom of speech be a guaranteed right?"

²⁹ www.ccsenet.org/elt

³⁰ Chen, Dehong. & Zhang, Nanfeng. (2000). *Western Theories of Translation* (in Chinese). Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, p. 126

1.6.Conclusions to this chapter: freedom of speech and ethics

Freedom of speech, like all the other human rights, has an intrinsic value. It allows an individual to express his/ her thoughts without being afraid of reproach, no matter what is said. This has important an important meaning for a country in every social and political field, as it is only when citizens are able to openly express support for or speak up against certain ideas that political policies or social norms become acceptable. For example, let's take into consideration the tragic case of the French magazine, Charlie Hebdo, when the slogan 'Je suis Charlie' spread around the world. It happened to a French satirical weekly magazine presenting cartoons, reports, polemics, and jokes. The publishers advertised in a stridently non-conformist tone their opinions about events from everyday life, and the publication was considered above all secular and atheist, far-left-wing, and anti-racist, while publishing articles on the [extreme right](#) (especially the French nationalist [National Front](#) party), religion ([Catholicism](#), [Islam](#), [Judaism](#)), [politics](#), [culture](#), etc. According to its ex-editor Stéphane Charbonnier ("[Charb](#)"), the magazine's editorial viewpoint used to reflect "all components of left wing pluralism, and even abstainers."³¹

The magazine was the target of two terrorist attacks, in 2011 and in 2015, probably a response to a number of controversial [Muhammad](#) cartoons it published. Twelve people were killed, including Charbonnier and several contributors, in the second of these attacks. It is an extreme case of how to limit or ban the freedom of speech. This example can be regarded as a failure in trying to be a mediator between languages and cultures. On the other hand, the action (photography and translation) was written on purpose, and it was regarded as a type of mockery; only it is pitiful that other cultures interpreted it in a negative way.

An action of this type started in the social sphere breeds a more thoughtful, more creative society, and it also lowers disapproval and may bring about social reform. By not allowing people to speak their mind can raise intercultural bridges, and it is not only detrimental in terms of the type of society being bred, but it also gives cause for worry in that citizens may feel deprived or suppressed of their rights, and this could breed latent dissatisfaction in the whole country or even worldwide. This latent disapproval may result in violence and anger, disrupting stability within nations. Conversely, if citizens are allowed the right to freedom of speech, this latent disapproval

³¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15551998> "Charlie Hebdo and its place in French journalism"]. BBC. Retrieved 20 January 2015

would then have a constructive outlet and repercussion would be more harmonious and less hostile in nature.

Undoubtedly, translation is also influenced by ethics, as it is a preliminary norm that governs the translator's source-text selection and the acceptability to the target culture. In case the SL appears shocking to the target culture, translators have the possibility to adapt it to the dominant ethics prevalent in the target culture. But if translators disagree to the dominant ethics of their time, they have the freedom to introduce the SL ethics to combat and destroy the dominant ethics.

As a conclusion, it can be said that theoretically a text which is embedded in its culture is both possible and impossible to translate into other languages. In practice, a professional ideally considers, however, that any type of translation must be possible. The degree of its closeness to its source culture or the extent to which the meaning of its source text can be retained is very much determined by the purpose of the translation.

Chapter 2: Mediation – from Philosophy to Cultural Theory

2.1. The crux of the philosophical stand

Philosophy, according to Encyclopedia Britannica (2012), is "the critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs and an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs." The traditional definition of "philosophy" is the love of wisdom (ibid). Philosophy should be best regarded as a mental and intellectual activity. It offers the possibility to activate and stimulate our own mind to reflect, to criticize and to evaluate all the experiences and interests we need to share. It should be forgotten that philosophy is the foundation of many of today's disciplines, as philosophy "was the grand Greek quest for understanding everything"³². It is a discipline that can potentially be involved when the re-examination of other disciplines occurs. There is a philosophy of chemistry, a philosophy of history, a philosophy of psychology, a philosophy of mathematics and even the philosophy of language.³³ These disciplines originated from philosophy, but they have actually evolved into scientific fields in their own rights.

³² Torretti, Roberto, *The Philosophy of Physics*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1999, <<http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam032>>

³³ Lycan, William G., *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2000.

Philosophy has played a key role being a spring from which many disciplines have been watered and developed and as it comes back now to work in the further analysis of these same disciplines, it has actually given so much and taken so little. This is also very true for translation studies. Pym (2007) presents the relation between philosophy and translation studies as "highly asymmetric"³⁴. The theorization of translation has leant on philosophical discourses more than philosophers have seriously considered translation.³⁵

As any other discipline, translation studies aim at studying, analyzing, researching, investigating, experimenting, and theorizing on its subject of study. Translation is an act by means of language as well as the result of expressing something in a language. Philosophy has been a valuable venue for translation studies to bloom. Despite the fact that philosophy has been defined sophisticatedly by many philosophers as the "the science by which the natural light of reason studies the first causes or highest principles of all things ... the science of things in their first causes, in so far as these belong to the natural order"³⁶. Therefore, a philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. The aim and result of philosophy is to make propositions clear to its public, and not a number of mere 'philosophical propositions'. Philosophy should make clear and demarcate sharply the opaque and blurred thoughts³⁷ of every thinking being.

George Berkley (1999:3) expressed the essence of philosophy when he described it as "being nothing else but the study of wisdom and truth, in a few words, the truth behind every aspect of knowledge. Truth is relative, not absolute. Provided that, the search for truth continues and never stops."³⁸

Interpretation, as well as mediation, was under the microscope many times and many theories have been created to clarify, analyze, and illustrate it. These theories are linguistic (for instance, Jakobson's and Nida's), or cultural more than linguistic (for instance, Toury's and

³⁴ Pym, Anthony. "Translation Studies and Western Philosophy." *A Companion to Translation Studies*. Eds. Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2007, p. 33

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Maritain, Jacques, *An Introduction to Philosophy*, Trans. E. I. Watkin, 1947, p. 108 in Translation, Philosophy and the search of truth, by Asst. Lect. Dia Abdullah Sulaibia

³⁷ [Wittgenstein](#), Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Trans. C.K. Ogden. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1922, p. 44

³⁸ Berkley, George, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Oregon: University of Oregon, 1999, http://www.academia.edu/2528079/Translation_Philosophy_and_the_Search_for_Truth

Venuti's). There are also philosophical theories meaning that the translation proper as an activity is regarded from a philosophical point of view.

Mediation is an act by means of language and, in the same time, it is the result of expressing something in a target language.

In *The Republic*, Plato compares the effect of education and the lack of it on our nature. If we go further and apply the theory of the 'Allegory of the Cave' to be found in [The Republic](#) to translation and interpretation, we have the chance to depict the hidden sense of the philosophy of language.

The fundamental idea of Plato's philosophic metaphor is that whatever is real can be understood as shadows. What is translated can be the shadow of the source text. Sitting in a cave, in chains, people are with their back to the entrance. Not knowing the particulars of a culture when translating a text can result in a translation of words, instead of a translation of meanings. Furthermore, not knowing a foreign language at all can mean not facing the world while being forced to enjoy the shadows. While the human beings sit in the cave, the shadows of things moving outside are projected by the light onto an inner wall of the cave. The prisoners have never been outside the cave, so they believe the shadows express reality. When one of them succeeds to release himself and to walk outside into the light, he becomes aware of the fact that his whole life has been in the shadow of an illusion. Elated by the discovery, he goes back to the others to share his discovery. Those who cannot understand become violent and the story ends with the death of the one who gained insight into reality. Could this allegory be regarded as an appropriate metaphor for the world of translation, interpretation, mediation or for philosophy of language? Maybe it could.

2.2. The main philosophical issues to concern a translator

Philosophy of language is interested in four essential problems: the nature of [meaning](#), [language use](#), language [cognition](#), and the relationship between language and [reality](#). However, [continental philosophers](#) agree that philosophy of language tends to be dealt with earnestly, not as a separate topic, but as a part of [logic](#), actually the logic of natural languages.

The philosophers of language prioritize their inquiry on the nature of meaning. They seek to explain what it means to "mean" something. Topics in that field include the origin of [synonymy](#),

the nature of meaning itself, and how any deep meaning can ever really be perceived³⁹ (cf. Wikipedia). Another interesting idea is the investigation into the manner in which sentences are composed into a meaningful whole out of their meaningful parts.

Philosophical thinking about the rationality of foreign views depends on assumptions concerning how the community understands and represents their own views according to their belief systems. Translation is more give than take; it requires a bending of one's own language to accommodate the other and to understand cross-cultural difference.⁴⁰ A self-conscious and responsible translation methodology proceeds to understand the text without imposing personal epistemological standards on them through language. Cross-cultural understanding is only possible when focusing on the difficulty of translation and sometimes its impossibility.

Philip Lewis (1985) has also concisely identified this new focus of concern for translation theory: "For the translator, the problem here can no longer be how to avoid the failures--the reductive and redirective interpretations that disparity among natural languages assures; the problem is how to compensate for losses and to justify (in a graphological sense) the differences--how to renew the energy and signifying behavior that translation is likely to diffuse."⁴¹ Translations are neither subjectively arbitrary nor objectively determinable, rather *they* are a "political play" that requires, above all, the exercise of what Clifford described as "ethnographic responsibility."⁴²

It is of no surprise to any translator to encounter words or concepts that have no equivalent in the target language. It often happens when translating a substantially foreign language that is very different from a grammatical angle, and/ or in terms of semantic/ lexical resources. A common case is the task to translate religious thoughts. Conceptual words like 'nirvana' and 'karma' are best left written in their native language, and a description is offered in order to understand them. Other examples are words that belong to the local folklore, such as in Romanian 'doină', 'ler', 'șezătoare', etc. In other words, sometimes the readers are forced to adopt and assimilate the content and use of certain foreign concepts.

