Relevance Theory and Discourse Analysis:
Complementary Approaches for Translator Training

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ABSTRACT

Since translation is a multi-faceted task, different kinds of difficulties can arise. Two of these have beset translators in every era: (1) receptor language readers are not always aware of contextual information that the source text audience understood, and (2) the receptor language has norms of structural organization that are different from those found in the source text. For mismatches of contextual information considerable help is provided by relevance theory, and its applications to translation are becoming widely known. Relevance theory, however, is not a theory of linguistic structure, and many translation problems involve structural mismatches.

The present paper deals primarily with structural issues, particularly on the discourse level. This level is crucial because, for reasons which are indicated here, discourse mismatches are harder to recognize and adjust for than those on lower levels. There are also reasons why translators need a conscious understanding of discourse issues, beyond the linguistic intuitions that serve so well in the production of natural receptor language discourse. Specific suggestions for translator training include: 1) conduct preliminary research to identify discourse characteristics in language families and areas, as well as in common-used source texts; 2) train in discourse/translation workshops which start with natural receptor language texts and focus on specific mismatches with the source text; and 3) ask experienced translators what problems they have encountered in translation and what kinds of training they have found to be most helpful.

Translation is a multi-faceted task and, as Timothy Wilt has noted, an interdisciplinary subject (Wilt 2003:xii). So it is ipso facto likely that a combination of approaches will be relevant for understanding it and useful in training for it. Among the fruitful approaches are, I believe, relevance theory and discourse analysis: relevance theory for reasons that are well documented elsewhere, and discourse analysis for reasons which I will sketch here. I will, however, begin with a few comments about relevance theory.

1   Relevance Theory

Relevance theory offers valuable insights about how communication is interpreted, which translators need to understand and apply to translation. Some of these insights are the following:[2]

- Interpreting a message involves linguistic coding, face-value semantics and context-based inference; these are used together in an inferential process.

- When information is expressed in a way that requires more than the minimum processing cost, readers or hearers are entitled to look for some kind of increased communicative payoff to justify their efforts.

- There are times when speakers and writers aim at suggesting an array of possible interpretations rather than specifying just one. This is especially true in figurative and poetic language.

- Readers who recognize a text as a translation can also recognize that it comes from a cultural and historical setting different from their own, presenting them with contextual mismatches. Understanding what the message meant in its original setting can thus serve as a preliminary step for seeing what it could mean in their own situation.

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[2] See, for example, Sperber & Wilson 1986[1995], Gutt 1991[2000], Weber 2005, Hill 2006.

- Although contextual mismatches in translation often require that implicit information be made explicit, there are reasons why certain implicit information should not be furnished as part of the text itself.

Of course, as Gutt notes (Gutt 2000:197, fn. 20), not all communicative payoffs in translation require that readers constantly be aware that the text is a translation and "process the text with respect to the original context" (p. 173). For example, in the narrative of the prodigal son, readers might imaginatively see themselves in the far country where the young man is suffering and feel with him, even though they may have never been in that situation and cannot visualize it accurately (Clark & van der Wege 2001). That is, readers sometimes engage in "context skipping", applying the message directly in their own context without closely examining the contextual mismatch. In hortatory discourse, readers can often feel the moral force of a command like "Love your enemies" directly, without the mediating step that begins with its original context. And in expressive discourse, many of us initially applied "The Lord is my shepherd" in a personal sense without knowing specifically how sheep were tended in the source-text culture, although that information can be useful once we become aware of it. For better or for worse, the imaginative, nonmediated mode of interpretation can bypass contextual differences, ignoring implications of the text as a translation, in the process running a serious risk of misunderstanding the intended message.

These two modes of interpretation – one mediated by the fact of translation and the other attempting to apprehend the message directly – are often intertwined and complementary in practice. They are related to Gutt's (1991[2000]) distinction between direct and indirect translation: "direct translation", for Gutt, depends on the reader's awareness of the fact of translation and of the need to use the original context in understanding the message, whereas "indirect translation" fosters a direct, nonmediated, and often personal apprehension of the message. Although recognizing a translation is a translation logically points to the mediated mode of interpretation, probably all of us know what it means to momentarily ignore the fact of translation, skip contexts, and interact with the message directly. These two opposing modes of interpretation can, in fact, be used by the same reader in different readings of the same passage, as distinct strategies for getting at meaning.

