

**Five key words: translation, priorities, hierarchy, prototype, subjectivity**  
**cinco palabras clave. traducción, prioridades, jerarquía, prototipos,**  
**subjectividad**

## **Priorities and Hierarchical Accounts of Translation**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is a study of the concept of *priority* and its use together with the notion of *hierarchy* in academic writing and theoretical models of translation. Hierarchies and priorities can be implicit or explicit, prescribed, suggested or described. The paper starts, chronologically, with Nida and Levý's hierarchical accounts of translation and follows their legacy in scholars as different as Newmark and Gutt. The concept of priorities is hinted at also in didactic models (Nord) as well as in norm-theoretical and accounts of translation (Toury and Chesterman) within Descriptive Translation Studies. All of these authors are analyzed and commented. The paper calls for a more systematic and straightforward account of translational priorities, and proposes a few conceptual tools that stem from this research model, including the concepts of *ambition* and *richness* of a translation. Finally, the paper concludes with an adaptation of Lakoff and Johnson's view of prototypicality and its potential usefulness in research into and the understanding of translation.

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### **Resumen**

Este artículo es un estudio del concepto de prioridad y su utilización combinada con la noción de jerarquía, tal como aparecen en publicaciones teóricas y especializadas sobre la traducción. Las jerarquías y las prioridades pueden ser implícitas o explícitas, prescritas, sugeridas o descritas. El presente estudio empieza con un repaso en orden cronológico de los enfoques jerarquizados de la traducción de Nida y Levý, y sigue la evolución de su legado en autores tan dispares como Newmark y Gutt. Asimismo, se apunta al concepto de prioridades in modelos didácticos, como el de Nord, y en enfoques descriptivos de la traductología (Toury y Chesterman). El artículo incluye análisis y comentarios de todos ellos. Entre las conclusiones se reclama abordar las prioridades traductológicas de una manera más sistemática y clara. Además, se incluyen algunas herramientas conceptuales que se derivan de

un modelo de prioridades jerarquizadas y restricciones, como por ejemplo la ambición y la riqueza de una traducción. Finalmente, el artículo concluye con una adaptación de la propuesta de Lakoff y Johnson sobre la prototipicalidad y su utilidad potencial en la investigación traductológica y un mejor entendimiento de lo que supone traducir.

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## **1. Hierarchical v. non-hierarchical accounts**

Before we go into a detailed study of hierarchical accounts of translation it could be useful to stop and think for a minute what is implied in a non-hierarchical approach. First of all, in the light of the results of descriptive studies, it seems quite safe to say that a non-hierarchical account of translation is necessarily aprioristic or prescriptive. This does not mean that all aprioristic and prescriptive accounts of translation are also non-hierarchical, as we shall see below. One example of this kind of attitude is that of an ideal notion of translation as a full, objective representation of the source text, such that there is only one correct way of rendering a text from a translational point of view. A non-hierarchical view is also involved when only one condition is proposed as the necessary requirement (e.g. the translator must render the same message). In this case, the single condition may be universal (all translations must meet the same condition) for some scholars, variable for others (as in a theory that proposed two or three different types of translations each one characterised by the condition to be met), but in any case there would only be one condition for each translation. A third possibility is the case where the theorist propounds that more than one condition must be met, but all conditions, whatever they may be, must be met to the same degree of satisfaction, i.e. they are of the same rank, hence there is no sense of hierarchy. As the number of conditions grows this case becomes more and more similar to the first one, where practically “everything” must be rendered, and nothing can be left out or changed. Finally, a refined version of this view has no sense of priorities (because all conditions must be met) but there is a sense of restrictions that vary in their degree of force. From this point of view, certain gaps, omissions, additions and changes may be explained in terms of the difficulties involved, but these “differences” are seen negatively as veering away from the ideal fulfilment of all the necessary conditions. Following this logic translation can be seen as impossible, at times, or frequently imperfect, meaning defective.