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_language

⁴⁰ James C, Lindahl, Graduate Program in Philosophy, *Anthropological Approaches to the philosophy of translation*, National Library of Canada, 1999, p. 297

⁴¹ Lewis, Philip E., 1985 The Measure of Translation Effects. In *Difference in Translation*, Joseph F. Graham (ed.) - Cornell University Press, Ithaca pp-31-62, apud C, Lindahl, 1999, p. 303

⁴² James C, Lindahl, Graduate Program in Philosophy, *Anthropological Approaches to the philosophy of translation*, National Library of Canada, 1999, p. 297p. 304

To sustain this idea, Jean-René Ladmiral, a French scholar of translation studies, showed that the “philosophy of translation” can be regarded as a fundamental issue in how philosophy is to be conducted. “The translation of philosophical texts, the translation of philosophy indicates that strictly speaking there is a philosophy of translation ... in other words that there is a philosophical wager (enjeu) in every translation.”⁴³

Ladmiral went even deeper and focused on the psychology of the translator. A mediator of cultures needs to be reflective about the topics. The translation is an expression of how and what the mediator thinks, and it is expressed by using to a certain degree psychological reflectiveness.

Philosophers who raise questions about the nature of translation usually do so by invoking some well-established theory of meaning. In contemporary philosophy of language, most philosophers have refused correspondence or a reduction of the theories of meaning. Even so, there are many translation theories that implicitly assume some related theory of meaning, even when the author does not explicitly endorse such a theory. Traditionally, the chain of theorizing follows this progression:

semantic theory -> translation theory -> translation practice

(source: Schogt, 1992)

In contrast, those who do translation, generally act without *the* need or benefit of such theories of meaning. Henry Schogt, in "Semantic Theory and Translation Theory," argues that "often translation specialists are even bothered rather than helped by the tenets of semantic theory"⁴⁴. When translators do address semantic theory, they are generally aware of substantial incongruities between theory and practice. The new and constructive trend in translation and semantic theory is to *start* with the practice/activity of translating, and translations themselves, and then work in the other direction:

practice/translations -> translation theory -> semantic theory

(source Schogt, ibidem)

⁴³ <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2151> *The Philosophy of Translation: The Philosophy of Translation From Nishida Kitarō to Ogyū Sorai* about Ladmiral, Jean-René 1994 “Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction” (Paris: Tel Gallimard)

⁴⁴ Schogt, Henry 1992 *Semantic Theory and Translation Theory*. In *Theories* apud C, Lindahl, Graduate Program in Philosophy, Anthropological Approaches to the philosophy of translation, National Library of Canada, 1999, p. 11

Translation is the result of expressing something in a language as well as an act by means of language.

2.3. Grasping truth through translation

Philosophy is an endless process of inspection and examination that involves every corner of knowledge and tackles a message in order to grasp the truth behind it. All disciplines have the same motivation concerning their domain, including translation studies. Translation has been an essential, but invisible, part of philosophy from its origins, or more precisely, ever since the passage from Greece to Rome. Throughout history, philosophy has constantly moved from one language to another, and that movement has driven thought, as well as the development of philosophical terminology and of languages themselves, in a decisive manner.

Different tools and instruments are used to grasp the essence of truth of different things. The diversity of the tools shows the involvement of people in trying to discover the best way to express things or to make life easier. This is also the case of translations. In real fact, there are different ways to try to render the right translation, despite or beyond the cultural differences, the words, concepts or idioms that cannot be explicitly or straightforwardly translated.

The question that appears in this case is what makes translation studies different from other disciplines, that is, eventually, its matter of investigation and research is actually a manifestation of the constant search for truth - a manifestation of philosophy.

According to Pym (*ibidem*), translation becomes a way of "actually doing philosophy"⁴⁵. But there remains a major difference; philosophy seeks truth and knowledge out in the wide world. On the other hand, translation follows what it requires of truth within the realm of the text it is operating with and its relation with the outside world.

But what is truth? Can both philosophy and translation search for the same thing? Aristotle defines truth as "to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."⁴⁶ This is quite informative in the sense that it implies logic in the determination of what truth is and what it is not. In that sense, a translator may apply that simple logic to the text in hand to determine, logically, what is and what is not true. The translator is exercising this epistemological process unaware in

⁴⁵ Pym, Anthony. "Translation Studies and Western Philosophy." *A Companion to Translation Studies*. Ed. Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2007, p. 41

⁴⁶ David, Marian. "The Correspondence Theory of Truth.", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Ed. Edward N. Zalta. 2009. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries>>

his hunt for the truth, and like any philosophical practice, translation is continuous, monotonous and limitless.

2.4. About (un)translatability

Certainly, in translating a literary text, there are some “losses” involving the difficulty of rendering some stylistic effects of the source text. Correspondingly, there are also some semantic “gains”, as there are in the translator’s language some possibilities that do not exist in the language of the source text.

But, at the same time, mention should be made that there are also certain possible approaches of “making up for” the losses which may arise in translation.

With regard to other types of texts, in translating them, explanatory periphrases may be used. “More than that, when there is no word to signify some notion, he uses borrowings from the SL, which are first explained by footnotes, and which further on are assimilated by the TL.”⁴⁷ Further on, Croitoru (1996) states that, as far as translatability is concerned, from a linguistic point of view, the distinction must be made between the primary linguistic aspect, based on the cognitive experience and including the field of denotation, which can be described by means of the referential definitions, and the secondary linguistic aspect, which includes the specific feeling – tones related to the cultural context, i.e. connotations which are among the greatest translation difficulties.⁴⁸

Leon Levițchi (1993) in his *Manualul traducătorului de limba engleză*⁴⁹ makes reference to a special category, that of ‘realia’ as he calls it. Realia are those words which have no semantic equivalent in a different language because the objects mentioned in a text are missing on the territory where the language of the text is spoken.

In this situation, the translator has two possibilities: either to keep the original word as such and explain it, by using a footnote, or to translate it with approximation, providing the same necessary explanations.

Following this method, the translator will translate the English word *porridge* as *fiertură de fulgi de ovăz sau porumb, cu caimac, lapte, cu sau fără zahăr*, the Romanian *sarmale* will be

⁴⁷ Croitoru, E. 1996. *Interpretation and Translation*, Galați: Editura Porto Franco, p. 34

⁴⁸ Idem, p. 34 -35

⁴⁹ Levițchi, L. 1993. *Manualul traducătorului de limba engleză*, București: Editura Teora, p. 15

translated as *force-meat rolls in cabbage or in vine leaves* and *plugușor* as *traditional procession with a decorated plough (in Romania on New Year's Day)*.

Similarly, *doină* will be rendered as *melancholic Romanian folk song*, *ciuleandă* as *a kind of Romanian dance*, *fotă* as *peasant skirt*, *ie* as *embroidered blouse* and *dor* as *longing or melancholy*. *Pastramă* and *(carne de) porc* – two Romanian words that penetrated the English language by way of Yiddish – will be translated as *salt meat* and *pork*, respectively.

Two words should be mentioned here– *crivăț* and *brânză*, which are acknowledged by the Webster's *Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* as being of Romanian origin. Although the latter has a much-used English equivalent – *cheese*, the former is currently translated as *north wind* or *crivetz*.

The translatability of a text is ensured by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantics, and the logic of experience. As Wills (1982) among others mentions, if a translation fails in terms of quality, the reason will be “not an insufficiency of syntactic and lexical inventories in the particular TL, but rather the limited ability of the translator in regard to text analysis.”⁵⁰ Thus, translators must have what Wills calls text-analytical competence.

On the other hand, Wills also acknowledges the large degree of variability in the translated texts to be more a result of the differing cultural contexts in which translators find themselves and their subjective decisions, and less a fault of the well-trained translator.

The assignment of the mediator is always to render a specific text designed to serve a specific purpose. In Reiss and Vermeer's (1984) opinions, one reason why communicative translation is now seen as the ideal form of translation may be that “Today, the translation of the so-called LSP-texts for the international, political, scientific exchange far exceeds the translation of the so-called literary texts”⁵¹.

As R.Jakobson (1966) mentions, most of the work of professional, industrial translators is defined by a certain textual norm: no explicit implication about the author or translator, or whether the text is a translation or not. Definitely, there must be no indication in the TT of the fact that it has been produced through translation.

⁵⁰ Wills, W. 1982. *The Science of Translation: Problems and Methods*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr, p. 49

⁵¹ Reiss, K., Vermeer, H. 1984. *Grundlegung einer Allgemeinen Translationstheorie*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, p.135

The texts which translators are required to produce must be “functional” and must seem so “natural” that translations should be indistinguishable from originals.⁵²

An important issue for the mediator is represented by the difference between languages in the extent to which the participant – process relationships are actually realized in their syntactic systems.

Equivalently, while clauses in English fall into a small number of patterns, there may be great variations according to length, embedding, and reclusiveness. This is one of the aspects which make a scientific text different from a philosophical one.

The relationship between the ST and the TT is complex and must take into consideration by the mediator as a person whose values and culture affect and shape the product.

The mediator has to analyse very carefully the various elements which make up the overall effect of the text, such as he comes to interpret it. Having done the analysis, he is faced with what L. Hewson and J. Martin call *the concave – mirror effect* of trying to express such elements through another culture. This can be explained by: the distorting effect that changing cultures produce, and the automatic series of connections which are made within the second culture.⁵³ Metaphorically speaking, the mediator is responsible for the “taming of the text”⁵⁴, i.e. to make the linguistic analysis taking into consideration the socio-cultural background.

2.5. More about cultural untranslatability

Catford (1965) classifies untranslatability into two different categories:

- linguistic untranslatability
- cultural untranslatability

Catford considers that latter appears as a result of the absence in the TL culture of a relevant situational feature for the SL text. In order to support his idea, he offers the example of the different concepts of the term *bathroom* in an English, Finnish or Japanese context and shows that both the object and the use of the object are not at all alike.