It is not my intention here to argue for one mode of interpretation over the other, nor to claim that relevance theory, as a theory, favors one over the other; according to Gutt (2000:200), it doesn't. One might instead argue that a translation can make effective use of both modes; that would be worth pondering. My point here, however, is none of the above, but simply to point out that relevance theory is useful in helping translators address issues such as these. That makes it extremely valuable in the training of translators. Since practitioners of relevance theory have been doing their part in relating it to translation, both in theoretical treatments and in training materials, I will not go further into the advantages of the theory.

2   Structure, Function and Context

Relevance theory, for all its virtues, is not a theory of linguistic structure, and many translation problems involve structural rather than (or as well as) contextual mismatches: the same structure, form, or linguistic pattern does not have the same communicative function in the receptor language as it does in the source text. Apparently in all ages there has been a tendency for translators to copy source text patterns, even though these suggest a wrong meaning or, more commonly, simply make the meaning obscure. Great names in translation have struggled with this problem. Early versions of the translation associated with John Wycliffe, for example, frequently copied source-text structures and had to be quickly revised (Hargreaves 1969:413, de Hamel 2001:174f). In the history of translation theory, a recurrent goal has been to find ways to break free from the automatic copying of formal features. For reasons we will see later, it is generally harder for a translator to recognize that he is copying discourse-level features than lower-level features, and even when this copying is recognized, it can be hard to know how to make adjustments.

Because translators have always had problems with structural mismatches, it makes sense for translator training to deal with these, especially on the level of discourse. Before going further, I would like to clarify two points relating to discourse structure or discourse organization.

- First, I am not saying that a knowledge of lower-level grammatical phenomena is of no interest to translators, but its primary value for them may well be as a prerequisite for understanding discourse patterns: basic grammatical categories are what discourse manipulates for its broader ends. As one Mozambican translator said in a discourse

workshop, "Discourse is what we studied grammar for."

- Second, in mentioning structural patterns I am not advocating a structuralism that discovers patterns divorced from function. Actually, I am talking about functionalism, of the kind that looks for correspondences between structure and real-time communicative function in a given context. By involving context, this kind of functionalism deals with pragmatics (Fillmore 1981:144); by focusing on real-time communication, it goes beyond an interest in how extragrammatical factors have shaped linguistic structures across time (Croft 2001). If I am a translator, the choices before me are about how to communicate a given meaning in a particular context. So I am interested in real-time, pragmatic functionalism, as distinct from structuralism on one hand and diachronic functionalism – why certain structures in the language take the form they do – on the other.

The three-way relationship between structure, meaning, and context allows us to compare relevance theory and discourse analysis in their main areas of focus. Here is one way to see this:
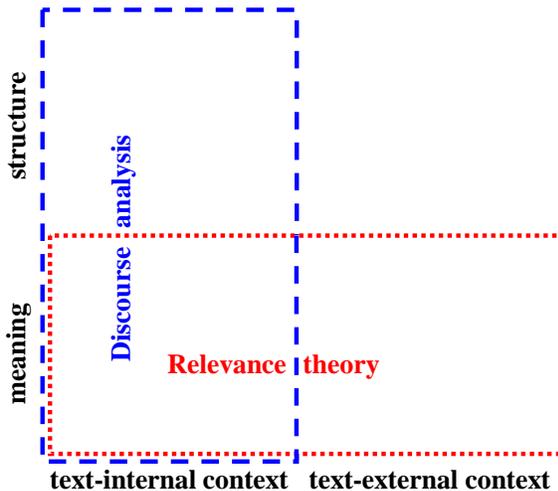

Figure 1: Focal areas in relevance theory and discourse analysis

Relevance theory focuses on the relationship between meaning and context, both text-external and text-internal context (the latter is sometimes called "co-text"). Discourse analysis adds structure to this relationship but generally focuses on text-internal context. [3] This means that the two approaches have partial overlap: neither entirely includes the other (Figure 1). It could be highly productive to use them in conjunction, for example in studying discourse topicality and thematicity, where over a particular stretch of discourse the propositional content is organized around an item of special interest or relevance to the speaker or writer (see Dooley 2007). But that kind of discussion would take us far beyond our subject here.