Non-hierarchical accounts tend to view translation as either “ideally” impossible or “ideally” unproblematic, i.e. either (i) everything is relevant and since everything cannot be

rendered to the same degree of satisfaction the whole exercise is either impossible or some form of cheating (betrayal, manipulation, impersonation, etc.); (ii) only one thing really matters, e.g. information, and there is no fundamental problem in conveying information or concepts (i.e. the universalist view of language). In-between varieties of these two extremes would tell you that translation is not about rendering one thing or everything, but several things (exactly which things or how many will vary depending on the author), all equally important.

A hierarchical account of translation recognises the relative importance of rendering certain aspects. The scholar admits that not everything can realistically be expected to be rendered to the same degree, sometimes not even two conditions can be equally represented in the target text. From this point of view, lower-ranking items are not undesirable but will simply have to “wait and see” whether or not they can be included in a translation only after (i.e. as long as) the higher-ranking elements have been taken care of first (i.e. are rendered). Prescriptively inclined theoreticians feel that it is their duty to point out what the ranking order is for a text to be regarded as a proper translation. From a descriptive angle it is a question of discovering hierarchies as norms (strong and weak), whereas the speculator would like to present us with all sorts of possible hierarchical arrangements.

What we have below (table 1) is Theodore Savory’s much-quoted collection of 12 prescriptions, which can be read in many ways and for many purposes. For instance, it may be read as a list of independent non-hierarchical statements about translation, many of which are pairwise mutually exclusive of each other, becoming a matter of either or. But several pairs may be read as sets of priorities, e.g. “A translation should reflect the style of the original much more than the style of the translator”. Some statements may be defended because they are thought to entail the others in certain situations, e.g. “A translation must give the words of the original as a means of guaranteeing that the style of the original is reflected and/or the ideas are kept”.

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | A translation must give the words of the original.        |
| 2 | A translation must give the ideas of the original.        |
| 3 | A translation should read like an original work.          |
| 4 | A translation should read like a translation.             |
| 5 | A translation should reflect the style of the original.   |
| 6 | A translation should possess the style of the translator. |

7	A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.	9	A translation may add to or omit from the original.
8	A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.	10	A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
		11	A translation of verse should be in prose.
		12	A translation of verse should be in verse.

Table 1. Savory's insight of the contradictions of translation experts.

What is more important: words, ideas, style? This is one question that some of these statements seem to want to answer, but one also wonders how any of these statements can claim to be universal. The problem seems to be twofold. They are all completely decontextualised, and they use strong modals. Of course, it is also possible to recycle these statements by providing meaningful contexts and changing their modality, e.g. "In certain circumstances a translator may wish [or be obliged] to reflect an author's intention rather than [mechanically] reproduce a rendering for each word as it appears in the source text".

## 2. Hierarchical approaches: prescriptive and descriptive

We have already said that non-hierarchical accounts are prescriptive or aprioristic, but there can be prescriptive hierarchical models, too. Among these we can distinguish between implied hierarchies and explicit hierarchies. When they are implied, there is an obvious danger of misinterpretation and we must rely on a global interpretation of the theorist's writings. Let us see an example of an implied hierarchy, where certain conditions might be said to entail others. In the literalist approach, the condition is that "the words of the original must be rendered". If this is seen as a single condition we are in a non-hierarchical paradigm. Alternatively, we might assume that what is actually implied is that lexical equivalence is given priority, but other conditions are not excluded; rather, they are entailed in lexical equivalence, meaning that translating the word guarantees that meaning, authorial intention, style and other aspects are also accounted for. Either this, or aspects such as appropriateness to register or communicability are implied lower priorities, meaning that if and when there is a choice within the lexical level (a choice between two or more synonyms), then the lower priorities may act as criteria for preferring one solution over the rest.

## 2.1 Levý's insight

What follows is Gutt's (1991: 106-121) account of Levý's (1969) awareness of the need for the notion of priorities, in his discussion of how Christian Morgenstern's poem "The aesthetic weasel" could or should be translated into English.