Popović (1976) has attempted to define the delicate issue of untranslatability without making a distinction between the linguistic and the cultural. He distinguishes two types, too. The

⁵² Jakobson, R. 1966. *On Translation*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 157

⁵³ Hewson, L., Martin, J. 1991. *Redefining Translation. The Variational Approach*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 152

⁵⁴ Willie van Peer 1988, apud Croitoru 1996, p.121

first is defined as “a situation in which the linguistic elements of the original cannot be replaced adequately in structural, linear, functional or semantic terms in consequence of a lack of denotation or connotation”⁵⁵ The second type is defined as “a situation where the relation of expressing the meaning, i.e. the relation between the creative subject and its linguistic expression in the original does not find an adequate linguistic expression in translation”⁵⁶ (idem)

Starting from the second type, we may give as example phrases such as *Bon appétit* or *Poftă bună* or some other sets of everyday phrases, which are culture-bound expressions. In English, for instance, there is no equivalent for the Romanian expression used toward a host or hostess by the guests or members of the household after a meal, *Sărut mâna pentru masă*.

2.6. More about text-taming mediation

One of the greatest theorists of the twentieth century is J.C. Catford, who started to analyze the problem of linguistic untranslatability in 1965, by making the distinction between translation and transference; he considers that “translation is the substitution of target language (TL) meanings for the source language (SL) meanings, not the transference of TL meanings into the SL, whereas transference is an implantation of SL meanings into the TL text.”⁵⁷

The latest descriptions on translation (Wills, 1982) refer to:

- product-oriented translations concerned with a “text-focussed” empirical description of translations,
- function-oriented translations, dealing with a cultural component which influences the reception of the TT,
- process-oriented translations, i.e. that of the process that is going on in the translator’s mind.

Besides, Wills considers that the text should be seen as a communication-oriented configuration, with some text dimensions recognizable at the surface level of the respective text, namely thematic, functional and text-pragmatic dimensions. Further on, he is sure that the deep structure of the language can be spotted and transformed into any language in any contemporary context.

⁵⁵ Popovič, A. 1976. *A Theory of Literary Translation*, Bratislava: Tatran, p. 25

⁵⁶ Idem

⁵⁷ Catford, J. C. 1965. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 8

The same idea is shared by Eugene Nida (1969), who believes that communication between people is possible due mainly to the semantic connections in languages that appear because of what he calls “the common core of human experience” as well as to the fundamental similarities that exist in the “syntactic structure of languages, especially at the so-called kernel or core level.”⁵⁸

The Romanian school of thought considers that translation is the result of extremely hard work. According to Leon Levițchi, “everything can be translated but only with efforts and pains”⁵⁹ and to translate means to capture the surface and deep structure of a text and to add to it the emotional content of that text together with its logical structure, so that the impact on the readers of the TT should be the same with the impact that the original text had on its readers. In his *Manualul traducătorului de limba engleză* (1993), L. Levițchi calls this type of translation a total translation, i.e. one which transfers as many meanings and overtones as possible from the ST to the TT.

Mention should be made that when considering the liaison between the ST and the TT, the mediator, seen as a key person whose values and culture affect and shape his/ her products, must also be taken into account. When using a metaphor, the translator is responsible for the “taming of the text”.⁶⁰

As Andrei Bantaș concludes that after a forty-year-old experience in translations, “particular challenges may appear in any kind of text and their early identification is necessary though not easy”⁶¹ He divides two types of difficulties, depending on the text-type:

- Type A, which requires a general background, “all-round culture”, considering the realia of various countries (specific notions, ranks, offices, personal titles and appellatives, measures, weights, etc, proper names, geographical names, foreign words, special registers, and others);
- Type B, considering the changes the author has made deliberately⁶². Andrei Bantaș considers that a faithful translation must be guided by a Translation Oriented Text-Analysis (TOTA) “through revealing in the SL the most adequate linguistic and

⁵⁸ Nida 1969:483, apud Wills 1982, p. 49

⁵⁹ Levițchi, L. 1993. *Manualul traducătorului de limba engleză*, București: Editura Teora, p. 6

⁶⁰ Willie van Peer 1988, apud Croitoru, 1996, p.121

⁶¹ Bantaș 1993:44, apud Croitoru 1996, p. 121

⁶² Idem

literary means for meeting the same requirements, structures, patterns and peculiarities to which the author himself had been submitted in creating the original.”⁶³

This analysis which wonderfully harmonizes with T. Slama – Cazacu’s (1988) psycholinguistic method of *Dynamic Contextual Analysis*, emphasizes and takes into account all the psycholinguistic aspects of the translation process. It is a multilateral, global, concentric analysis of the original.

As the author indicates, “under various circumstances, depending on the nature of the text, one or another of the many aspects of analysis mentioned above may either predominate, acquire importance gradually or, on the contrary, decline in value...”⁶⁴ The concept of TOTA inevitably leads us to another one, that of the interpretive theory of translation, which has to do mainly with:

- observing conventions of form;
- interpreting and translating style and register;
- preserving the coherence and cohesion of the text;
- interpretation of meaning at and above the word level;
- the cultural context.

At this point it would be convenient to mention that “the theory of interpretation studies and compares the original message with that conveyed by the interpreter and endeavors to discern the interplay of thought and language through the evidence supplied by the processes of understanding and expressing.”⁶⁵

Mediation aims to find the appropriate expression to convey a given meaning at a given point in time and in a given context; furthermore, it involves “the identification of relevant concepts and their rewording in another language so that the SL and the TL wordings may correspond only in their temporary meaning in a given speech performance.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Idem, p. 24

⁶⁴ Bantaş 1988:15, apud Croitoru 1996, p. 122

⁶⁵ Seleskovitch 1976:98, apud Croitoru 1996, p. 39

⁶⁶ Croitoru 1996, p. 39

CHAPTER 3 : The Mediator's Status

3.1. Challenges

Our research topic forces us into asserting all over again the major challenge which is language as such – with risks and barriers born within every linguistic system on earth – and obviously the touchstone constituted by the translator-mediator in the light of his skill-generating training and self-assumed roles. These aspects will add layers of significance to the consequences we are going to establish in relation to every translational endeavour.

3.1.1. Language awareness

It is very well known that for mediators there are at least two languages and two cultures involved rather than one. It is also almost sure that mediators are more consciously aware of language and its resources than monolingual communicators are. Both possess procedural knowledge about language, i.e. they know how to operate the system, but they do not necessarily also possess factual knowledge, which stands in fact for knowing that any system has a certain spectrum of characteristics.

The usual question that appears at this point is “How does the mediator move from one language to the other in the course of translation?” The answer might be provided by a study of the communication process, as well as of the translation process.

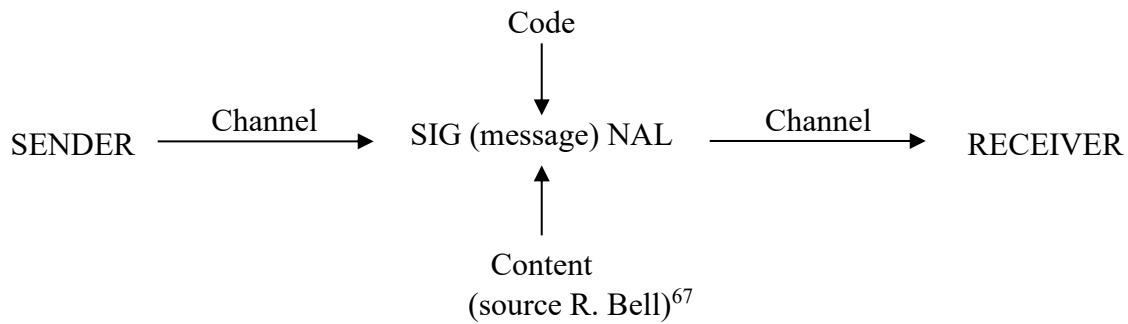
There are two situations that appear here and should be pointed out: monolingual communication and translation.

The process of monolingual communication can be described in terms of nine steps. In Bell's (1991) opinion, these are:

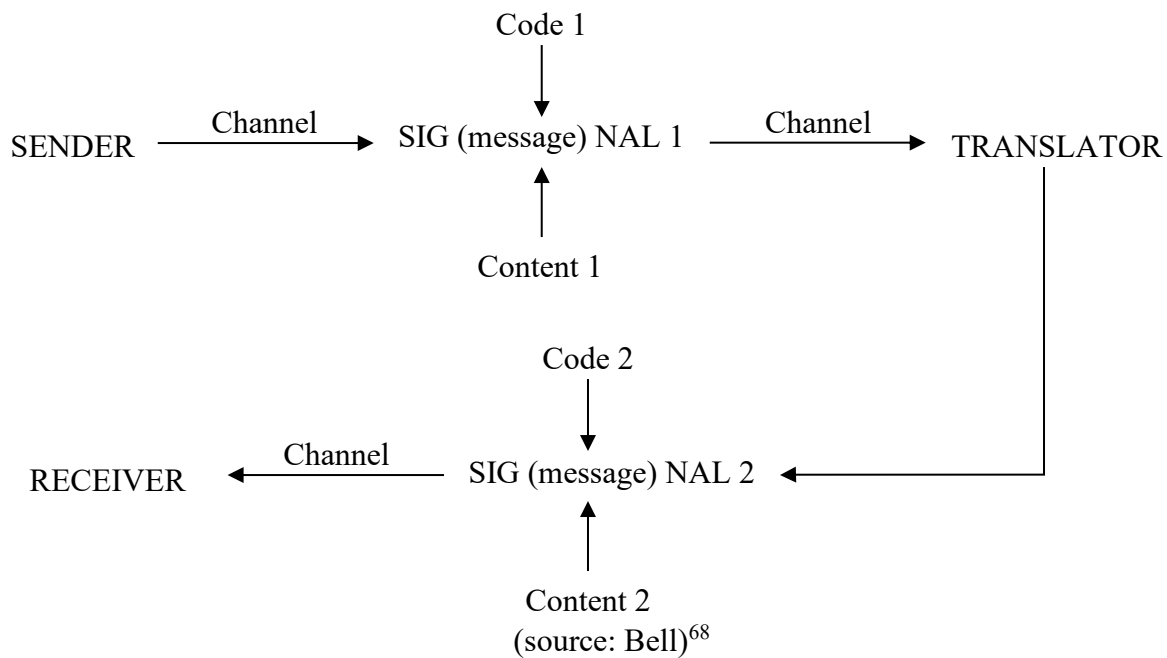
1. the sender selects the message and the code
2. the sender encodes the message
3. the sender selects the channel
4. the sender transmits the signal containing the message
5. the receiver receives the signal containing the message
6. the receiver recognises the code

7. the receiver decodes the signal
8. the receiver retrieves the message
9. the receiver understands the message

The process of monolingual communication and its steps can be seen even more clearly in the following figure:



The second situation, that of bilingual communication involving translation can be represented as follows:



The steps in this case are:

⁶⁷ Bell, R. 1991. *Translation and Translating. Theory and Practice*, London and New York: Longman, p. 18

⁶⁸ Idem, p. 19

1. the translator receives signal 1 containing the message
2. the translator recognizes code 1
3. the translator decodes signal 1
4. the translator retrieves the message
5. the translator comprehends the message
6. the translator selects code 2
7. the translator encodes the message by means of code 2
8. the translator selects channel
9. the translator transmits signal 2 containing the message

As Edward Sapir (apud Bassnett, 1991) claims, “language is a guide to social reality”⁶⁹ and human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality.