Discourse is not an amorphous mass. In my view, it has both structural and conceptual patterns, and readers and hearers use both, in a framework of contextual information, in interpreting the text. Discourse patterns are generally not rule-bound as in lower-level grammar, but are more flexible, reflecting underlying conceptual patterns more directly. In fact, many structural discourse patterns can be thought of as epiphenomena of conceptual patterns. But it does not follow that all languages have the same structural discourse patterns: a given conceptual pattern can be realized in different ways in different languages. It is for this reason that copying patterns from the source text can be a problem.

We will be looking at a few specific ways in which languages commonly differ in their discourse patterns, producing cross-linguistic mismatches on the discourse level which, historically, have given

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[3] In the terminology of Brown & Yule (1983:24s), relevance theory, in treating discourse phenomena, has thus far largely taken the approach of "discourse-as-process", while discourse analysis has, in some treatments, combined "discourse-as-process" with "text-as-product".

problems in translation. First, some general comments on discourse issues.

3   Discourse Mismatches in Translation

The fine art of discourse choices was studied in ancient times as "rhetoric", that is, how communication can be packaged so as to be more effective. Those kinds of choices are basic to translation: first in the source text and then in the receptor language, the message is packaged in particular ways, for particular effects. Here we are concerned with mismatches which make problems in translation, where the source text and the receptor language have different ways to package the message for hopefully the same effect, the same communicative function. I mention a few common areas of mismatch, beginning with areas that utilize the notion of discourse units, such as paragraphs or episodes.

Narrative discourse units tend to have **characteristic patterns of information**: certain types of information tend to occur at the beginning of the unit, others medially, and others at the end. We see this in Mark 15:1-5:

Orientation	[1]Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate.
Series of closely related events	[2]Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "It is as you say." [3]The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. [4]Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" [5]But Jesus made no further answer;
Closure	so Pilate was amazed.

Figure 2: Narrative pattern of information in Mark 15:1-5 (New American Standard Bible 1995)

This narrative unit begins in v 1 with orientation information that sets up time, place, and major participants for the unit: 'early in the morning', the Jewish rulers, Jesus, Pilate. There is an event here as the leaders take Jesus to Pilate, but it is largely orientational, setting the place and participants for the unit. From there the unit proceeds with a series of closely related events, speech events, all of which fit within and use the initial orientation. The unit ends in v 5b with an evaluation, from Pilate: he was amazed. Other narrative units may end in a summary or a moral. The general narrative pattern – orientation, event sequence, closure – is conceptually motivated and highly universal. However, languages tend to have their own versions of the pattern and different ways of signalling it, as in sentence-initial connectives, the form of referring expressions, and discourse topics and themes.

- **Sentence-initial connectives** and other sentence-initial devices often have distinctive patterns depending on their position within the discourse unit. In narratives of languages like Mbyá Guarani of Brazil, for example, temporal connectives tend to occur paragraph initially, while causal connectives occur medially (Dooley 1986:66). Beyond this, in certain languages the default is to begin sentences with a connective, generally one which signals a general textual relation rather than a specific semantic relation; in Biblical Hebrew this commonly happens with *waw* and in Koiné Greek with καί.[4] In other languages, including most European languages, the default is rather to begin sentences without a connective. The New American Standard Bible in its first edition of 1971 followed the pattern of the biblical languages, but in its 1995 revision it adopted the natural English pattern where the default is to have no connective. We can see the difference by comparing Mark 15:1-5 in these two versions:

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4 One exception to this is the Gospel of John (Levinsohn 2001:70).

Mark 15:1-5 in NASB 1971	Mark 15:1-5 in NASB 1995
1And early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate. **2And** Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And answering He said to him, "It is as you say." **3And** the chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. **4**And Pilate was questioning Him again, saying, "Do You make no answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" **5**But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate was amazed.	**1Ø** Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate. **2Ø** Pilate questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him, "It is as you say." **3Ø** The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. **4**Then Pilate questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" **5**But Jesus made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.