Ein Wiesel Sass auf einem Kiesel Inmitten Bachgeriesel (Christian Morgenstern)	A weasel sat on a pebble in the midst of a ripple / of a brook ( Levý)	A weasel perched on an easel within a patch of teasel (Max Knight)
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The playful rhyme is more essential than the zoological and topographical exactness, for Morgenstern himself says so in the next stanza. This can be seen in Max Knight's version. He adds in the preface that other translations would be equally possible:

(1) A ferret nibbling a carrot in a garret	(3) A mink sipping a drink in a kitchen sink
(2) A hyena playing a concertina in an arena	(4) A lizard shaking its gizzard in a blizzard

Table 2. alternative translations for Morgenstern's poem.

More important than the individual meanings in detail is here, says Gutt, the preservation of the play on words. The example is presented by Levý as an illustration of one of the most basic problems of translation: what the translator should [can] do when he cannot possibly preserve *all* the features of the original (I would be tempted to say that this is the very nature of translation).

In translation there are situations which do not allow one to capture all values of the original. Then the translator has to decide which qualities of the original are the most important and which ones he/she could miss out. The problem of reliability in translation consists partly in being able to recognise the relative importance of the values in a piece of literature (Levý 1969).

The 'values' among which the translator has to choose are described by Levý in terms of 'semantic functions': ... in Morgenstern's text some words have two semantic functions: 1.

Their own denotative meaning; 2. A function in a structure of a higher order (and just this was retained in the translation).

Levý proposes that this choice follows from a ‘functional hierarchy’ that determines the relative ranking of importance of various aspects of word meaning.

The particular hierarchy Levý proposes for this example looks as follows:

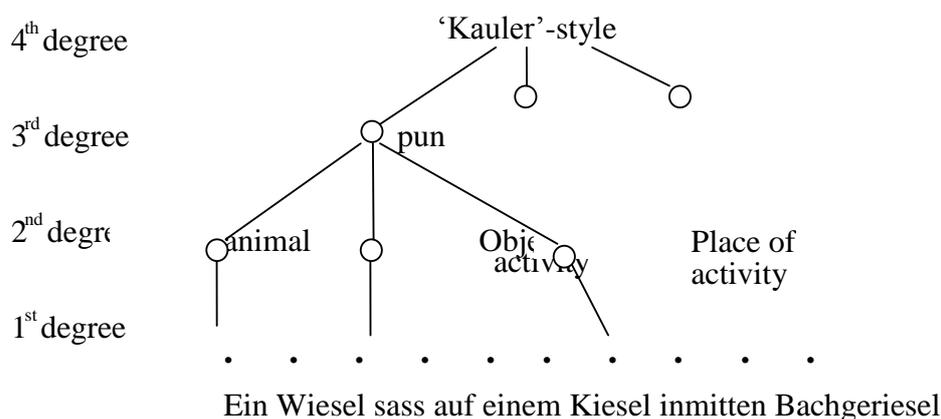


Figure 1. Levý's priorities

My personal comment on this diagram is that it is not really a hierarchy of priorities as much as a diagram of various degrees of abstraction. And this is what seems to baffle Gutt in his analysis of Levý, especially if we consider that it is probably equally —if not more— intuitive to consider punning as a more abstract —or general— category than ‘Kauler’ style (especially if we think of it as Kauler’s style of punning). There need not be an inescapable correlation between degree of abstraction/ generalization and degree of importance. In other words, a hierarchy of abstraction is not the same as a hierarchy of importance. Some priorities on a hierarchy of importance may be abstract (e.g. a certain feeling or tone for the text), and others may be very concrete (maximum number of words, rhyme scheme, etc.).

## 2.2 Christiane Nord and the translator's commission

In Christiane Nord, 1997, p. 60-65, we find a more recent example of how a translator’s commission can be formulated as a hierarchy of priorities, even though it is a little imprecise regarding the ranking position of some of the priorities with respect to some of the others. The text is a brochure to inform on the Sixth Centenary of Heidelberg University.