Many structural contrasts appear between language systems rather than during communication across cultural barriers - therefore, the former are of greater importance. That is why translation becomes a branch of contrastive linguistics, and translation problems become a matter of the non-correspondence of certain formal categories in different languages. For Catford (1965), “a formal correspondent is any TL category which may be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the ‘same’ place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL”.⁷⁰

The assumption that ‘formal correspondence’ is of relevance to translation studies generates an investigation of ‘equivalence probability’, i.e. an attempt to arrive at a statistical calculation of the degree of probability that a given SL category will, in any text, be rendered by an equivalent TL category.

Hatim and Mason (1992) showed that the probability of the French ‘dans’ to be rendered by the English ‘in’ is calculated, in the case of a particular pair of texts, at 73 per cent.

Jakobson (1959), another theorist concerned with contrasts between the mechanics of different languages, is of the opinion that “languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they can convey.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Edward Sapir, apud Bassnett-McGuire, 1991, p. 13

⁷⁰ Catford, J. C. 1965. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 32

⁷¹ Jakobson 1959:236, apud Hatim, Mason 1992, p. 26

It is also believed that all natural languages have the capacity to express all sorts of experiences of the cultural communities of which they are part, but non-correspondences appear due to the grammatical and lexical structures and categories specific to any language. Usually, such non correspondences are to be found in the categories of deixis. In the case of the English personal pronouns, for instance, gender and [+/- human] are expressed in the third person singular (he / she / it), but not also in the plural (they).

In French, the personal pronoun ‘vous’ is used to express not only the plural of the second person, but also politeness.

e.g. *Vous avez raison, mes amis.*

Vous êtes très gentil, Monsieur Gerard.

In Romanian, there is a three-way polite / familiar distinction (tu / dumneata / dumneavoastră).

e.g. *Tu ești ca și copilul meu.*

Dumneata, vecine, știi despre ce vorbesc.

Domnule doctor, dumneavoastră sunteți ultima mea speranță.

The Italian language also has different pronominal forms, pronouns to differentiate between formal and informal register, in the third person both singular and plural, respectively *egli* / *ella* / *essi* / *esse* and *lui* / *lei* / *loro*.

The informal variant of the third person singular feminine *lei*, with all its forms, always written with capital L, is used as a form of address showing great respect. It is the perfect equivalent of the Romanian *dumneavoastră*.

e.g. *E Lei, signora, anche Lei è Americana?*

Prego, dica, signore, posso aiurda La?

3.1.2. Challenging bilingualism

As it can be easily observed with reference to our examples above, there are several major differences between monolingual communication and bilingual communication involving translation. There are two codes, two signals (or utterances or texts or discourses) and two sets of content, consequently more than merely one message.

There are two ways to explain these differences. One of them is a psycholinguistic explanation, which focuses mainly on two steps in the first figure presented, namely decoding and encoding.

Considering things from the point of view of text-linguistic or sociolinguistic, the other explanation focuses more on the participants, on the nature of the message and on the ways in which the resources of the code are drawn upon by users to create meaning-carrying signals and the fact that a socio-cultural approach is required to set the process in context.

3.2. Tasks

Through the authentic literary creation, language acquires the force and power it needs and deserves. The translator must discover (a) this *inner power* of the word, (b) the sparkling *associations of contrast*, (c) the perfect *adequacy* of a word or phrase in every linguistic context and (d) the coexistence of differing *cultural contexts*. All of these letter-introduced discoveries can be safely called tasks for the cultural mediator.

A supplementary task of the mediator is to observe and render exactly *the means* the writer makes use of to refer to a certain location and time. That is to say, the mediator should be faithful to the writer, to his/ her intentions but also to the traditional background, culture and language from which and into which he/ she translates. He/ she must try hard to spot some older or more recent sense in order to render the cultural images across language, culture and time borders and barriers.

In Peter Newmark's (1991) opinion, the first ability of the translator as mediator is that of writing neatly, naturally and deftly in his language of habitual use, in a variety of registers appropriate to the topic and situation: to write "plain" language. With "plain", he mentions, one should think of honest, direct, clear, unadorned, sincere, smooth, simple language. The translator uses fresh language, with the stress not on outdated grammar rules, but "on avoiding the vogue for jargon words like *interface*, *parameter*, *perception*, *expertise*, *interaction*, *crucial*, *communicative* (...) and so on, and still knowing when to use them." ⁷²

Then, according to his point of view, the translator has to be conversant with and responsible for the topic, the referential meaning of the text: he or she has to check figures, facts,

⁷² Newmark, P. 1991. *About Translation*, London: Multilingual Matters Ltd., p. 62

places, proper names. The translator's first duty is to the truth, to the facts of the matter, and in informative texts this responsibility comes before his/ her responsibility both to the author and to the readers of the text. Moreover, the translator has a responsibility to the principles of human rights – in this sense, the translator is neither objective, nor anonymous.

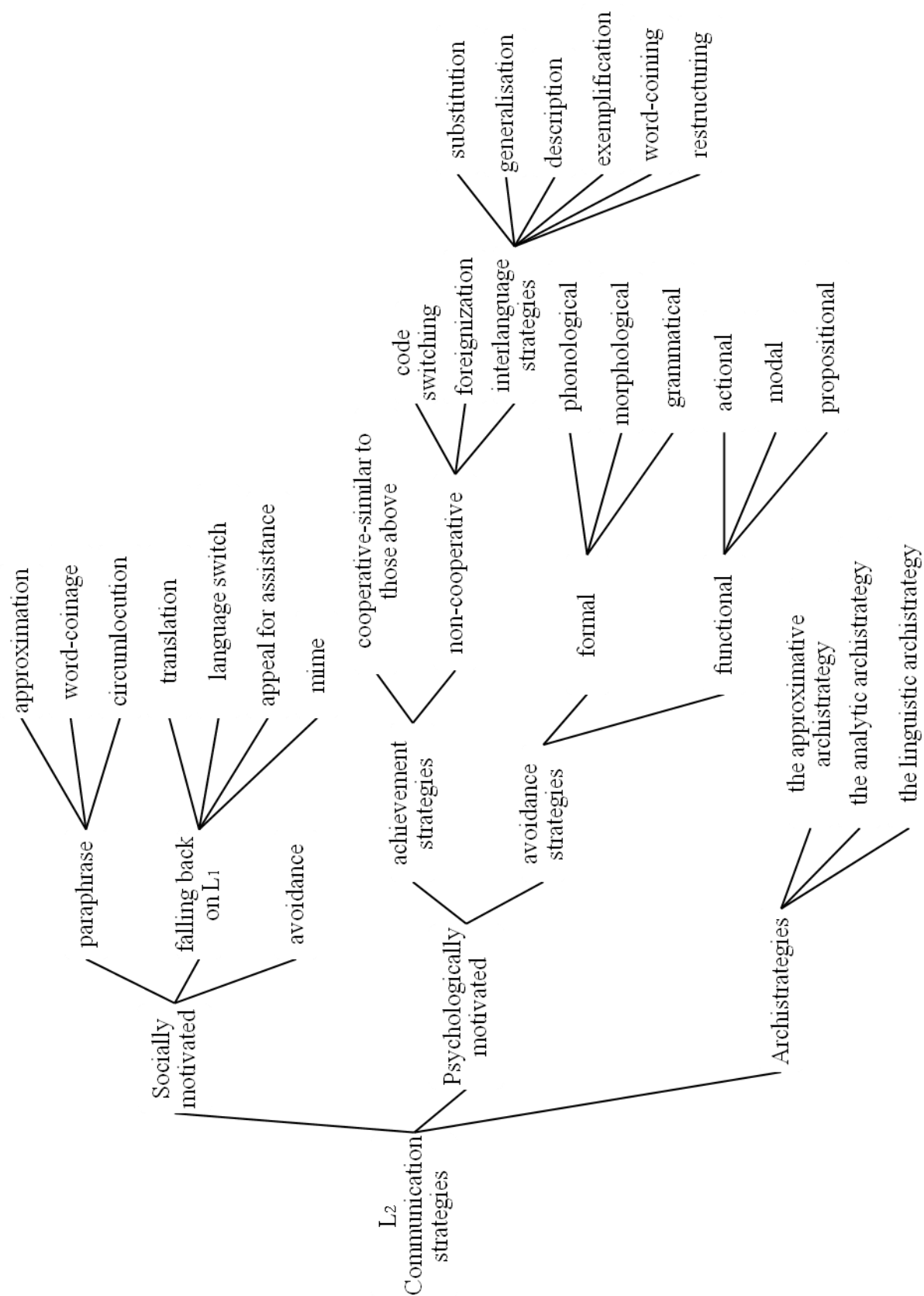
Lastly, the professional mediator has to have an “appropriate knowledge of at least two, and normally more than two, foreign languages.”⁷³

R. Bell (1991) says that the translating process involves a double awareness on the part of the translator, that of linguistic texture in terms of structure and discourse and of text processing in terms of construction and interpretation, combining knowledge of linguistics and psychology. Both the translation process and the interpretive one aim at communicating the meaning of the original message. Interpretation deals with ideas, with the conceptual content of message, constituting an important intermediate stage in the translating process. In Brislin's (1976) opinion, “translation endeavours to establish linguistic equivalents, whereas interpretation aims at an integral communication of meaning”.⁷⁴