Figure 3: Sentence-initial connectives in Mark 15:1-5, two versions

In the 1971 version on the left, the connective *and* from Greek καί occurs three times in sentence-initial position; in the 1995 version, these three *and*s are deleted, in favor of more natural English. (The English connectives which remain all translate the Greek δὲ.). When connectives are omitted for the sake of receptor-language naturalness, the textual function they had in the source text is left implicit: in Greek και signals normal event sequencing, but in English this is left implicit. [5] This does not imply that in languages like English connectives should never be heavily used. In certain contexts, for example in Genesis 1, it may be that a repetitive connectives can be used for a particular effect ("**And** God said"). The point here is that this kind of decision should depend on norms of the receptor language rather than the source language. Otherwise, the source-text pattern would simply be copied. Translators need to know how their language uses connectives and how they are used in the source text.

- The **form of referring expressions** is often conditioned by – among other factors – their position within the discourse unit with its pattern of different kinds of information. Often, paragraph-initial orientation favors heavier coding expressions for referents; light coding is usually possible in the medial event sequence, while the closure often has slightly heavier coding (Givón 1983:15). The very lightest coding of all is often reserved for a central character, which in the Mark 15 paragraph is Jesus (the following figure reflects referring expressions in the Greek):

Orientation	**1**Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding **Jesus**, they led **Ø** away and delivered **Ø** to Pilate. **2**Pilate questioned **him**, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And **Ø** answered him, "It is as you say." **3**The chief priests began to accuse **him** harshly. **4**Then Pilate questioned **him** again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" **5**But **Jesus** made no further answer; so Pilate was amazed.
Series of closely related events	
Closure	

Figure 4: Form of referring expressions in Greek: Jesus in Mark 15:1-5

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[5] Mbyá Guarani is like Hebrew and Greek in that sentence-initial connectives are the default, but its system of connectives works on different principles, so that the correspondence with the biblical languages is not direct (Dooley 1986).

Jesus is referred to by name only at the beginning and the end, but medially by pronouns or zero. Compare this with references to Pilate:

Orientation	[1]Early in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole Council, immediately held a consultation; and binding Jesus, they led Him away and delivered Him to **Pilate**. [2]**Pilate** questioned Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered **him**, "It is as you say." [3]The chief priests began to accuse Him harshly. [4]Then **Pilate** questioned Him again, saying, "Do You not answer? See how many charges they bring against You!" [5]But Jesus made no further answer; so **Pilate** was amazed.
Series of closely related events	
Closure	

Figure 5: Form of referring expressions: Pilate in Mark 15:1-5 (reflecting the Greek)

References to Pilate show the same general pattern based on the paragraph, but with somewhat heavier coding. Of course, languages have different categories of referring expressions: Greek zeros, for example, regularly become pronouns in English. Some languages have a four-way opposition – noun phrase, free pronoun, verb agreement, zero; others have a three-way or only a two-way opposition – noun phrase or zero – with pronouns only being used for special purposes. Sometimes a central participant has a special pronominal form or uses the minimal referential coding, usually zero or a pronoun. So although reference can be expected to follow certain universal principles within a discourse unit, languages have specific ways of doing this, and translators need to know what those ways are.

- **Discourse topics and themes** often have as their scope a discourse unit such as a paragraph or episode: a discourse topic or theme holds *for the discourse unit*. Commentaries sometimes attempt to indicate topics and themes; although their criteria are seldom explicit, they are often in basic agreement. In Mark 15:1-5, there is evidence that Jesus is discourse topic: besides the referential pattern noted above, each step in the schema of the discourse unit relates directly to him, and furthermore he is in control of developments, so that Pilate ends up reacting to him instead of vice versa. But it is one thing to identify a topic or theme in the source text; it is another to know how to represent it naturally in the receptor language. Some languages have very specific ways to indicate thematic elements: in Paez of Colombia, themes occur explicitly in paragraph-initial position, with a special syntax and particle (Gerdel and Slocum 1976:275). In other languages such as Greek and English, signalling themes is not a matter of grammatical rule, but uses a mix of conceptual and formal clues (Dooley 2007). However themes and discourse topics are signalled in a given language, readers and hearers know how to recognize those signals and translators need to know how to use them.

These three phenomena – sentence-initial devices, form of referring expressions and thematic elements – typically pattern in particular ways with respect to discourse units. So in order to use these phenomena in translation, the translator must also use receptor-language discourse units themselves, signalling them in appropriate ways. One of the earliest articles on discourse in translation was "Some problems in translating paragraphs idiomatically" by James Lauriault (1957), discussing Shipibo of Peru.