<p>The brochure is intended to inform any visitors or interested persons (also possible German sponsors and future students) about the anniversary events and further academic projects. The University Press and Information Office produces a German text for a folder with coloured photographs and attractive layout. The text will be translated into English, French, Spanish and Japanese; layout and photographs will be the same for all versions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Intended text functions: information about anniversary events; image promotion</li><li>● Medium: monolingual brochure with coloured photographs and short texts in a given layout</li><li>● Reason for text production: 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Heidelberg University</li></ul> <p>Following general requirements for the translations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Conform to text-type and general style conventions and a rather formal register</li><li>● Spacial and temporal deixis will refer mainly to Heidelberg and the year of the anniversary</li><li>● The text must fit into the space provided by the layout</li><li>● The information on anniversary events will have priority over other data.</li></ul>
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Table 3. Nord's priorities for Heidelberg University brochure.

In this kind of situation it could be useful, at some point, to distinguish (for solutions on the linguistic level) between restrictions such as layout, photographs and amount of space provided, on the one hand, and priorities such as intended text functions, conventions and informativity on the other.

### 3. Prescriptive hierarchies

Newmark (1981, 1988) says that one of the theoretician's responsibilities is to propose a translation method. Immediately, it becomes apparent that most of the methods that Newmark reports or proposes are different hierarchical arrangements of relatively small sets of priorities (i.e. render lexical meaning, render sentence meaning, render contextual meaning, render intention, render effect, plus, be grammatical, strive for some degree of aesthetic effect, be easy to understand, be faithful to the author's intentions). It takes a little more time to see that the relation between the various methods also implies a much larger set of priorities for each individual method. This is so because Newmark is too quick to comment the "negative" consequences of not fulfilling these implied priorities, thus giving the impression that he is taking for granted that they cannot be satisfied. This skipping of intermediate steps is surprising in a book addressed primarily at students. It is obvious to anyone that ungrammatical sentences are a common feature of literal translation, yet this does

not mean that in translating literally one is not attempting in some way to be grammatical. In a more hierarchically-aware account of the same phenomenon the result of ungrammaticality can be explained by stating that the desire to be grammatical is a much lower priority than the desire to produce a one-word rendering for each source-text word. In other cases of literal translation, however, the desire is precisely to illustrate the grammatical structure of a foreign language as distinct from that of the target language, which automatically explains why the text looks foreign (this brings to mind Venuti's (1995) label of *foreignizing* as opposed to *domesticating*).

### **3.1 Nida and Taber's system of priorities**

Nida and Taber (1969: 14), make the following claim, "As a basis for judging what should be done in specific instances of translating, it is essential to establish certain fundamental sets of priorities". Nida defends a system of four priorities; but more precisely, they are actually four pairs of norms (as we now say in the light of Toury's norm theory) where one norm for each pair is given priority over the other.

1. Contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency (or word-for-word concordance). This is their linguistic perspective. A ST word need not be translated in exactly the same way throughout.
2. Dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence. This takes into account the reactions of the receptors, and is the basis of the popular equivalent effect principle, which should probably go back to its original name and be called the priority of equivalent effect.
3. The aural (heard) form of language has priority over the written form: especially applicable to Bible translation (but also an interesting priority for screen translation and interpreting, for instance).
4. Forms that are used by and acceptable to the audience for which the translation is intended have priority over forms that may be traditionally more prestigious: types of audience.

At close inspection we can see that the priorities of the first two pairs can almost be read as one, and are probably meant that way, merely separated by Nida for the sake of driving the point home more clearly, although it is also interesting to note that Nida's first "context" refers to verbal context, or cotext, whereas dynamic equivalence can be said to be a function of context of communication, or setting. Dynamic equivalence is the main objective,

which would thus justify not always translating a repeated word in the source text by the same word in the translation. Nida's fourth priority is also an aspect of the second one, which takes into account the reactions of the receptors, and number four simply supposes what kind of audience the target text (for Nida supposedly the Bible) is going to have in its majority. So, Nida does not view his four priorities as clashing (not even potentially) but, rather, as being complementary aspects of some other more general priority, which he is careful not to spell out as an evangelical, missionary purpose since he interested in giving his proposal a much wider range of validity than Bible translation.

