PART I: *Introducing Translation Studies* 30 points (1 point/right answer).

**Answer sheet**

Enter your answers by ticking the appropriate box. Only one box may be used per row. Wrong answers will not be penalised. Good luck!

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1 **Intersemiotic translation** is
   a. Rewording
   b. Transmutation
   c. An interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language
   d. An interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language

2 Which of the following does **not** belong to the branch of **applied translation studies**?
   a. Product oriented descriptive studies
   b. Translator training
   c. Translation criticism
   d. Translation aids

3 According to Newmark, which thematic dichotomy prevailed during the pre-linguistic period of translation?
   a. Word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense
   b. Semantic vs. sociological
   c. Dynamic vs. fixed
   d. Linguistic vs. systemic

4 John Dryden's category of **metaphrase** is defined as
   a. Forsaking both words and sense
   b. Translating solely the connotative senses of the text
   c. Semantic translation, where the form of the ST is secondary
   d. Word by word and line by line translation

5 Schleirmacher is considered to be the creator of which dichotomy?
   a. Semantic versus communicative translation
   b. Alienating or foreignization versus naturalization or domestication
   c. Direct translation versus oblique translation
   d. Formal equivalence versus dynamic equivalence

6 Controversy over which text type was central to Western translation theory for its first two millennia?
   a. Business contracts and financial texts
   b. Religious texts and the Bible
   c. Literature and poetry
   d. Scientific texts

7 **Meaning** can be broken down into
   a. Linguistic meaning, emotive meaning and componential meaning
   b. Emotive meaning, connotative meaning and linguistic meaning
   c. Referential meaning, emotive meaning and connotative meaning
   d. Referential meaning, connotative meaning and linguistic meaning
8 Which of the following statements about kernel structures is not true?
   a. Kernel sentences are simple, active, declarative sentences
   b. All languages have between two to half a dozen kernel structures
   c. Kernel sentences require the minimum of transformation
   d. All languages agree more on the level of kernels than on the level of elaborate structures

9 Translation shifts refer to
   a. Small linguistic changes occurring in translation of ST to TT
   b. Transfer of cultural or scientific ideas from SL to TL
   c. Shifts in meaning occurring during the translation process
   d. A group of translators working in the same shift during express translation

10 Vinay & Darbelnet's translation model was mainly based on
   a. Innovative adaptation of earlier translation theories
   b. Textual analysis of their own translation between French and German
   c. Comparative stylistic analysis of two different languages
   d. Findings in psycholinguistic and neurological study of translators

11 Calque is
   a. A mathematical method created for translation analysis
   b. A special kind of borrowing where the SL expression or structure is transferred in a literal translation
   c. A synonym for oblique translation
   d. Correspondence of an expression or structure with something at a different level of the same language

12 Catford's theory of translation belongs to which theoretical approach
   a. Cultural
   b. Functional
   c. Sociological
   d. Linguistic

13 According to the interpretative model of translation, re-expression is defined as
   a. A repeating structure in a text that must be translated faithfully on every occasion
   b. A translation strategy where source culture allusions are translated with target culture allusions
   c. A process where the target text is constituted and given form
   d. A process where the translator revisits and evaluates the target text

14 Think-aloud protocol refers to
   a. A system of textual analysis used by translators of song lyrics
   b. A co-operative working routine of conference interpreter pairs
   c. A research method where a translator is asked to verbalize his/her thought processes
   d. A teaching method where the teacher describes the choices he/she makes while translating

15 According to Reiss, the aesthetic dimension of language is associated with which text type?
   a. Informative
   b. Operative
   c. Appellative
   d. Expressive
16 In the translatorial action model, which role is played by the translator?
   a. Commissioner
   b. ST producer
   c. Initiator
   d. TT producer

17 What is meant by **genre** according to Halliday's systemic functional linguistics?
   a. A defined category of literature, for example poetry
   b. The sociocultural context a certain grammatical utterance has
   c. The conventional text type associated with a specific communicative function
   d. A style of narrative fiction

