The nature of translation is a topic that tends to lead to extreme points of view. There is a tendency on the one hand to emphasise the role of language to the exclusion of everything else, and on the other to neglect the role of linguistic elements and to concentrate on the conceptual content. The notion that translation involves merely replacing words in one language with words in another is probably the most common one held by the general public. This is then extrapolated onto other concepts; a chemist can easily recognise the equations and formulae in a text written in a different language with a script that is not even alphabetic, and, with a few clues about the language, he may manage to decipher a great deal of it. A doctor may be able to construe a patient’s anamnesis even if the patient comes from a remote part of the globe for as long the patient presents him with an accurate medical account written by his previous physician.

If all technical texts were expressed entirely in a symbolic notation, the concept-for-concept formula would be perfectly practicable, technical translation, at least, would be one of the simplest things on earth. However, even mathematical texts use a certain amount of ordinary language, and in so far as they do this, the concept-for-concept approach is not sufficient.

1. Contemporary views

Translation is practically as old as writing itself, and for almost as long as humans have been writing they have been translating. The mechanical substitution of word units can be effective under certain conditions and up to a point. Some simple forms can be converted in this way from one language to another. But if translation were solely the replacement of words, the appropriate procedure would be to consult a bilingual dictionary. This can only be feasible if there is a certain amount of equivalence in-between the languages. However, if translations are supposed to bring in information that is new to a language or culture, then they cannot be expected to be naturally equal. That is, new ideas and concepts will eventually require new terms and expressions. The twentieth century saw a blossoming of diverse approaches, each inventing useful tools to facilitate the translation process. Unfortunately, none of them provide a comprehensive clue. Equivalence operates more at the level of beliefs, or fictions, while Hans Vermeer’s skopos postulates that the most important ingredient in any translation is its purpose, viewing the process as a communicative activity performed for a specific reason. Texts are written for a specific purpose, which greatly affects and determines what the best approach to their translation should be. Grammatical knowledge should also enable the translator to distinguish between optional and obligatory forms in the language, those matters that have to be expressed as such, and those that have alternatives. To understand the ambiguities and to avoid compounding them in the process of translating, we must dismantle the languages and look at the component parts. It is important to realize that while none of the existing approaches to translation on their own can yield an infallible model, they can provide adequate raw material that can be used to devise an informed and acceptable model to guide our practical work.

Key words: translation, language, meaning, dictionary, equivalence, skopos, words.
idence of this can be found in ancient clay tablets containing bilingual Sumerian-Eblaite glossaries (Deslisle and Cloutier 1995:7). That translation has accompanied virtually every significant scientific and technological discovery throughout the ages is well documented and it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a single example of an invention or discovery which was not exported to another language and culture by means of translation (Byrne 2012: 3).

The portentous events from the past are not mentioned here in order to say that translation practice at the time had resolved the issues of adequate approaches to the process. Even more than today, translation lacked the standards of accuracy and quality that we expect nowadays. It was only feasible for as long as there was a certain amount of equivalence in between the languages. And indeed, the notion of equal values among languages has dominated the translation paradigm for centuries. If translations are supposed to bring in information that is new to a language or culture, then they cannot be expected to be naturally equal. That is, new ideas and techniques will eventually require new terms and expressions, so that translations are going to be marked in ways that their source texts are not.

This argument usually becomes a question of terminology: should the translation use loans from the source text or should new terms be invented from the resources considered 'natural' in the target language? (Pym 2010: 21).

2. The illusion of equivalence

The naïve belief that translation consists of matching concepts from one language with their equivalents from another does not sound outlandish at first glance. At second glance though, we may wonder what happens when a concept to be translated is totally inexistent in the target culture. Should the translator have the audacity to snatch it from the source culture and create a bogus new concept in another? This loaning or invention of new phrases occasionally adds a commensurate amount of naïve superstition in the target culture; take for example Halloween taken to a higher level of overplay in the TL expression Noć vještica eclipsing the inherent notion of Svi sveti by instilling the notion of witches even though the original wording in English is totally devoid of it.