Experts in translatology have unanimously reformulated the act of translating as a task that must be looked upon as a temporary coming to terms with the foreign side of a message in another linguistic code. Owing to the reality that foreignness remains out of reach for uncountable numbers of people, an ever higher development in translation studies is to be envisaged for mankind's intellectual future. As such, this development stays permanently open to refinements coming from contributors all over the world. The strategic side in every approach to translation is taken to pieces quite often as if putting languages and cultures to the test again and again. Communication of the original can and must be raised to higher levels of comprehension and reformulation, so it is always exciting to revisit the graphs of the gist of linguistic communication, such as the one we are reproducing now on the next page of our paper:

⁷³ Idem, p. 62-63

⁷⁴ Brislin, R. 1976. *Translation: Application and Research*, New York: Gardner Press, Inc., p. 92



(source Croitoru)⁷⁵

To conclude this section of the subchapter, we underline the fact that the translation process develops over three stages, implicitly over three kinds of significant tasks:

1. The initial stage is the analysis of the original text, consisting in an interpretation act on the part of the translator, who performs to a large extent the work of a semiotician. The translator must interpret the text and discover its inner structure.
2. The translator proceeds to the transformation of the original text, where deverbalization occurs in order to make the SL text sound natural in the TL.
3. The last effort is the recreation of the message, a recreation oriented towards polishing the final product.

3.3. Skills and roles

Communication in general was compared to translation in particular, due to the fact that both acts imply a transfer of significance and the problem raised is that of “making sense”, in other words to interpret the message, i.e. to decode it and then to reconstruct it, that is to re-encode it. It can be said that any communicator is a translator. The difference appears when we look closer and we observe that while the normal communicator has to work into one language, the translator has to re-encode it into a different language. Thence, the translator may be defined as “a bilingual mediating agent between monolingual communication participants belonging to two different language communities.”⁷⁶

3.3.1. Exploration of the author’s intentions

Bantaş (1988) claims that the translator, being the first receiver of the text in a foreign language, must become conscious of the author’s ideas and intentions and try to conserve as many of them as possible: “he must discern the author’s general as well as specific intentions, his reference to proverbs, etc., other meta-textual, inter-textual allusions, etc. (a point in which the

⁷⁵ Croitoru, E. 1996. *Interpretation and Translation*, Galați: Editura Porto Franco, p. 177

⁷⁶ Idem, *ibidem*, p. 28

dynamic contextual analysis as well as intertextuality ought to help him, alongside his general background, all-round culture, etc.)”⁷⁷

According to Paul Newmark, “any fool can learn a language but it takes an intelligent person to become a translator”⁷⁸, considering that translation is a complex task, involves a lot of skill, preparation, knowledge and an intuitive feeling for texts. On the one hand, the translator is an applied linguist who has some obligations of furthering the reader’s understanding of language and the ability to explain the acts of communication in which he/she is continually engaged. On the other hand, the translation is characterized as one of the most powerful tools of negotiation between communication partners, the translator has a meta-communicational role, as he/ she is involved as a third party in capturing the initial communication and establishing a hypothetical situation of communication in the LC₂. In this respect, the mediator need to possess objective competence based on interlinguistic techniques and a subjective creativity in that he/ she decides upon the translator’s options and the conditions in which they are to be inscribed. He/ she has to mediate between the two situations; he “will take upon himself to define the norms and options that need to be established between two language cultures.”⁷⁹ At this point, we need to come up with examples.

Oscar Wilde mentions in the third chapter of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a certain “Blue-book” (“Well I can tell you anything that is an English Blue-book”). It makes references to a reality specific to the British culture, i.e. a report or other printed paper by Parliament, wrapped in blue paper. In this case a word-for-word translation is needed: we shouldn’t replace it by a target specific culture term which we consider to be the possible equivalent. Also, it has to be translated by using a definite article, to avoid a possible confusion in the mind of the reader, thinking of any book with blue covers.

Other illustrative examples are:

backwoodsman – *colonist în pădurile seculare ale Americii*

banshee – *zâna care prevestește moartea prin tânguiri* (Irish / Scottish myth)

ceilidh – *petrecere dansantă* (Irish / Scottish culture)

⁷⁷ Bantaș, 1988:7, apud Croitoru 1996, p.33

⁷⁸ Newmark, P. 1991. *About Translation*, London: Multilingual Matters Ltd., p. 95

⁷⁹ Hewson, L., Martin, J. 1991. *Redefining Translation. The Variational Approach*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 28

changeling – *copil lăsat de elfi în schimbul celui răpit de ei* (in fairytales)
cișmegiu / cișmigi – *manager of public fountains* (Romanian history)
cipilică – *kiss-me-quick*
fluierice – *hunter's whistle used to lure the game*
jupân – *boyar of the highest rank* (Romanian history)
jupâniță – *the wife of a "jupân"* (Romanian history)
lipcan – *official courier (Turkish or Tartar, employed by Moldavian and Wallachian rulers)* (Romanian history)
mocănaș – *popular pastoral dance in Moldavia and Dobrudja; the tune of this dance*
țimir – *official guide for foreign travellers* (Romanian history)
țuțuian – *Transylvanian shepherd*
vasilică – *adorned pig's head carried on a tray by lads who sing carols on New Year's*

Eve

The translator, also named the translation operator (TO), explores the ST aiming to render the initial text into the TT. His/ her attention must be drawn to the LC₁ specific elements of the text, which take a certain importance when considering the text from the TT perspective. In other words, the translation operator must be competent in two STs. The mediator needs to have knowledge and practice of three independent developing entities, i.e.:

- semantic knowledge, referring to the translator's proper choice to render the content embedded in the original text;
- syntactic knowledge, i.e. how clauses are patterned to carry the propositional content;
- pragmatic competence, in order to render the exact intention of the creator of the message.

As a conclusion, mention should be made that the TO's competence, which is measured by his / her ability to analyse and convert two cultural systems, is of utmost importance.

3.3.2. Exploration of the transposing process

One of definitions of translation is "the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language."⁸⁰

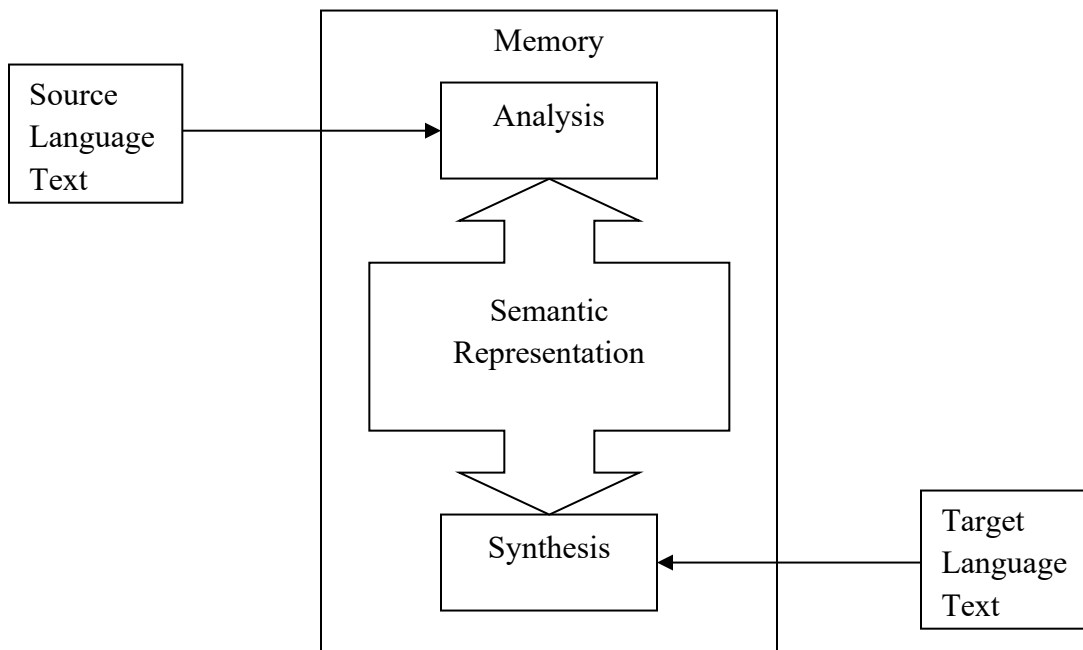
⁸⁰ Bell, R. 1991. *Translation and Translating. Theory and Practice*, London and New York: Longman, p. 20

According to Holmes (1974), the translating process is a mental process. During it, the mediator must inspect the choices from a wide range of possibilities. Subjective decisions can be introduced, i.e. the translation process implies initial decisions that determine subsequent decisions.⁸¹

R. Bells argues that translation seen as a processual attempt is the transformation of a SLT into a TLT by means of processes which take place within memory:

- the analysis of one language – specific text, i.e. the SLT into a universal (non language specific) semantic representation;
- the synthesis of that semantic representation into a second language specific text, i.e. the TLT.

The ideas stated above can be better understood if studying the following figure:



(source Bell)⁸²

S. Bassnett-McGuire (1991) recommends a descriptive rather than prescriptive approach to the translating process, admitting that the purpose of the translation theory is “to reach an understanding of the process undertaken in the act of translation and, not, as is so commonly

⁸¹ Holmes , 1974 apud Gentzler, E. 1993. *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London: Routledge, p. 31

⁸² Bell, 1991 apud Croitoru Croitoru, E. 1996. *Interpretation and Translation*, Galați: Editura Porto Franco, p. 51

misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation.”⁸³ Bell (1991) describes the translating development as an attempt to understand this “playing of the machine”. In his opinion, this demands a double awareness, that of linguistic texture in terms of structure and of discourse and, at the same time, that of text processing in terms of construction and interpretation.

The process of translation also includes the problems of equivalence, which will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters to follow.

It is worth mentioning here that the semantic and / or stylistic characteristics of the ST in the course of translating it into the TT should be “preserved” as much as possible.