18 Discourse and register analysis can begin to explain how
   a. Characters of a fictional work interact
   b. Texts construct meaning
   c. The grammatical functions of clausal structures have formed in the development of a language
   d. The power relations shift between actants in debates

19 Which of the following is **not** one of the registers in Juliana House's revisited (1977) Model of translation quality assessment?
   a. Field, refers to subject matter and social action and covers the specificity of lexical items
   b. Intralinguistic criteria, or semantic, lexical, grammatical and stylistic features
   c. Tenor, includes the addressee's temporal, geographic and social provenance as well as his [or] her intellectual, emotional or affective stance
   d. Mode, relates to channel (spoken, written etc.) and the degree of participation between addressee and addressee

20 Overt translation is
   a. A target text that does not purport to be an original text
   b. A draft translation to be further worked upon
   c. A target text that openly purports to be an original text
   d. A verbal translation performed in a court of law or similar public situation requiring transparency

21 The following definition of discourse (in its wider sense): “modes of speaking and writing which involve social groups in adopting a particular attitude towards areas of sociocultural activity (e.g. racist discourse, bureaucratese, etc.)” was coined by:
   a. Eugene Nida 1969
   b. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason 1997
   c. Roman Jakobson 1959
   d. Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan 1976

22 Lefevere examines translation as
   a. Rewriting
   b. Reconstruction
   c. Shifts
   d. Deconstruction
23 According to Lefevere the literary system of translation is controlled by three main factors. Which of the following is not one the factors?

a. Professionals within the literary system
b. Patronage outside the literary system
c. Readership
d. Dominant poetics

24 The core of feminist translation theory is

a. Female authors should be translated by female translators
b. There is a parallel between the status of translation in relation to original text and status of women in society and literature
c. Texts should never be manipulated from a male gender perspective
d. Relationships between languages and cultures parallel the relationships of the sexes and thus should be accepted at face value

25 The central intersection of translation studies and post-colonial theory is

a. Cross cultural theories
b. Analysis of texts written in colonies
c. Histories of colonial writers
d. Power relations

26 In Chaume’s model of analysis of the signifying codes of cinematographic language, which of the following codes concerns the acoustic channel?

a. The paralinguistic code
b. The iconographic code
c. Syntactic codes
d. Photographic codes

27 Which of the following is not one of the four parts of George Steiner’s concept of hermeneutic motion in his *After Babel*?

a. Modulation
b. Initiative trust
c. Incorporation or embodiment
d. Compensation or restitution

28 How did feminist translation theorists receive *After Babel*?

a. They embraced it
b. They developed it further
c. They criticized it
d. They were not aware of it

29 Persistent tensions between which two theories may cause fragmentation of translation studies:

a. Linguistic vs. cultural
b. Polysystemic vs. cognitive
c. Machine translation vs. traditional translation
d. Sociological vs. hermeneutical
30 In the last chapter of the entrance examination book, Munday suggests:

a. Reinforcing the individual disciplines of translation studies in order to maintain stability
b. Focus on the more recent, more advanced theories
c. That those within the field both continue in specialization and work collaboratively
d. That the trainers of future translators guide them with the help of strict pedagogy and canonized theories
SECTION II GRAMMAR, IDiom, VOCABULARY (30 points/0.5 points per answer)

Answer sheet

Enter your answers by ticking the appropriate box. Only one box may be used per row. Wrong answers will not be penalised. Good luck!

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PART II: GRAMMAR, IDIOM, VOCABULARY

- This section contains 4 texts and 60 multiple-choice questions.
- Read all of each text and choose the alternative you think is correct or most suitable in that context.
- In questions marked WW choose the alternative you think is wrong or least suitable in that context.
- Remember! The question of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ should always be considered in context!