2.1. The dominance of purpose

Equivalence can only be helpful for as long as all the facets of the expressions perfectly fit each other in the SL and TL cultures. This is more often not the case than it is and the twentieth century saw a blossoming of diverse approaches to translation differing to such great extents that many have pondered to bridge the gap by finding a common denominator. Hans Vermeer attempted to bring the differing approaches closer by postulating that the most important ingredient in any translation is its purpose, viewing the process as a communicative activity performed for a specific reason. Texts are written for a specific purpose, which greatly affects and determines what the best approach to their translation should be. It is this purpose, that he named Skopos, which conducts the translation process. This may seem commonplace, but compared to the equivalence approach, where the source text and its effect on the source language audience determine the translation process, the Skopos approach provides a different angle viewing the source text function as the ultimate shaper of the target text and the translation process.

Within such an approach, there is general acceptance that one source text can be translated in different ways in order to carry out different functions. The translator thus needs information about the specific goals each translation is supposed to achieve, and this requires extra-textual information of some kind, usually from the client. This expands and bends the notion of translation fidelity, rather contrariwise to the equivalence paradigm. For the Skopos paradigm, the translator's choice need not be dominated by the source text, or by criteria of equivalence, unless the source text and equivalence happen to be stipulated as essential for the purpose. A legal document for example may be adapted to the target-side textual norms if, and when it is to be governed by the laws operative in that particular
Translation intricacies – The Simpler the Approach, the More Complicated the Outcome

culture, or it may be rendered with the source text form if, and when the translation is more for the purposes of understanding, or again, it may be translated in an almost word-for-word way if, for instance, it is to be cited as evidence in court. The source text would be the same in all cases. What is different is the purpose that the translation has to serve (Pym 2010: 22-23).

The Skopos approach however can be rather fiddly to use in practice due to lack of clarity in the notion of translation purpose, as it does not actually say how translators are supposed to fulfil a particular purpose. It helps them, nonetheless, to focus on the most pertinent facets of the translation process.

2.2. The shortcomings

The limitations of the equivalence and Skopos approaches are also indicative of other functional approaches. While the equivalence approach can provide us with theoretical criteria that can be used as strategies for comparing originals with their translations, it does not provide explanation for many other elements existing outside texts, which nevertheless exert major influence on the translation process. Equivalence also comes short of telling us which of the various levels of concurrence is the most desirable for a given text. Unlike Skopos, equivalence places the substance of translation onto the role of the source text to the detriment of its purpose in the target audience. Skopos, on the other hand, takes a more holistic approach and views translation beyond the horizon of the process itself, perhaps laying too much emphasis on the professional context.

3. Levels of decoding

Translation is primarily concerned with communicating the overall meaning of a stretch of linguistic expression. Once the translator makes up his mind about the purpose of the text, or the desirable level of equivalence for that matter, another dilemma arises – at what level should equivalence be sought? – at the level of words, sentences or discourse chunks. To achieve this, we need to start by decoding the units and structures which carry the meaning.

3.1. Reliance on words

Translation is more than mere transfer of concepts – it is more akin to transfer of meanings expressed by words, and words are not necessarily the names of things and ideas. Defined loosely, the word is ‘the smallest unit of language that can be used by itself’ (Bolinger and Sears 1968:43), which leads many to believe that the word is also the basic meaningful element in a language, which is a rather inaccurate belief. Meaning can be carried by units smaller than the word (consider the morphemes ‘re’ or ‘dis’, etc in recreate and disbelief respectively). But if translation were solely the replacement of words, the appropriate procedure would be to consult a bilingual dictionary. At its best, however, a bilingual dictionary shares the main limitations of a monolingual one. It has the same alphabetic and atomistic classifications, the same tendency to obsolescence. Moreover, bilingual dictionaries tend to furnish standardised translations that do not correspond to the full lexical ranges in two languages and may therefore be incorrect because of temporal shifts of meaning in both languages.