I mention here two other phenenomena which often involve discourse mismatches, but which are not as closely tied to discourse units:

- Languages commonly differ in regard to **the default order between thesis statement and supporting material**. This is related to the language's basic word order within the clause: in languages with verb preceding object – VO languages – thesis tends to precede support; in OV languages, the tendency is opposite.

In **VO** languages: **thesis** + **support**
In **OV** languages: **support** + **thesis**

Figure 6: Default order of thesis and support

The order of thesis and support depends on other factors as well, such as genre, hierachical level, and type of support relation. In hortatory discourse, for example, Figure 6 tends to hold in authoritative instructions, directives, demands, and rebukes, but not in reasoned persuasion (Levinsohn 2006b). The default ordering seems to hold most regularly between propositions (two clauses within a sentence or two sentences; Roberts 1997), but sometimes also between higher discourse-level units. In Japanese, a rigid OV language, for example, a favored traditional type of expository text is called *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu* (the four terms indicate major discourse units in the text). The thesis (*ketsu*) occurs last; earlier units are support (Hinds 1983). At any rate, ordering of thesis and support commonly results in translation mismatches: both biblical languages are VO, but around 45% of the world's languages are OV (Whaley 1997:83). In these languages, support relations are often best translated in a different order from the original. Even though this kind of mismatch is highly predictable from basic word order, implications for translation have only become clear in the last 10 years.

- **Information structure** – sometimes called "focus structure" or "topic-focus structure" – is largely manifested on the utterance level, and languages can signal it in different ways. For example, early studies within the Prague School pointed out that focus structures which are signalled by word order in Slavic languages are generally signalled by sentence accent in languages like English (Firbas 1964). This in itself is significant a translation issue, since written language is very limited in its representation of intonation. But languages also differ in how frequently they use marked or special-purpose information structures. In English, for example, fronting for topicalization is much less frequent than it is in German (Doherty 2005), Mbyá Guarani or Koiné Greek (Dooley 2005). What English does – and many Bantu languages are similar – is to leave unexpressed many of the the information-structure distinctions that are found in the Koiné; that is, many marked information structures in Koiné are rendered in the unmarked topic-comment, subject-predicate order (Lambrecht 1994:132). We see this in Mark 15:5:

ὁ	δὲ	Ἰησοῦς	**οὐκέτι**	**οὐδὲν**	ἀπεκρίθη
the	DM	Jesus	**no.longer**	**anything**	answered
			- - Marked focus - - -		
'But Jesus made **no further answer**.' (Mark 15:5, NASB)					
Topic - - - - - Comment - - - - -					

Figure 7: Information structure

Here in Mark 15:5, the Koiné preposes the object before the verb for marked argument focus 'But Jesus **no longer anything** answered' (Lambrecht 2004:228-233, Levinsohn 2000, sect. 3.6) – the subject 'Jesus' is also fronted as a marked topic – whereas the NASB translation is in the more neutral topic-comment order: "But Jesus made **no further answer**." In natural English, departures from the neutral configuration are much more rare than in Koiné. This means that a New Testament in natural English will systematically leave implicit certain kinds of communicative functions that are explicit in the source text. Although as a translation strategy this is extremely common and, I believe, valid (Dooley 2005), translators may feel ill at ease with it and attempt to represent the information structure of the source text. This issue needs to be addressed in training.

Should translation change *all* source text discourse patterns to natural target language patterns? That is rarely if ever attempted, and there are often good reasons why not. To briefly consider this question, let adopt the view of discourse hierarchy of Hinds 1979, in which

- the paragraph is the lowest-level complete discourse unit, for which orientation is commonly adjusted explicitly (typically paragraph-initially) and which "maintains a uniform orientation" throughout (p. 136);

- the "building blocks of the paragraph" are conceptual "segments" or steps which make use of the overall orientation of the paragraph, whose typical content type depends on genre (p. 146), and whose minimal realization is typically the sentence; and

- paragraphs are typically part of larger and larger discourse units, up to the text as a whole.