TEXT 1 Roll over, Confucius from The Economist

Throughout the millennia, students of all ages in China have had to endure the miseries of learning by heart. But for the past year, the government has been experimenting with

1 WW
- potentially revolutionary changes
- such changes, which could be revolutionary,
- what could amount to revolutionary changes
- changes that could prove revolutionary

in China’s classrooms. The aim is to make education more pleasant, more useful and, above all, to challenge students to think for themselves. What has prompted the reforms is a belated recognition that China’s education system is failing to produce enough innovative thinkers. In addition, students are deeply unhappy. Exam pressures frequently lead to suicides. According to a survey last year among senior secondary-school students and university freshmen in one area, more than 50%

2
- had considered killing themselves.
- would have considered suicide.
- considered to kill themselves.
- considered that they will commit suicide.

Several other countries in East Asia, including Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, are grappling with similar problems. But the implications of China’s reform efforts are particularly profound. China’s traditional education methods are ideally suited to a political culture that

3 WW
- demands that the citizen submit blindly to authority.
- wants that the citizen should submit blindly to authority.
- requires the citizen to submit blindly to authority.
- insists on blind submission by the citizen to authority.

By encouraging students to question their teachers and regard them as equals, China could be ushering in a new kind of relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The problem is making it work. The government has set ambitious targets to ensure that the country’s more than 10m teachers acquire the skills and determination to change the habits of a lifetime. Some of the reforms involve introducing livelier textbooks. In elementary mathematics, for example,

4
- they try to relate formulae to practical situations.
- formulae are tried to relate to practical situations.
- it is being tried to relate formulae to practical situations.
- formulae are aimed to be related to practical situations.

New English textbooks encourage pupils to experiment with dialogue instead of memorising words and phrases. Teachers are expected to use these textbooks as “platforms” for imaginative exercises rather than “sacred texts”. All this, however, costs money. This will not come from the ministry but from local education departments. But these are already facing acute problems, particularly in the countryside where some teachers go unpaid for months on end.

5
- “More than this
- “Over all this
- “Above this
- “On top of this

1/10
is the problem of convincing parents that new-fangled education methods are going to benefit their children. “

As long as
Providing
On condition that
If only

the entrance requirements for universities and senior secondary schools remain based on the results of national exams which primarily test students’ ability to memorise, parents will pile on the same pressures.

The schools, which have a good record of getting pupils into top universities,
Schools that have a good record of getting pupils into top universities
Schools, having a good record of getting pupils into top universities,
Schools, with a good record of getting pupils into top universities,

are obviously in the greatest demand. There is therefore a considerable risk that schools will pay lip service to the new reforms

in
whereas
but
while

continuing to cram students in the time-honoured fashion. “We’ll face a lot of pressure, but we have to keep going,” says Mr Liu. “Curriculum changes are creating a new culture in the classroom that is open, scientific and democratic.”

For snivelling children and recalcitrant carnivores, requests that they should eat to eat that they eat for eating five portions of fruit and vegetables every day have mostly echoed in reached struck fallen on
deaf ears. But those who did adhere to comply with follow up heed

official advice from charities, governments and even the mighty WHO could remind themselves, rather smugly, that the extra greens they forced down at lunchtime would greatly reduce their chances of getting cancer.

Or could remind until now.
Could until now.
Until now, that is.
Or they could until now.
Because a group of researchers at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York have conducted a new study into the link between cancer and the consumption of fruit and vegetables and

14  
- found that it is far weaker
- found it far weaker
- found it would be far weaker
- found it to be far weaker

than anyone had thought. In the past, veggie-associated reductions of cancer-risk rates as high as 50% had been reported. But it appears that some of these early investigations may have been biased by the use of "case-control" studies. Such studies try to identify the factors contributing to cancer by comparing people who have the disease with those who do not, but are otherwise similar. The problem is that they can easily be misleading if researchers do not adequately establish that

15  
- the two comparative groups
- the two groups being compared
- the two groups under comparison
- the two groups to be compared

are,

16  
- surely,
- indeed,
- true,
- decidedly,

otherwise similar. Walter Willet, at the Harvard School of Public Health, says it appears that earlier investigations were more likely to use health-conscious people as their controls. These types of people,