For such an approach, it would suffice to operate with a list of SL words and a corresponding list of TL words; each SL word would have its TL counterpart. This indeed is the naïve idea of a bilingual dictionary and what the layperson in the street expects to find in it. It presupposes that words are clear-cut and distinct entities, each word normally having only one clear and distinct meaning. This idea goes with an equally widespread notion that language itself, any individual language for that matter, is a list of words of this kind, and that each word is the name of some object in the external world.

The two examples mentioned above can also conveniently show that some notions expressed by one SL word require more than one word to be translated in the TL: (recreate = pono-vo stvoriti/izgraditi) while others may keep the number of corresponding words. Even loan words are not a guarantee of keeping the number
of words equal – take tennis player and teniser in
English and Serbian respectively for example.
More often, however, meanings are carried by
units much more complex than the single word
and by various structures and linguistic devices.
One can hardly call such a structure complex or
complicated, and yet it is sufficiently complicat-
ed to show that dictionary translations of this
type tends to become very cumbersome and im-
practical, albeit the process itself remains at a
rather simple level. Even most linguistically in-
occent people have an intuition that meaning is
intrinsically bound up with individual words.
While such an assumption seriously underesti-
mates the complexity of word meaning, there is
some merit in its postulation. Languages do have
words, at least partly, since in the cultures they
are supposed to serve, the meanings that such
words entail need to be communicated – which
provides an explanation in terms of their motiva-
tion (Cruse: 2011: 77).

3.2. Other levels of decoding

Anyone who has ever attempted transla-
tion will be aware of how illusory it is to abide by
the rule of the word. Yet it persists, and in a
somewhat more sophisticated shape, it provided
the starting point for the first experiments in
translating by means of the electronic digital
computer (machine translation). Part of the rea-
son for its persistence is that there is an element
of truth in the idea that translation is concerned
with words only. Translation is concerned with
words, but not with words only. A translator
needs grammatical knowledge to enable him/her
to resolve ambiguities caused by structural fea-
tures and to foresee and avoid interferences be-
tween the two languages. Grammatical struc-
tures of languages differ from one to another and
categories within them do not always corre-
spond.

The mechanical substitution of word units
can be effective under certain conditions and up
to a point. Some simple forms can be converted
in this way from one language to another. A
phrase like vrijeme in Serbian can be replaced by
time in English. We can arrive at this point with
an ordinary bilingual dictionary, and there are a
number of other phrases that can be dealt with
on these lines. For example, a phrase containing
an adjective, like Serbian dobro vrijeme, will with
a little extra information yield to the English
good time. The information that the noun vrijeme
takes a neuter gender form of the adjective on ac-
count of the noun belonging to the same gender
need not be reflected in the corresponding
equivalent in English, which may be a syllogism
leading to an erroneous conclusion that all the
semantic and grammatical facets have been ade-
quately taken account of.

Grammatical knowledge should also enable
the translator to distinguish between optional
and obligatory forms in the language, those mat-
ters that have to be expressed as such and those
that have alternatives. This kind of knowledge is
second nature to all of us, as far as our mother
tongue is concerned. It may be very deeply root-
ed in a person with a good command of another
language but they will never be able to take it for
granted in the same way. In any event, nobody
has perfect control of any language (Pinchuck
1977: 148). By the same token, a further exten-
sion of the utterance, such as that in the phrase
Dobro vrijeme u teškim vremenima would be per-
fectly commonplace and effortlessly compre-
hended by a native speaker of Serbian, but it
would impose a major obstacle in the simple bi-
nary approach to translation since the word vri-
jeme in such a phrase brings to surface its hom-
onymic properties. English, on the other hand,
can conveniently take care of this semantic bifur-
cation by deploying two distinctly separate words
– weather and time, respectively. It also goes the
other way around too.