In this framework, we can observe that all but the most literal translations rearrange material within paragraph segments (this is the primary domain of information structure), certain "freer" translations rearrange segments within a paragraph (for this, verses are occasionally grouped together instead of numbered individually), but very few translations attempt to rearrange paragraphs within larger discourse units. Such "major displacement of material in translation", which SIL has historically discouraged (Hollenbach 1975), can seriously affect readers' confidence in the translation, especially when they compare it with other translations in that or another language. When for such reasons it is judged necessary for the translation to incorporate mismatches on this "macro" discourse level, it may need to include clarifying expressions which do not translate specific elements in the original: 'before that', 'this happened because', etc.; this would be in line with the common linguistic fact of marked structures having more morphemic material. Another option could be *inclusio* or "sandwich" structures in which both the source-text and the target-language orders are incorporated (Levinsohn 2000, §17.2.5). Such issues should be discussed in translator training.[6]

4   Discourse and Native-Speaker Intuitions

But why should anyone who is translating into their own language need training in its discourse patterns? What could that possibly add to their linguistic intuitions? In fact, couldn't a conscious awareness of linguistic patterns interfere with their intuitions?

Dr. John Wycliffe and his colleagues were mother-tongue translators. They were also eloquent in their mother tongue, English, as preachers. Nevertheless, their early translation was flawed because they copied structural patterns from the Vulgate, resulting in a text which was "often grotesquely inelegant and sometimes actually incomprehensible" (de Hamel 2001:174). The principal revisor, John Purvey, wrote "a long Prologue describing the preparatory studies which a Bible translator needs to undertake" in order to render the sense (Ellingworth 2007:309f). Just because translators have native-speaker intuition and fluently in primary communication, that does not mean that their translation will be free of problems. As Longacre (1998) mentions, they may copy structural patterns out of a natural reverence for, or familiarity with, the source text or a high-prestige traditional version, or in order to validate their translation by facilitating formal comparison with the high-prestige version.[7] A further reason for it is the immense complexity of the translation task: if the time that it takes to do a good translation is any indication, it is many times more complex than producing a text within one's own language and culture. Translation almost always involves different passes. Whereas adjustments for lower-level linguistic mismatches are often made in an initial pass, other adjustments must be made afterwards, after the fact. Crucially, these later adjustments involve conscious choice. They are no longer a simple matter of subconscious fluency or intuition: that generally gets left behind after the first pass. Later passes involve conscious analysis and conscious choices, and, like it or not, these can interfere with native-speaker intuitions! To be honest, discourse organization can, to some degree, be addressed in the first pass: for example, translators can record an episode, telling it from memory in their own language and then transcribing the recording. But aside from the fact this is a slow process which is difficult to maintain as the normal mode of translation, it still requires subsequent adjustments – for example, factual details may need to be added or corrected – and these must be worked into the translation in such a way that natural discourse organization is preserved. So even in this mode of translation, discourse organization needs to be consciously considered in later passes. In any case, translation requires different passes, so adjustments cannot be made on the basis of native-speaker intuition alone. Discourse adjustments in particular commonly require conscious adjustments. Training should help the translator access his intuitive fluency as conscious knowledge, when that is needed.

The fact that discourse-level adjustments are commonly made in later passes is likely related to other observations:

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[6] For further discussion, see Dooley 2005.

[7] According to de Hamel (2001:174), the latter reason likely influenced the translators of the first Wycliffite version, especially Nicholas Hereford, toward their literal rendering, as "part of a deliberate attempt to represent the text exactly as in the Vulgate, without any possible suspicion that it had been tampered with or adapted in any way." If so, they quickly discovered that this kind of validation comes at a high price: the Bible remains a closed book to the masses.

- Discourse-level mismatches often go unnoticed when we are focusing on lower-levels, such as on the level of individual concepts and propositions. It appears to be cognitively difficult to focus on large-scale patterns and micro-phenomena at the same time; when we concentrate on the word level it's easy to miss the fact that the overall structure of the discourse is awry. In straining at the gnat, we swallow the camel. This may also be one reason why discourse analysis is a newcomer to mainstream linguistics.

- Low-level grammar is generally more prescriptive, with more rigid rules, so that errors are more noticeable and more urgent to "fix".[8]

- Adjustments on the discourse level are generally more complex: in some cases, they require restructuring an entire discourse unit.

For reasons such as these, discourse adjustments often require conscious attention in revision and special emphasis in translator training.