17  
- not surprising,
- it hardly surprises,
- without surprise,
- unsurprisingly,

are more likely to agree to be interviewed about their health than slobby couch potatoes. Dr Boffetta and his colleagues have therefore carried out a different kind of study, known as prospective cohort study. Their work follows a group of individuals over time and

18  
- explores
- delves into
- looks
- goes into

how different factors contribute to different outcomes — in this case the development of cancer. Analysis of dietary data from almost 500,000 people in Europe found only a weak association between high fruit and vegetable intake and reduced overall cancer risk. According to Susan Jebb at Cambridge the new study suggests that if Europeans increased their consumption of fruit and vegetables by 150g a day, it would result in a decrease of just 2.6% in the rate of cancers in men and 2.3% in women. Even those who eat

19  
- virtuously
- veritably
- voraciously
- virtually

no fruit and vegetables, are only 9% more likely to develop cancer than those who stick to the WHO recommendations. On the face of it, that is quite a blow to the self-satisfied salad-eaters, and the health lobby’s

20  
- spin-doctors
- quacks
- doom merchants
- enforcers
were out in force in the wake of the paper’s publication to play down its conclusions. Before racing to the food-
recycling bin with the contents of an ageing fruit bowl, they pointed out, there are a number of other factors that
nutritionists would urge that you consider. One is that this kind of study has attempted

21
a to adjust for
b to sum up
c preclude
d to adapt to

every possible factor that might contribute to the relationship and isolate only the contribution that fruit and vegetables
make. This means if people who turn away from fruit and vegetables end up eating more processed meats or foods
high in fat instead, they probably will increase their cancer risk,

22
a even though the direct cause is not
b despite of the direct cause not being
c even if the direct cause should not be
d although the direct cause would not be

the consumption of less fruit and veg. More importantly, there is still good evidence that fruit and vegetables protect
against heart disease and strokes by lowering blood pressure. It is also possible that some specific foods, such as
tomatoes, broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables, do offer protective effects against particular forms of cancer. As a
consequence, the best advice is probably still to eat your five a day. But for snivelling children and recalcitrant
carnivores the

23
a fleeting
b racing
c fleeing
d speeding

thought that you might not have to was nice while it lasted.

TEXT 3 From Company Man by Terry Eagleton

The name Shakespeare in Britain is rather like the names Ford, Disney and Rockefeller in the United States. He is
less an individual than an institution, less an artist than an apparatus. Shakespeare is a precious national treasure
akin to Stonehenge or North Sea oil. He is to be ranked alongside King Arthur, Monty Python and the crown jewels as
part of the nation’s cherished mythology. In some quarters, indeed, he is almost as well-known as Harry Potter. That
right-wing troublemaker Prince Charles brandishes

24
a the Seer
b the Bard
c the Guru
d the Sage

as a weapon in his campaign to defend the Queen’s English, a language that in his case is literally his mother tongue.
Stratford, Shakespeare’s home town, has become a place of pilgrimage only slightly less sacred than Mecca,

25
a where waddle American tourists
b American tourists waddle
c and there waddle American tourists
d with American tourists waddling

reverently around the spectacularly tasteless cathedral of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. Shakespeare’s familiar
high-domed head, an image that is quite possibly not him at all, has adorned everything from TV beer commercials to
the £20 note. Without him, industries would crash and ideologies crumble. It is even rumoured that he also wrote
plays. Not all the English have been so admiring. The eighteenth century found his work rather barbarous,
others have found his jokes dismally unfunny.

27
a He is neither easy to appropriate
b Neither he is easy to appropriate
c He is not either easy to appropriate
d Nor is he easy to appropriate

as a patriotic Englishman. There is some chauvinism in his plays, but in King Lear he comes near to championing some form of socialist redistribution. The beauty of the drama, however, is that you can

28
a take away from it
b read into it
c interpret it
d make of it

pretty much what you will. There are, for example, times when it is almost impossible to believe that he had not read Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Wittgenstein. Frank Kermode’s book, The Age of Shakespeare, provides us with an elegant, economic survey of the politics and religion of the age, along with some shrewd speculations on the man himself.