### 3.2 Newmark's "tensions"

Newmark's account of "tensions" justifies his proposal of (at least) two different methods). This approach has provided much fruitful thought on translation. However, it must be said that the graphic representation is a little misleading. The metaphor of different tensions "pulling" in opposite directions would lead to the conclusion that items on opposite extremes are mutually incompatible, which cannot be postulated before studying each pair of languages, cultures, norms, etc. i.e. before studying each individual case.

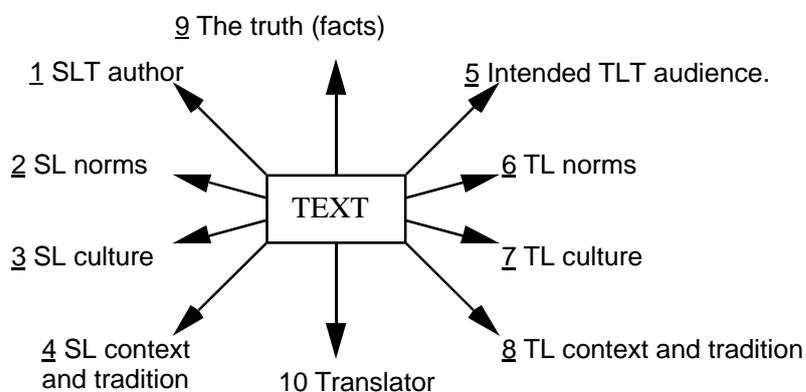


Figure 2. The tensions of translation according to Peter Newmark (1988: 4)

## 4. Discovering hierarchies, or the descriptive account

### 4.1 Toury's account of a translator "subjecting himself" to constraints

From the mainstream of descriptive translation studies, mostly under the influence of Toury, descriptions have been embarked upon with the aim of discovering norms. Although considerable effort has been made to explain how norms can be seen in positive terms, the argument does seem a little forced at times. The fact is that norm theory is one the most

powerful research tools that we have nowadays. The danger, then, could well be that norm theory will be abused, i.e. used to explain all phenomena, turning everything into a norm, thus rendering norm meaningless or vague and/or ambiguous. The sister concept to norm is that of constraint. Let us now go on to look at an example, precisely from Toury (1995: 193-205), of a hierarchical account of translation, where the terms used seem a little forced or unnatural. In this example Toury sets out to discover the following translating process.

Avraham Shlonsky's Hebrew translation of Hamlet's monologue "To Be or Not To Be" (*Hamlet* III:1) made in 1946, first and foremost for staging at the Habimah theatre (...). An attempt will be made to uncover the *constraints* to which that translator subjected himself as he went along and the way he manoeuvred among them. This will include a glimpse at the *interdependencies* of the various constraints and the *relative force* of different ones." (...) Six major constraints to which Shlonsky subjected himself in his translation and which account not only for the final version of the monologue but also for his interim decisions and his successive revisions:

1. To operate within one verse unit
2. which would eventually constitute a Hebrew iambic hexameter (rigid prosodic constraint)
3. tending to fall into two preferably symmetrical parts (application of the same principle to verses where the original entails no division... consequently, the few cases where this strategy is in keeping with the original may be considered a happy coincidence).
4. To establish a script suitable for declamation in a theatrical performance rather than a text for silent reading.
5. To demonstrate richness and stylistic elevation in his linguistic choices
6. as well as in their organization into higher-level segments, especially in terms of orchestration.

There can hardly be any doubt that what all these constraints have in common is the fact that they reflect first and foremost the interests and needs of the *recipient* culture at that particular time (...). A certain aspiration for adequacy should therefore be added to our list of constraints. This aspiration, however, would rank hierarchically *lower* than most of the constraints listed above. This means that out of a list of options which are reasonably adequate as translational replacements of a certain source-text segment, the one which tended to be preferred was the one which would have satisfied the greatest number of the remaining criteria (...) —even if this involved bypassing more adequate alternatives. Be that as it may, the result is a translation whose *general* character (rather than this or that detail in it) differs from the source text's —and in a direction which indeed contributes to its acceptability into the target culture. (...) Finally, a similar account of the constraints which Shlonsky seems to have adopted in his translation of Hamlet's monologue could have been arrived at on the basis of the *finalized* version alone (as indeed it was).