The good news is that we are making progress in that, if we believe what Mozambican translators said at the end of a recent discourse workshop. After four weeks of finding discourse patterns in their own language, seeing how they differ from source text patterns, working on actual translation, and talking over the issues together, they said: "Now I want to go back and revise what I've translated. Now I know how to do it." Similar experiences have been reported in Guinea-Bissau and Malawi by Al and Cheryl Jensen (p. c.) and in other locations by Bob Longacre (1998) and Stephen Levinsohn (2006a). So there is encouragement.

There are also cautions. I mention two. First, yes, it is possible for own-language discourse factors to be misanalyzed and even correct analysis to be misapplied in such a way that it overrides valid linguistic intuitions. One notices a pattern in one type of context and applies it in another context where it doesn't fit. A little knowledge is always a dangerous thing. But for translators, total ignorance is not a viable option. So training needs to help the translator both to be careful in analysis and sensitive to intuitions. And after all, translation is far from being an exact science. A translator needs to look at the translation with a critical eye, to listen to it with a critical ear, and to check things carefully with other speakers. If that is done, a conscious knowledge of discourse patterns can be extremely useful.

A second caution is that certain kinds of adjustments to discourse patterns, though analytically correct, need to be tested beyond the training course, workshop, or translation desk. They need to get out to the language community. It's like developing an alphabet: analysis is only one part of the process, what users do with the result is another. Changes often take time to be accepted and "settle in". Real changes cannot be made in a vacuum. This means, among other things, that training cannot afford to be prescriptive just to keep things simple. It needs to be salted with the humble recognition that some decisions will take time and need to be made within the language community.

5   Conclusion and Proposals

In this presentation I have tried to give reasons why discourse analysis should be part of translator training, along with relevance theory and perhaps other complementary approaches – complementary, in the sense that none of them by itself provides all the insights or handles all the problems that translators face. Discourse analysis needs to be included because translators need to deal with discourse mismatches with respect to the source text, and mismatches on this level can be notoriously hard to recognize and adjust for. Other approaches or topics could be included as well, such as sentence breaks, punctuation, translation software and other helps, and community attitudes in relation to the translation. These would probably all be helpful to include in many translation situations.

This is not to say that translator training should become encyclopedic or simply present surveys of available approaches. Just the opposite: it should focus on specific issues that are known to give

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[8] In a recent article, Bybee (2006) talks about how linguistic patterns emerge via frequent usage; not all of these patterns reach the point of actually being fixed by a grammatical rule. Low-level patterns, within a single word or phrase, occur more frequently and become rule-bound.

problems in translation. It should be practical in that sense.

For discourse analysis, what would practical training look like? I would like to make three specific proposals:

a) **Conduct preliminary research:** Languages in a particular family or area often share discourse patterns. For training in that family or area, it could be extremely helpful to know ahead of time what discourse patterns frequently show up. A list of patterns could be compiled, as is being done in the Bantu Initiative. For identifying mismatches, one would also need to identify patterns in source texts, whether these are in biblical languages or in commonly-used versions in languages of wider communication. With this information in hand, the training can concentrate on specific mismatches. This kind of research is a doable linguistic task; the tools are available. And the payoffs, both for training programs and for ongoing reference, would be far greater than the effort expended.

b) **Train in workshops:** Discourse analysis in one's own language is best done in hands-on workshops with actual language data (Longacre 1998), or perhaps in formal courses with hands-on analysis of natural texts in the receptor language. Two workshops would eventually be good – a basic one in narrative and a later one in expository, hortatory or other non-narrative genres. As far as possible, the training should proceed inductively, starting with natural texts in the receptor language and drawing out their patterns, then comparing these with how similar things are expressed in the source text. There should be time for experimental translation and for reflection and discussion. A brief list of available materials in discourse training is appended. Participants should be familiar with the basic grammar of their language, including word classes, verbal morphology and clause-level syntax, which they could get in an earlier grammar workshop.

c) **Ask experienced translators:** One way to get valuable input on training would be to conduct a survey among translators who have two things in their background: years of translation experience and a broad range of training. Questions could include: What issues have given you difficulty in translation? What aspects of training have you found to be helpful? What would be good to include? Items that are mentioned widely should be given priority. Today experienced translators are becoming more and more numerous; they constitute a primary resource for translator training. Their knowledge, together with advances in linguistics and translation studies, should make it possible, with God's help, to offer practical training in different aspects of the translation task.

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