29
a Oddly enough
b How oddly
c Oddly rather
d Odd it is

for a fairly low-born seventeenth-century working scriptwriter from the rural outback, Shakespeare is better known today than many of his contemporaries. It is true that we cannot be absolutely sure that the Will Shakespeare that was an actor from Stratford also wrote Hamlet. Some conspiratorial souls, for whom the Kennedy assassination

30
a does nothing for the Shakespeare conundrum,
b is nothing by the Shakespeare conundrum,
c makes nothing of the Shakespeare conundrum,
d has nothing on the Shakespeare conundrum,

believe that the real Shakespeare was a nobleman who stole the name of this country bumpkin. This is because they find it hard to stomach the suggestion that a clodhopping peasant who couldn’t even spell his own name properly could come to rank alongside Dante and Goethe. One or two of the writers of his time also viewed him as an upstart, but this was probably envy: Shakespeare was big in his own day as he is in ours. A few conspiracy theorists have even proposed the earl of Oxford as the true Shakespeare, a claim zealously supported by the present Earl of Oxford, who

31
a needs to live down
b could do with
c catches up with
d makes do with

a little culture in his family tree. The only drawback to this eminently plausible case is that there is not a scrap of evidence for it. But at least Oxford was a nobleman, who could occasionally spell his own name correctly, and who like Shakespeare’s plays would have known

32
a a thing or two
b something or other
c some matters
d one and another thing

about affairs of state. Much ink has been

33
a poured
b shed
c spilled
d spread
on the question of Shakespeare’s identity, including a somewhat fanciful book by a scholar named Thomas Looney. Kermode, for his part, takes it pretty much for granted that the boy who attended Stratford grammar school also later wrote “To be or not to be”.

34
a Despite of his identity,
b Irrespective who he was,
c Regardless his identity,
d Whoever he may have been,

Shakespeare had a nose for business as well as an eye for metaphor. He was in on the ground floor of the flourishing new London theatres, won himself one-tenth of the shares in Lord Chamberlain’s drama company and ended up as a prosperous property owner. As Kermode points out, Shakespeare was acquainted with much that went on in social ranks both above and below him as a result of his own ambiguous social status. It is a complex richness of experience to which his plays bear eloquent testimony. In fact,

35 WW
a It is eloquence that one associates with him above all,
b above all, eloquence one associates with him,
c what one associates with him above all is eloquence,
d eloquence above all is something one associates with him,

as his characters produce torrents of unstoppable verbal intricacy just to announce that there is someone at the door. The butchers and candlestick makers in the audience may not have followed it all, but they were oral types accustomed to listening to rhetoric (in church, among other places).

36 WW
a unlike us moderns.
b as we moderns are not.
c differently from us moderns.
d in contrast to us moderns.

It is remarkable how many of the most eminent names of English literature have been socially ambiguous. Jane Austen, the Bronte Sisters, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, all of these women knew the tension between aspiration and bitter reality. And it was partly out of this discrepancy that they produced such distinguished art. Shakespeare went even further,

37
a for being caught
b caught as he was
c because being caught
d due to that he was caught

not just between two social classes but between two historical modes of production. His Globe theatre was a profitable enterprise, charging only a penny for standing space, but able to accommodate an audience of 3,000. With his usual exquisite sense of timing, Shakespeare

38
a succeeded to get born
b succeeded in becoming born
c managed to get himself born
d successfully was born

at exactly the right moment for artistic greatness. Major art often flourishes on the fault lines between civilisations. Shakespeare’s England was still a repressive, court-centred monarchy. But Kermode points out that finance and commodity markets were growing apace, as middle-class opportunists like the

39
a Lion
b Fox
c Swan
d Deer
of Avon stealthily accumulated power. Shakespeare seems to have taken no trouble to proofread his plays. It has been estimated that some 3,000 theatre scripts were produced in England between the 1550s and the 1640s, many of which,