Table 4. The translator's constraints as seen by Toury (1995: 193-205)

Using Toury's criteria, but rephrasing them in terms of priorities, going down the hierarchy, we get the following.

1. Hebrew iambic hexameter ("whatever alternatives were considered and whatever changes were made were in line with this constraint" p. 196)
2. Demonstrate richness and stylistic elevation
3. Two symmetrical parts for each line of verse
4. Suitable for declamation
5. Organization into higher-level segments
6. Content in each line of verse determined by ST ("second global constraint to which Shlonsky subjected himself")
7. Observance of the rules of Hebrew normative grammar ("not always... interim between written varieties and speakability/declamability" p. 197)

When Toury speaks of Shlonsky "restricting himself", it seems more natural to regard the translator as setting out certain priorities (goals for the translation) which can be traced to the translator himself and not any other source, although we might consider the theatre and society's expectancy norms as indirect sources for these priorities.

The sources of priorities are the commission and/or factors to do with the initiator, text users (expectancy and accountability norms). An interesting distinction is to be made between formal and functional priorities. Drawing from the Toury example, we have the following.

- FORMAL priorities 1- Iambic hexameter; 3- each line in two parts; 5- orchestration
- FUNCTIONAL, 6- Content (FORM of FUNCTION: ST line/TT line)
- FUNCTION of FORM: iambic pentameter for poetic function, norm-fulfilling (regarding expectancy norm of loyalty to prestigious text)  
2- Stylistic excellence; 4- declamability; 7- grammaticality.
- AMBITION is proposed here as a term for referring to a greater or lesser number and nature (including ranking position) of the priorities; i.e. the greater the number and importance of the priorities, the greater the "ambition" a translation can be said to have. Thus, RICHNESS can be used to refer to the degree to which ambition is fulfilled, and the event that other elements are noted even if they were not originally intended. So, we

might say that Shlonsky shows greater ambition than a (hypothetical) translator who had not wished his/her translation to be declaimable, but coincided in all of the other goals for the target text; if the translation coincidentally turned out to be highly declaimable it could be said to be as rich as Shlonsky's, assuming that all the other factors remained unaltered. Such a model of Priorities and Restrictions can therefore distinguish between intentions for the target text (ambition / problems) and the resulting translated text (richness / solutions).

- SUBJECTIVITY is a measure of priorities that are heedless of, or contrary to, aspects of the source text. Certain priorities might be clear candidates for bringing about a greater likelihood of subjectivity. For example, those which can be formulated with no reference to the source text, such as: a desire to conform to target cultural/linguistic norms, a desire to promote one's (i.e. the translator's) creativity, a desire to promote the target text language. It is important to note that ambition, richness and subjectivity do not entail value judgements (i.e. a richer translation is not necessarily a better or worse translation), although it is obvious that they can be used as evaluative criteria if one so wishes.

What we have hoped to show here is that so far in translation and translation studies alike there has only been a vague awareness of the presence and importance of priorities, and because it is vague Toury (among many others) has used other, related, terms instead. To be true to the metaphorical language used we can look at restrictions as being strong or weak, obstacles as large or small, so it is possible to rank restrictions in order of strength and size, but they are not necessarily interdependent. What this means is that restrictions are non-hierarchical, when conceived of as obstacles or constraints. Rather, restrictions can have a compounded effect. On the other hand, constraints that *can* be ranked in order of importance are surely more clearly seen as priorities; they form a hierarchy of more important and less important factors, bringing out the idea of relative importance, of interdependence between factors. Priorities of a higher order are obstacles that are in the way of lower-ranking priorities, but not vice-versa. So, priorities act as restrictive forces, too. But they also provide directionality much more clearly than the notion of self-inflicted restrictions, or even norms. Priorities may be norm-abiding, norm-challenging, norm-breaking, or even norm-creating. Norms tell you what you can and/or cannot do, what is done or tends to be done. Priorities tell you (and let you tell others) what you want to do. Thus, priorities are less deterministic than norms.