3.3.3. Exploration of meta-communication for a translator’s purposes

We remember that, in R. Bell’s opinion, the translator should own, as a communicator, the knowledge and skills that are common to all communicators, but in at least two languages. The concept of meta-communication has been developed so as to cover additional ground, to show how the information contained in a communicated piece should be read or interpreted. A message accompanied by meta-communication becomes the opposite of what it says, for example in irony, or is exactly what it says in a supportive way, for example in a transparent political message. Gestures can be part of meta-communication, as well as other verbal and non-verbal cues.

To begin the exploration of this topic while relating it to a translator’s skills, we recall the piece of evidence that a knowledge-base applies equally to all translators, professional or amateur, technical or not, simply because “translation is translation whoever does it (this is, of course, by no means to deny the likelihood of the professional doing a far better job) and because ‘real world’ knowledge is not the special preserve of the ‘technical’ translator but the possession of all communicators.”⁸⁴ (Bell 1991:36)

Meta-communication is clearly an asset whenever there is bilingual competence.

Therefore, the translators need to know:

- a) how propositions are structured, i.e. semantic knowledge;

⁸³ Basnett-McGuire, S. 1991. *Translation Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 37

⁸⁴ Bell, R. 1991. *Translation and Translating. Theory and Practice*, London and New York: Longman, p. 36

- b) how clauses can be synthesized to carry propositional content and analysed to retrieve the content embedded in them, i.e. syntactic knowledge, and
- c) how the clause can be realised as information-bearing text and the text decomposed into the clause, i.e. pragmatic knowledge. Lack of knowledge or control in any of the three cases would mean that the translator could not translate.

There is a probability for analysts to interpret meta-communication as idealism. Maybe one of the most important section of a translator's knowledge is the so-called ideal bilingual competence, which, according to Bell, would be an abstraction from actual bilinguals engaged in imperfectly performing tasks of translation... but (unlike them) operating under none of the performance of actual translation.

Chomsky was interested as well in the goals of linguistic theory and in the competence of the "ideal speaker-hearer". He viewed translation theory as primarily concerned with an ideal bilingual reader-writer, who would know both languages and who would not be affected by memory, distractions, shifts of attention or interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying this knowledge in actual performance.

Mention should be made here also of the expert system, which describes translation competence in terms of generalizations based on inferences drawn from the observation of a translator performance.

The expert system is a specialized software package which is intended to give users the possibility to benefit from the knowledge of an expert human consultant, knowledge which is typically presented as a collection of rules, held as data, which may be updated with use.

This type of system, i.e. a translator expert one, contains two basic components.

The first of them, the knowledge base, consists of:

- a) source language knowledge, the syntactic rule systems of the code, its lexicon and semantics and its text-creating systems;
- b) target language knowledge, equivalent to that in the SL;
- c) text-type knowledge;
- d) domain knowledge;
- e) contrastive knowledge of each of the above.

Both source and target language knowledge are extremely important. A comparison can be drawn between the ST and the TT in the following columns:

By Jane this attention was received with the greatest pleasure, but Elizabeth still saw superciliousness in their treatment of everybody, hardly excepting even her sister, and could not like them; though their kindness to Jane, such as it was, had a value as arising in all probability from the influence of their brother's admiration.

Jane primi acest compliment cu cea mai mare plăcere; dar Elizabeth încă vedea îngâmfare în felul lor de a trata pe toată lumea, făcând cu greu excepție chiar și în cazul surorii ei, și nu putea să le simpatizeze, deși amabilitatea lor față de Jane, atâta câtă era, părea că se datorează admirației fratelui lor.

(J. Austen, **Pride and Prejudice**, apud Croitoru, Popescu, Dima 1998:16)

The denotative meaning of the noun *value* is not important in our discussion, but the connotative one is, although the noun is no longer part of what is being communicated in the translated version. Consequently, *had a value as arising in all probability from...* can only be translated as *părea că se datorează în deplinătatea efectelor sale....*

The second component, an inference mechanism, permits:

- a) the decoding of texts, i.e. reading and comprehending source language texts;
- b) the encoding of texts, i.e. writing target language texts, e.g. a writer's assistant system which helps with the writing⁸⁵

For instance the sentence *He fell off his chair when hearing the news* can be appropriately translated into Romanian only if the meaning of the phrase *to fall off one's chair* is decoded correctly, i.e. to be overwhelmed with wonder.

Consequently, the Romanian equivalent of the sentence above will be *La auzul veștilor, rămase cu gura căscată / mut de uimire.*

If not decoded properly, a deficient decoding of the SL phrase will bring about a wrong encoding in TL.

Consequently if not correctly decoded and encoded, the sentence above would be rendered as *La auzul veștilor căzu de pe scaun.*

⁸⁵ Sharples and O'Malley 1988, p. 276-90, apud Bell 1991, p. 40

- Communicative Competence

The knowledge (and ability) possessed by the translator which permits him / her to create communicative acts – discourse – which are not only (and not necessarily) grammatical but socially appropriate, is in fact a manifestation of meta-communicative competence.

To sum up, meta-communicative competence minimally consists of the last two areas, out of four areas of knowledge and skills:

1. Grammatical competence: knowledge of the rules of the code, including vocabulary and word-formation, pronunciation / spelling and sentence structure, i.e. the knowledge and skills required to understand and express the literal meaning of utterances.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: knowledge of and ability to produce and understand utterances appropriately in context, i.e. as constrained by topic, the status of the participants, purposes of the interaction, etc.
3. Discourse competence: the ability to combine form and meaning to achieve unified spoken or written texts in different genres. This unity depends on cohesion in form (the way in which utterances are linked structurally to facilitate interpretation of text) and coherence in meaning (the relationships among the different meanings in a text; literal meanings, communicative functions or social meaning).
4. Strategic competence: the mastery of communication strategies which may be used to improve communication or to compensate for breakdowns (caused by limiting factors in actual communication or by insufficient competence in one or more of the other components of communicative competence).

Before going on with the process of translation, there should be mentioned also Newmark's (op. cit.) opinion with regard to the translator and his / her activity. He, like other translatoologists, believes that the specific skills of the translator include sensitivity to language, the ability to write neatly, plainly and nicely in a variety of registers in the target language as well as having a good knowledge of its cultural background, the ability to research often temporarily the topic of the texts being translated, and to master one specialization. Last but not least, he/ she needs to have a good reading knowledge of two or more foreign languages with their cultural backgrounds.

In addition to these skills, Newmark (ibidem) enumerates six general qualities that a translator must have:

- a) common sense, or the ability to detect and expose nonsense;
- b) discrimination in weighing one option against another;
- c) speed in working against a deadline;
- d) the ability to think of several things at the same time;
- e) meticulousness, the attention to details-figures, SI units, spelling, omissions, proper names, though this isn't so important if, as it should be, all work is revised;
- f) lateral and vertical thinking, i.e. the ability to let one's mind play around a problem.⁸⁶

Eventually, we sum up in our own way the translator's roles as follows: interesting communicator; mindful reviser; organized language worker; common-sensical error detective; speedy and punctual linguist; successful cultural mediator; persuasive advocate of progressive ideas as part of globalised culture.

CHAPTER 4: APPLICATION ON QUOTES, UNCOVERING MEDIATING EFFORTS

4.1. The intentions of the application

When communicating, humans alternate informal, personal advice with clichés, slogans or quotes – from proverbs to maxims or stereotypical pronouncements – meant most consciously to influence their interlocutors, as long as nobody offers samples of wisdom without a strong wish that their implicit or explicit advice be followed.

All the quotes we have picked below are concerned with the possibility and the means of creating powerful characters out of the advice-takers.

The following quotes are taken into consideration:

1. "Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." (Vince Lombardi)

⁸⁶ Newmark, P. 1991. *About Translation*, London: Multilingual Matters Ltd., p. 49-50

2. “Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” (Thomas A. Edison)
3. “When you lose a lover it’s like getting a bad haircut. It grows back in time.” (Sammy Davis, Jr.)
4. “Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” (Theodore Roosevelt)

We must notice the shifts in the focalizing angles: first, ambition to go up in the world; second, the attack on defeatists; third, consolation after loss of love; fourth, encouragement for unassuming folks. Then we must observe that mental strength seems to be shared as an ideal by all those thinkers coming from a variety of fields of activity, yet building up careers in the same span of around eighty years in history: the interval from the last term of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. Probably these decades had been of much toughness for those who lived them and who were in bad need of building resilience in their inner worlds.

The set of the four famous statements will be analyzed by us methodically, by following three stages:

- explanation of the messages
- our translations into Romanian
- description of the mediating initiatives adopted while translating

The purpose for putting down wise thoughts such as the above ones is, in the long run, to get their readers to trust the fact that a discourse world can really become a possible world even for ordinary beings. This basic idea will result also as an inference from our paraphrasing activity to be found in a later subchapter of the dissertation.

4.2. Background information on quotes and quoters

The explanations of the embedded message will be preceded by documentation on the personalities behind the words, in order to make sure that not even the slightest hint between the lines can be missed by us.

Here are a few words about the authors of the quotes:

Vincent Thomas "Vince" Lombardi (June 11, 1913– September 3, 1970) was an American football player, coach, and executive. He is best known as the head coach of the Green Bay Packers during the 1960s, where he leads the team to three straight and five total National Football League championships in seven years, including winning the first two Super Bowls following

the 1966 and 1967 NFL seasons. He is considered by many one of the best and most successful coaches in NFL history.

Thomas Alva Edison (February 11, 1847 – October 18, 1931) was an American inventor and businessman. He developed many devices that greatly influenced life around the world, including the phonograph, the motion picture camera, and the practical electric light bulb. He was one of the first inventors to apply the principles of mass production and large-scale teamwork to the process of invention, and he is often credited with the creation of the first industrial research laboratory.

Samuel George "Sammy" Davis Jr., (December 8, 1925 – May 16, 1990) was an American entertainer. Primarily a dancer and singer, he was also an actor of stage and screen, musician, and impressionist, noted for his impersonations of actors, musicians and other celebrities.