40
a in accordance with legend,
b tells legend,
c by legend,
d so legend has it,

were destroyed by an eighteenth-century cook who used them to make pies. The story gives new meaning to the notion of literary taste. Having made his pile, Shakespeare bought his father a gentleman’s coat of arms. (There is some evidence that Shakespeare senior was a/n

41
a occult
b closet
c dormant
d hidden

Catholic, and some scholars believe that junior was as well.) Shakespeare’s steady progress up the social scale wasn’t at all bad for a theatrical profession whose members had been

42
a lumped
b dumped
c humped
d bumped

by the law with whores and vagabonds only a few years earlier, and who could still suffer the odd cold blast of disfavour from the Puritan city fathers. The Puritans disliked the theatre because

43
a they feared it would spread
b they feared the spread of
c it was feared to spread
d there was a fear of spreading

immorality, public disorder and sickness. The latter was a real anxiety in an era of smallpox, malaria, bubonic plague and a positive rash of sexually transmitted diseases. As for immorality, the sight of beardless boys dressed as women making love to men on the public stage was not considered especially desirable.

TEXT 4 Lost in Translation  Stephen Budiansky, Atlantic Monthly

In one famous episode in the British comedy series Monty Python a foreign-looking tourist appears at the entrance to a London shop. He marches up to the man behind the counter, solemnly

44
a looks up
b refers
c looks from
d consults

a phrase book, and in a thick Middle European accent declares, “My hovercraft… is full of eels!” Eventually the scene shifts to the Old Bailey where the prisoner is accused of intent to cause a breach of the peace for having published an English-Hungarian phrase-book full of spurious translations. For example, the Hungarian phrase “Can you direct me to the railway station” is translated as “Please fondle my buttocks.” This episode is brought to mind by some available computer programmes that claim to provide automatic translation between English and a number of other languages. When faced with criticism of their products’ translations, MT (machine translation) vendors tend to invoke the “talking dog” -- as in Don’t be picky; it’s amazing that a dog can talk at all. When the field

45
a was still in children’s shoes,
b still was in early days,
c was still in its infancy,
d still had baby’s teeth,
in the early 1960s, a story went round about a computer that the CIA had built to translate between English and Russian: to test the machine, the programmers decided

46 WW
a to have it translate
b to get it to translate
c that it should translate
d to make it to translate

to have it translate

a phrase into Russian and then back into English to see if they would get the same words they started with. The director of the CIA was invited to do the honors; the programmers all gathered expectantly around the console to watch as the director typed in the test words:

47
a “ Here today, gone tomorrow .”
b “ Out of sight, out of mind .”
c “ See no evil, hear no evil.”
d “ Now you see it, now you don’t .”

The computer silently ground through its calculations. Time passed. Then, suddenly, magnetic tapes whirred, lights blinked, and a printer clattered out the result: “ Invisible insanity.” When I tried out Babelfish and Comprende, Babelfish handled that highly figurative phrase with ease, rendering it in idiomatic, even nuanced, French. But the Pythonesque possibilities were

48
a all but
b too far
c much
d all too

apparent in what Babelfish did to “ I have lost my passport.” After a trip into French it came back as “ I have destroyed my passport”.. “ All’s well that ends well ” by way of Portuguese became “ All gush out that the extremities gush out”, and “ Would you like to come back to my place? ” returned from German as “ Did you become to like my workstation to return? ” Most translations

49
a fell
b reached
c located
d became

somewhere between impressive and nonsensical; in general they were surprisingly understandable,

50 WW
a though
b albeit
c except for
d if

don’t understand

odd and stilted. The computer talks this way for

51
a considerably
b very much
c a lot
d greatly

the same reason that Hercule Poirot does – both use literal translations of foreign idiom. The earliest computer translators were even more simple-minded; they used “ direct systems ”, which means they looked up each word or phrase in a lexicon and substituted an equivalent word or phrase in the target language. It ought to have been obvious that this approach had serious

52 WW
a shortcomings.
b drawbacks.
c deficiencies.
d shortages.

But such was the naïve optimism that it took practitioners a surprisingly long time to realize that they had a lot of hard work ahead of them to produce even passable translations. One huge snag is word order. Forty to fifty percent of words in a typical English sentence end up in a different position in the corresponding French sentence. In going from English to Japanese, the rearrangement rate hits almost 100 percent, partly because in Japanese verbs regularly
come at the end of the sentence. Another problem with the direct approach is the sheer amount of computational resources required. Like all modern translation systems, the latest MT products seek to overcome these limitations by incorporating at least some grammatical rules for figuring out what words are performing what functions in a sentence.