#### 4.2 Quotes from Chesterman show the need for greater awareness of priorities

An example of a non-systematic awareness of translational priorities and hierarchies can be found also in Chesterman (1997). Direct references to priorities —and paraphrases— are scattered all over the book, but the dominating concept of norm obscures the potential use of devoting more space to an explicit treatment of the concept of priority and hierarchy. Below I provide a several illustrative examples, with my underlining:

1. [on Luther] ... Clarity, intelligibility, readability, fluency – these were the things that mattered. p. 25.
2. [German Romantic Period] the translation of literature should aim at a style that is deliberately marked, strange, foreign, so that the reader feels the translation to be unfamiliar... the rhetoric stage prioritized stylistic equivalence above semantic and formal. But in the Logos stage equivalence of effect is essentially denied, inasmuch as target readers are deliberately exposed to a textual strangeness... Formal equivalence, however, is given more weight... a closer adherence to word order. p. 26
3. ...different translation tasks may require balancing acts between different priorities, a point that I overlook here. p. 68
4. One translation task might require a translation which gave priority to a close formal similarity to the original... Another might prioritize stylistic similarity... Yet another might highlight the importance of semantic closeness... and another might value similarity of effect above all these. Every translation task sets its own profile of “equivalence priorities”. p 69.
5. [on Steiner] His approach is as follows: any human activity has a hierarchical structure. ... Applied to translation, such a view allows us to see translating as multilevel hierarchical process [at different levels]. p 88.
6. Strategy is goal-oriented. p 89.
7. At the more general level, where the problem to be solved is something like “how to translate this text or this kind of text”, we have “global strategies”... an obvious example of a global strategy... what kinds of intertextual resemblance should be given priority. Another example might be the general issue of dialect choice... at a more specific level... we have local strategies. p. 90.
8. [On motivation]  
Why did you use that strategy here, why did you write X? Possible answers:
  - Desire to conform to the expectancy norms
  - Desire to conform to the accountability norm
  - Desire to conform to the communication norm
  - Desire to conform to the relation norm (p. 113)
9. *Stage three*: [towards full translator] competence... It thus becomes necessary to develop a sense of priorities, and this is the crucial aspect of this phase. People learn “a hierarchical procedure of decision-making”. This entails the ability to see the situation more as a whole, to formulate a plan, and select the set of factors which are most important for the realization of the plan. p. 148.

Table 5a. Excerpts from Chesterman.

Chesterman seems to have an intuition that, indeed, priorities are variable, and it is this variability that makes translation so complex and diverse. What I find particularly interesting is how priorities can explain a desire to break a norm much more clearly than a norm that is created to go against another norm, which is rather twisted logic. There may be conflicts between norms, which can be difficult for many people to grasp, but this conflict disappears by simply stating that in certain circumstances the translator, or some translation authority may desire (give priority) to challenge a norm, to break it or to create a new one. In quote number 8, we should presumably allow for the event that a translator would desire not to conform to norm such-and-such. This can be seen below.

10. ...expectancy norms are broken because of some higher priority. p. 66
11. A translator may also have reasons to disregard these norms or to set up particular priorities between them; such translators will feel they “ought” to translate in some different way. p. 68.
12. If translators then decide *not* to follow the perhaps clumsy style in which such texts are often written in the target language, this shows that they have given priority to other norms than expectancy ones... In other words there is a conflict of norms, p. 142.

Table 5b. Excerpts from Chesterman.