Theodore "T.R." Roosevelt, Jr. (October 27, 1858 – January 6, 1919) was an American politician, author, naturalist, soldier, explorer, and historian who served as the 26th President of the United States. He was a leader of the Republican Party (GOP) and founder of the Progressive Party insurgency of 1912.

In the end of this subchapter, it is perhaps useful to point out the fact that we have documented ourselves amply on the achievements of the afore-mentioned personalities for the sake of learning the good grounds on which they are entitled to volunteer guidance to their fellow-beings.

4.3. Paraphrasing the message

The quotes can be grouped into two categories as follows: the first (Lombardi's) with the last (Roosevelt's) quotes for illustrating the inspirational line and the middle ones (Edison's and Sammy Davis Jr's) for being motivational.

We may say that Lombardi starts from a dead end of actions. Despite the fact that perfection cannot be reached, we should still act as if we were able to reach it one day. A positive person might say that the message is really inspirational and we should stand up and do our best in all jobs. A negativist person might say that there is no point at all in doing the best one can, in dreaming or in hoping. As long as we know how things are from the beginning, what is the point to behave as if we were blind and to think that there might be a way? The key word "excellence" might be exactly what a negativist needs to be convinced that he/ she should stand up and enjoy

life. We might not be the best in a domain, in what we do, but at least we have the feeling that we did try to be, and the “excellence” can be exactly the events we live on our path toward reaching our goals. The thing we do, or we learn to do, or we cope with on our way to “excellence” is what makes us stronger, smarter, and that very thing, in the end, defines us. If the idea of trying counts more than the idea of reaching where you want, this idea can determine someone to “fight” for excellence and this idea is, for sure, a personal option.

Roosevelt has a different way in trying to motivate people. He advises people to start from the very beginning to believe in themselves, in their capacity of being able to do things. Once this stage is completed, we can consider that those things, necessary to be done to achieve something, are partially done. In this case a positivist might say that, by believing, we activate the law of nature, and we harvest what we plant. Therefore, as long as we act as if we really can do something, we will end up by doing it. A negativist might take this quote to a very personal level and he/ she might even blame the author by making him/ her feel guilty about the lack of success of his/ her actions. We need to do real things to achieve something; so, why think that we ourselves should stop to analyze whether we believe or not that we can do it? Is it necessary to ask ourselves if we can something or not? We certainly need that. When having an aim, we should think about future acts, in case we consciously knew that we could reach our aim. By imagining our own action, we are paving our way to success.

The other two quotes have in common the fact that they try to motivate us by giving us that click to push personal efforts further on.

Edison’s quote tries somehow to pamper our ego. We are great human beings, able to do anything in this world, but we may never try enough times. We should not give up easily, no matter how hard something is; maybe it is necessary for us to take exactly one more step. What if the next time we try it is going to be successful? We can remember for an instant Sisyphus, the Greek king who was punished for chronic deceitfulness by being compelled to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this action forever. We could imagine him thinking that maybe he has to do the work one more time and it will be the last time. We could also say that is the case of our actions when we try again and again without succeeding. But the word “try” might be the clue we need to give this quote an optimistic approach. Trying means a new attempt to do something. Trying is not repeating the actions in the same way as we used to do them. If we tried something and it did not work then we should try again but we must use other

tools or means. After thinking about how we do things and what exactly we do or did, then we might be able to make the necessary corrections in order to be successful.

I would say that Davis' quote is slightly ironic and mean. In this context, "lose" means to "break up", "to end a relationship", not "to die". "Getting a bad haircut" suggests that someone else gives us a bad time and ruins our mood. The use of the word "get" is very interesting because it connects the two actions presented; "get" and "lose" are actions done or initiated by someone else, not by ourselves. We "receive" the haircut, and we "face" the tough moment when someone walks away from our life. As a comforting thought, we are told that, in time, things change and are going to be better. Our hair will grow back and we will have the chance to decide again what we want or how we want to look. In the same way, we will have again the opportunity to select the person we want to be next to us or to decide how we want things to happen.

Inspirational or motivational, we need to hear quotes, because we can get motivated, or at least feel some encouragement, knowing that there is someone in this big world who had the same problems as we are having. And if there was a way that worked for someone, it means that we can do it, too.

4.4. Suggested translations into Romanian

English	Romanian
"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence." (Vince Lombardi)	a) Perfecțiunea este intangibilă, dar dacă ne-o propunem putem atinge excelența. b) Nu atingem vreodată perfecțiunea, dar alergând după ea putem ajunge la performanță.
"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." (Thomas A. Edison)	a) Slăbiciunea noastră cea mare constă în a renunța. Cea mai sigură cale de a reuși este întotdeauna să mai încerci o dată. b) Slăbiciunea noastră capitală este să ne dăm bătăuți. Modul cel mai sigur de a reuși, în orice situație, este încă o încercare.

“When you lose a lover it’s like getting a bad haircut. It grows back in time.” (Sammy Davis, Jr.)	a) Când pierzi o iubită este ca și când te alegi cu o tunsoare proastă. În timp toate se rezolvă. b) Când pierzi o iubire e ca și când cineva te-a tuns prost. Trece timpul și apare o altă față.
“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” (Theodore Roosevelt)	a) Crede că poți și scopul e pe jumătate atins. b) Când crezi în forțele proprii ești de două ori mai aproape de destinație.

4.5. Description of mediating initiatives

We have purposefully limited the variants in Romanian to two in the previous subchapter, allowing at the same time the multiplication of ideas for translating words or phraseological patterns in different ways when we approach mediation critically, accounting for our choices. Our (a) propositions will appear with a weaker mediation when discussed by the side of our (b) propositions. There are very many other possibilities of playing with words!

Case 1

“Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.”

(Vince Lombardi)

a) *Perfecțiunea este intagibilă, dar dacă ne-o propunem putem atinge excelența.*

b) *Nu atingem vreodată perfecțiunea, dar alergând după ea putem ajunge la performanță.*

- The translated Romanian version to be found on the internet is “Perfecțiunea nu este realizabilă. Dar urmărind perfecțiunea putem prinde excelența.”⁸⁷ We admit we approve of the dynamism included in the twin verbal choice of the internet author, ‘a urmări - a prinde’, for it mirrors the sportive nature of Vince Lombardi himself. ‘Chase’ is not a mere ‘a fugi’, it actually means pursuing in order to catch and capture/kill/hunt; as such, there is a correlation between the verbs used by the sportsman, chase + catch, and that should be preserved.

⁸⁷ <http://www.citatemotivationale.com/tag/perfectiune/>

- We prefer the use of ‘intangibilă’ instead of ‘realizabilă’ or ‘accesibilă’, as it helps to illustrate the negation while excluding ‘not’. Maybe ‘intangibilă’ is a little harsh and it places ‘perfection’ onto a very high level. The negative point of the (a) translation might be that ‘intangibil’ is a negativistic word, and instead of motivating people, instead of tickling their courage, it might inhibit it. Moreover, in “nu este realizabilă”, readers might memorize “este realizabilă” or just “realizabilă”, and in this case they will feel empowered.
- In the second part of the propositions (a) and (b), we use the conjunction ‘dar’, as its psychological effect is to erase all the information passed so far and to replace it by a positive meaning. Indeed ‘chase’ is closer to the Romanian version ‘urmărind’ than ‘propunem’, in the same way as ‘catch’ is closer to ‘prinde’ than ‘atinge’. In (a) and (b) translations we feel the cadence of the message. Then, using ‘ne-o’ instead of repeating ‘perfectiune’ might reduce the energy of the message. On the other hand, ‘o’ might raise even confusion, as the reader will ask himself what is the referent of the pronominal form ‘o’ and he will need to read again the whole quote. ‘Catch’ undeniably is not ‘atinge’ and certainly is ‘prinde’. But ‘atinge’ makes the connection with the first part of the text; if at the beginning excellence was “not attainable” meaning “irealizabilă”, now there is a ray of sunshine at the end of our action, there is a motivational “atinge”. Objectively speaking, we think the second version (b) uses the more appropriate word by word meaning, whereas the first translation (a) is for sure the message of what and how we felt the original message to make sense.
- We consider it of some importance to discuss the meanings of a couple of key words in Romanian, namely ‘perfectiune’, ‘exelență’ and ‘performanță’. Dex online prompts the synonymous ‘desăvârșire’ for the first noun – which may sound more literary if used in any of the Romanian texts. As for the second noun, the two situations when the dictionary recommends its use are (1) the title for addressing ambassadors or the honorific address to high officials and (2) something exceptionally good. Therefore, in Romanian we think that the best match for the meaning of excellence in the original is the third Romanian noun on the list, ‘performanță’, in tune with either of the two definitions, ‘a particularly good result scored in sports competitions’ or ‘a prominent achievement in a domain of activity’. Besides, if we re-read the three Romanian nouns on our list, they can be found to mean less and less in expected value, like saying ‘best’-‘better than most’-‘good’. So, for the end part of Lombardi’s maxim, we can also suggest a way out of this difficulty of finding and expressing the distinctions between ‘exelență’ and ‘performanță’:

we can resort to replacement by ‘superioritate’, maybe even “superioritate față de semenii noștri” at the end of the aphorism.

Case 2

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” (Thomas A. Edison)

a) *Slăbiciunea noastră cea mare constă în a renunța. Cea mai sigură cale de a reuși este întotdeauna să mai încerci o dată.*

b) *Slăbiciunea noastră capitală este să ne dăm bătăuți. Modul cel mai sigur de a reuși, în orice situație, este încă o încercare.*

- For this quote the only Romanian translation posted on the internet was “Cea mai mare dovadă de slăbiciune este să renunți”⁸⁸, which seems to be just the first part of our text. The deletion of the second half reduces the pleading tone of the advisory line.

- In our two variants, we have chosen to change the order of words when translating into Romanian. Starting with ‘slăbiciunea’, we manage to draw attention upon the topic of discourse.