53 WW
a There is demonstrated by all this effort
b One thing demonstrated by all this effort is
c All of this effort provides a demonstration
d What all of this effort demonstrates is

that language is far more complex than even linguists ever imagined. Yorick Wilks, of Sheffield University, is one of a number of MT researchers who have been developing automated programmes that comb through a corpus of text to derive grammatical rules empirically. This whole approach

54 WW
a flies in the face of Noam Chomsky’s theories,
b cocks a snook at Noam Chomsky’s theories,
c plays havoc with Noam Chomsky’s theories,
d steal Noam Chomsky’s theories’ thunder,

which, Wilks says, led linguists to believe that “they know language through intuition and introspection and don’t need evidence.” Wilks’s lab has developed an English grammar that so far contains 18,000 rules – many times the number that linguists ever dreamed would be necessary. The entire exercise of machine translation has been sobering, even depressing, because the best MT systems so far appear to have less to do with linguistic breakthroughs than with sheer doggedness. Even more annoying is the impressive performance a few years ago by a system that made a total mockery of the theories of linguists. This system was designed by a group of physicists at IBM who got the idea of treating translation as a problem of simple probability. Rather than working out grammatical rules themselves, they created a programme to exploit the expert knowledge built into actual translated texts. The computer would simply string the words together in different combinations until it came up with the one that contained the most statistically probable sequence of word pairs.

55 WW
a What was embarrassing was that
b Embarrassingly,
c To the general embarrassment,
d It embarrassed when

the IBM system performed almost as well as systems that incorporated the latest in highfalutin linguistic theory. With no programmed intelligence, no rules about meaning or grammar or word order, statistical systems got as many as 50 per cent of their translated sentences correct,

56
a as
b although
c where
d even if

the rate is about 65 percent for systems like Babelfish. Developers of statistical systems have been going around bragging “Every time I fire a linguist, my system gets better.” The real failings of MT have less to do with the state of linguistic theory than with the fact that computers don’t have any common sense. For example, is “bank” a place to put money, the edge of a riverbed, or a manoeuvre performed by an aircraft? A five-year-old child can grasp the differences in meaning, but getting a computer

57
a to grasp
b to
c grasping it
d to do

is another matter. In other words semantics is the key, and semantics is a matter of a lot more than linguistics - it requires real-world knowledge. A major effort now under way is to come up with elaborate taxonomies (luokittelu) of meaning that will in effect duplicate the real-world knowledge that allows human beings effortlessly to know which words relate to which in a sentence and which of various meanings the speaker intends. The

58
a sacred cow
b holy grail
c Shangri-la
d Mecca
for many people in machine translation is to find a way to reduce any sentence to a pure description of meaning in a/n

59

a  “interlingua”.

b  “supralingua”.

c  “sublingua”.

d  “extralingua”.

This can then be reassembled into a sentence in any language. But no one seems to be holding his breath.

Professional translators are, not unexpectedly, scornful of MT, but they are also undeniably nervous about it. Another major growth area for MT is the European Union, which employs about many thousand translators to handle 23 languages. The biggest

60

a  payload

b  payout

c  payback

d  payoff

may come from combining computers and people in a way that exploits the natural talents of each. A document can be given a once-over by MT, and a professional translator can then clean up the problems. Working in tandem with an MT system some people can produce 18 pages an hour, whereas the standard quota for a professional government translator is five to six pages a day. Younger translators in particular have embraced this approach. Their attitude towards computers is if you can’t beat them, join them. Or, in the words of one programme, “If you cannot strike it, connect them.”