## 5. Prototypical translations and hierarchies

If we see translating as working according to different arrangements of an array of priorities, we can come up with a hypothesis for a prototypical translation (following Lakoff and Johnson’s idea of prototypicality and Lefevere’s idea of refracted texts), rather than a clear-cut definitive definition, even if that meant going against the theoretical tide of the moment. An account of a prototypical translation includes both its priorities and its circumstances, since certain priorities only make sense in specific contexts. Here is an idea of what kinds of things might be said about a prototypical translation.

A **prototypical translation** (TT) is a text/message that has a clearly identifiable source text/message (ST) which has its own readership (at some point in time). Both ST and TT contain the same meaning(s)/information(s), convey the same intention(s), fulfil the same functions and belong to the same genre and text-type. The TT audience will have basically the same experience in receiving the translation as the ST audience had, i.e. ST and TT will be of the same difficulty and will produce the same effect, such that the communication acts can be said to be the same. The original message is in one language and the translation is in another; the translation is exactly what the ST author would have written if s/he had been able to,

which means that the translator's presence is only felt to the degree that s/he deviates from this hypothetical text written by the ST author.

### **5.1 Fake guns and pseudotranslations**

George Lakoff (1980: 115-125) develops the categories listed below, by taking prototypicality as a starting point. I have made a rough attempt at adapting it to translation given the difficulty in establishing the boundary between what is and what is not translation. Even if one does not agree with the examples given here I hope the usefulness of Lakoff's insight can be appreciated anyway.

- ◆ **Par Excellence:** picks out the prototypical members of a category (e.g. a robin is a bird par excellence, because it is small, colourful, flies and sings). This label, par excellence, could be used to refer to the translation of denotational, informational texts with no metalinguistic components; unambiguous texts regarding their propositional and referential meaning, where there are only small intercultural differences. For example, the translation of certain weather (business, academic, etc.) reports. Bible and legal translation might also fall into this category, since the Bible is the Bible (in the case of official versions) in any language, just as an international law or contract might be granted the same validity or status in any of its official versions.
- ◆ **Strictly speaking:** picks out the nonprototypical cases that ordinarily fall within the category (e.g. penguins as birds, since they don't fly or tweet). Applied to our domain, a translation "strictly speaking" would be one that has a source text and has undergone a process that one can call translating; e.g. literal translation (despite ungrammaticality and obscurity), simultaneous interpreting (despite numerous omissions).
- ◆ **Loosely speaking:** not ordinarily in the category because they lack some central property but which share enough properties so that for certain purposes it could make sense to consider them category members, (whales are fish, loosely speaking as they live in the sea). Most forms of adaptations; refracted translations (e.g. interlingual communication which involves a change of genre, mode or channel of communication). An interesting case might be translations of the Quran, since they might be regarded "strictly speaking" (since there is a source text and a translating process) as translations, but they do not "fly" the way official versions of the Bible do in any language, since only the Arabic version is the officially recognised one. But by this reasoning, for Muslims, they would have to talk of Quran translation as "translation loosely speaking", if they cannot grant it "proper translation" status. This case also illustrates what some authors point out about translation

as being a culture-bound concept, which cannot be defined outside a cultural context, since varying cultures have different perceptions of what is and what is not translation.

- ◆ **Technically speaking:** circumscribes a category relative to some technical purpose (e.g. a moped is technically a motorcycle for purposes of bridge tolls, but technically not a motorcycle for the purpose of insurance). Applied to our domain, situations like pseudotranslation, intralingual translation, and intersemiotic translation come to mind.

A fake gun is not a giraffe, says Lakoff. Following this reasoning a pseudotranslation is a fake translation rather than a parking ticket, i.e. it is a phenomenon that has to do with translation and needs to be accounted for within Translation Studies. For Lakoff, a fake gun is not a giraffe because it shares properties of category membership: perceptual properties (looks like a gun), motor-activity properties (hold it in a certain way), purposive (threaten, display on wall, etc.), functional properties (shoot), history of function (originally made to shoot). This helps to understand why some originals can be passed for translations (referred to as pseudotranslations) and vice versa (referred to as hidden or invisible translations, otherwise plagiarism plain and simple).

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