- We prefer to include ‘noastră’ in the translation, because it textually brings people together (or at least the ones who feel like us, or who at least read the quote). In the version found on the internet we feel a certain amount of coldness, as if someone were accused of being weak. This impression comes perhaps from the grammar problem with generic pronouns (‘noi’ in the first utterance versus ‘tu’ in the second utterance). That implies also a change of attitude from solidarity to a moralizing stance. Besides, it is not obvious that the author wants it, due to only one pronoun between the lines in Edison’s text, which is ‘we’ (behind the possessive ‘our’). It is clear to us that Edison does not mean to become peculiarly didactic. In our (b) variant we have managed to avoid didacticism too, since there is no pronominal occurrence or hint about persons.

- The use of ‘constă’ instead of ‘este’ shows that the verb ‘lie’ has no generic meaning, but it is an important fact that happens. Another version in Romanian could be a shortened message: “Cea mai mare slăbiciune este de a renunța.” We could also think about the emphatic note of the advice in the original (emphasis indicated by two superlatives – ‘greatest’ and ‘most certain’ – and two adverbs – ‘always’ and ‘just’) and we could similarly add emphasis to the Romanian wording by saying ‘a renunța ușor’ at the end of the statement.

⁸⁸ <http://www.rightwords.ro/citate/autori/thomas-alva-edison/slabciciune>

- Then, we might reconsider the relative superlative ‘cea mai mare’, a form generally loaded in Romanian with implications of favourable circumstances; that is why we might try its replacement by ‘major(ă)’, (such as in ‘dezastru major’, etc.) or ‘capital’ (such as ‘păcat capital’), subjectively believing that the negative colour can be thought of, after this mediating initiative.
- We can still think of additional possibilities of translating in the case of the adverb ‘always’, since it becomes in Romanian not only ‘întotdeauna’, but also ‘mereu’ and ‘în orice împrejurare’.

Case 3

“When you lose a lover it’s like getting a bad haircut. It grows back in time.”

a) *Când pierzi o iubită este ca și când te alegi cu o tunsoare proastă. În timp toate se rezolvă.*

b) *Când pierzi o iubire e ca și când cineva te-a tuns prost. Trece timpul și apare o altă față.*

- A Romanian version to be read on the internet says “Când pierzi o iubită e ca o tunsoare nereușită. Cu timpul părul îți crește la loc.”⁸⁹

- In both versions of this translation, the verb ‘lose’ becomes ‘pierzi’, following the wording and the word order from the English original. The special problem is created by its grammatical object fulfilling its transitivity (‘losing what?’). Let us examine the answer. The trick in the Romanian language is that we do have genders for the English unique form but dual gender in the noun ‘lover’, so how should we know whether this is a discussion about ‘iubit’ or ‘iubită’? The safest way is to look at the author of the quote; a man will be likely to speak about a woman and vice versa. This is what happens in a traditional approach. Nowadays, without opening the topic of gender mainstreaming, we should come across a safe way to translate ‘lover’ without offending any minority related to gender orientation. We come up with a clumsy slash which is the twinned variant ‘te-a părăsit iubitul/iubita’ and we find that we might make an unfounded guilt-finding when it could have been the case that you dumped him/her, and not the other way round. Consequently, we come up with ‘ai pierdut o iubire’ which strays away from the generalizing present tense use of the original.

- There is a hilarious ‘hair-growth and infatuation’ parallelism in the internet translation - “cu timpul vezi că părul ți-a crescut la loc” (making room for some illogical expression, taking into account the fact that the Romanian ‘tunsoarea’ does not mention ‘păr’, like in the English ‘haircut’). We might also suspect that the effect is intentional on the part of Sammy Davis Jr, he

⁸⁹ <http://autori.citatepedia.ro/de.php?a=Sammy+Davis+Jr>.

could easily have meant satirical glances at love, eventually writing a half-ironical half-funny aphorism in colloquial form. This conclusion has taken us to a more extravagant idea, present in our (b) translation: we have come across the literal and at the same time metaphorical statement "o altă față", it completes the new haircut (changed looks) with a new love (another beloved one)... We diminish the weighty loss of the beginnings... Then, we draw conclusions directly instead of indirection of the message which is rather faulty in logic – that is to say, "revenirea la normal" is part of our lovelife. What is more, we obviously prefer "tunsoare proastă" to "tunsoare nereușită", because it may be that the romantic commitment itself had not been bad when it happened ('reușita' could have been real when it happened, but temporary in nature). Owing to the temporary nature of any hairstyle, haircut or length of hair, the implied idea is that another future choice of person can prove a better match in future. This is how we work out the breach of logic in what Davis says carelessly, about "iubit/iubită" and "tunsoare nepotrivită".

- As for the "bad haircut", we think our (a) translation is a little abrupt, suggesting that the moment hurts quite badly when someone leaves you. We have already pointed to the fact that 'nereușită' can suggest that it was not a bad relationship while it lasted, only not a successful one in the end. We find the second sentence, "It grows back in time", quite difficult to translate. 'It' refers to the hair, as we can see in the English original, but how is it connected to a romantic relationship? Or should they be associated? As it appears, 'time heals' or 'în timp toate se rezolvă', so we'd say that our best version is a very remote rendition of the original, when retrieving the message in the way we did. Things happened in the past, but now it seems we do not even want to mention them, so we just focus on how time can affect lovers by implication only, while talking about altogether different things.

Case 4

"Believe you can and you're halfway there." (Theodore Roosevelt)

a) *Crede că poți și scopul tău e pe jumătate atins.*

b) *Când crezi în forțele proprii ești de două ori mai aproape de destinație.*

- The Romanian version found on the internet is "Crede că poți și problema este pe jumătate rezolvată"⁹⁰.

⁹⁰ <http://www.cugetari.ha-ha.ro/incredere.php>

- Both this internet version and our (a) translation start with “crede” – like a strong urge to do so. In both cases, the personal pronoun is missing; in Romanian, like in other Latin languages, we can understand a sentence without using pronouns every time, especially in this case when “believe” is an imperative. The second part of the sentence is very different from the original in both (a) and (b) translations. In our (a) version, we introduced “scopul”, as we thought “halfway there” shows a point that should be reached. In the second version the noun “destinație” makes an unanticipated appearance, again a word that does not come out in the original text but that implies the thing that needs to be solved. I think the meaning of the source text is “ai parcurs jumătate de drum”. In Romanian, we think this translation will make no immediate connection with the first part of the sentence. The original “half way” is a cautious expression associated with the possibility that the half left to be covered may never be covered if you do not trust yourself.
- We use the verb “e” instead of “este” in our (a) translation because in the original text we find “you’re” and we think we should use a short form like its contracted correspondent in English.
- We should discuss another conflictual condition for Romanian speakers: the imperative for the verb “a crede” for some is “crezi”, for others is “crede”. On the internet, the imperative is the first form in some grammars, and the second in others... How do we solve the problem? We think the version expressly changed into a conditional seems safer, “când crezi că...”, and we go beyond the critical moment... Ultimately, why shouldn't we say from the very beginning “Credința în propriile forțe scurtează calea la jumătate”?
- There is a conviction that the imperative ‘crede’ is to be used alone as grammatical due to a Romanian saying, “crede și nu cerceta” (just trust and do not probe into things), wrongly interpreted to be a quotation from the holy scriptures. Nowhere does the Bible mention that there is such a command, on the contrary, the injunction is to permanently be in search of truth. Worship and search into God’s plans and creation are mutually dependent, they support each other permanently.

Glancing back at our motivated mediation, we sum up the endeavours by stating the finding that the internet is rich in collections of quotes that are indiscriminately called either ‘motivational’ or ‘inspirational’. However, we consider that these thoughts by inspiring leaders and famous writers can be differentiated following a referential criterion that ultimately may be interpreted as a manifestation of subjectivity. Do they refer to wise interpretations of anyone’s life, to life experience expertly lived, or to the wide world philosophically interpreted? Then we deal

with ‘inspirational’ quotes, generally sharing a positive colouring, and orienting their recipient to follow a transmission from the author down to the common reader. Do they refer to work, jobs, careers, success, the joy of discovering and learning? Then the quoted lines are dubbed ‘motivational’ and oriented from the reader upward to the wise adviser. If we adopt this doubly-oriented discursal perspective, we can classify the quotes worked out in this chapter: we subjectively take the first and the fourth quotations to belong to the inspirational group, whereas the middle ones (second and third) sound motivational - for they push the less lucky experiencer toward a higher performance. Ultimately, there may come other analysts to put labels indiscriminately, reversing our categorization, a shift which does not look wrong at all, assuming that analytical minds can argue their standpoint freely.

4.6. Conclusion: mediation and subjectivity seen at work

Associated with the value of universality motivating the birth of quotes is the notion of subjectivity; their subjectivity, if any, must be taken for objectivity by their authors, for they feel they are at objectively motivated – to say the least – by personal life experience.

Eventually, we have to see that the importance of quotes in general is contained in the manifest fact that they are expected to leave a lasting impact on their consumers. Things almost always happen in this direction because we witness the same kind of effect that any carefully chosen words can enjoy. People habitually look forward to the appearance of inspirational messages, especially since the internet surfing and blogging have reshaped the interests of computer-users. Words in those special environments are found to be crafted well and to have credibility in between the quotation marks. Moreover, quotes are memorable with an emphasis when they confirm the suspicions or the expectations of ordinary consumers. These guys look up to great achievers who can, on top of it, be eloquent, clear and concise in discourse. After all, we can take for granted what one of those currently posted internet quotes says to the effect that those people who will influence us are precisely people who do believe in us.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

★ Texts are not neutral, their translation is not neutral either, but impregnated with a translator's biases.

★ Invisibility cannot be invoked either in the case of original authors or in the case of their translators; critique becomes suspicious about cultural benefits if no difference gets negotiated in the process of translating.

★ Meanings are not universal; hence, subjectivity in decoding authorial meanings is naturally allowed to occur in translation work and also in consequential decisions made by the translating mediator.

★ Subjectivity is foregrounded when the translator is not self-effaced in a pretense of modesty, but clearly involved in and committed to some kind of textual manipulation.

★ Translators act mainly as cultural mediators who do not usurp the source, but spread it in a useful contribution to the intellectual welfare of the planet.

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