In translation, we have to cope with ambi-
guieties of this kind occurring in two languages at
the same time. To understand the ambiguities
and to avoid compounding them in the process
of translating, we must dismantle the languages and
look at the component parts. The typical
definite and indefinite articles, so prolific in Eng-
lish texts, are missing in Serbian. The tree types of
gender and case declensions of Serbian are re-
duced to an incomparable minimum in English.
Similarly, there are difficulties in the use of classes
such as noun, verb or adjective whose gender is one of the decisive factors in the meaning decoding process. The word *friend* in English can be taken to refer to either of the sexes, unlike the gender features entailed in Serbian *prijatelj* or *prijateljica* with unmistakable sex designations.

This, in turn, portents amendment to the belief that Serbian case inflections are generally replaced by a more rigorous and inflexible word order in English or expressions that include a preposition. Compound this complexity by the fact that the translation process must take into account that adjectives and nouns in a phrase necessitate conformation in case, gender and number; the verb form must conform to the noun and various other elements regulated by case relations. This corroborates the notion that a typical Serbian sentence is packed with a greater amount of information than might be considered necessary in English. Serbian is not economical, but it is less susceptible to misunderstanding.

4. Limitations

The theoretical distinction between words and morphemes mentioned in the previous paragraph attempts to account for such elements of meaning, which are expressed on the surface. It does not, however, provide an answer to how words and morphemes can be further broken down into components of meaning. It is nevertheless important to be aware of this distinction, as it can be useful in translation, especially in dealing with loan words. Perhaps the best description of the slippery path of relying on word-for-word translation is that expressed by Culler saying that if language were simply a nomenclature for a set of universal concepts, it would be easy to translate from one language to another. If language were like this the task of learning a new language would also be much easier than it is. But anyone who has attempted either of these tasks has acquired a vast amount of direct proof that languages are not nomenclatures, that the concepts of one language may differ radically from those of another. Each language articulates or organises the world differently. Languages do not simply name existing categories, they articulate their own (Culler 1976: 22).

It would transpire from this that if one persists in putting ‘round pegs into square holes’ there would have to be a certain amount of flexibility in the elements of both the source and the target languages, notably in their lexical, semantic and syntactic components. This flexibility however can only go so far, and if the translator bends the words, their meaning or congruence too much they will tend to refract. Perhaps, Anuradha Dingawaney was right to say that translation from one culture into another involves varying degrees of violence (1995: 4). This idea of translation as refraction rather than reflection was first developed by Lefevere offering a more complex model than the old idea of translation as a mirror of the original. Inherent in his view of translation as refraction was a rejection of any linear notion of the translation process. Texts, he argued, have to be seen as complex signifying systems and the task of the translator is to decode and re-encode whichever of those systems is accessible (Grant 1992: 84).

4.1. Instability of meaning

Because the occurrence possibilities of words within lexical items are typically severely constrained, the ‘meaning entails choice’ principle indicates that their meanings are similarly constrained. In other words, they are not fully functional semantic elements. Sinclair calls this restriction of meaning possibility ‘delexification’ (2004: 32). There are many other factors that undermine the word-for-word approach and devalue the resources of dictionaries. Numerous words in the language can hardly be said to serve
the purpose of nominalisation of the world around us.

Whatever may be argued about words like house or kuća (and even this, as demonstrated in the opening paragraphs, can be very complex), they are as simple as any words can be in a language as far as nominalisation goes; even more so if we ask ourselves what prepositions like on, to, at – or Serbian na, u etc, for the same matter - actually name. If it is maintained that they name ideas, such as ideas of spatial position, it would be difficult to allocate their correspondences between the languages.

To illustrate it further, ponder the English language go to town; in the street; at the market and the corresponding Serbian phrases ući u grad; na ulici; na pijaci etc. Clearly, the meaning of the prepositions varies according to the context, but this being so, they cannot be called ’names’ in the sense that one could say that John is the name of a person, while dog is the name of a particular kind of animal. This, in turn, implies that translation is far from being a transposition of names and is quite different from the comparing of languages or counting of words or phrases.

5. Principles rather than approaches

John Sinclair proposes that there are two basic ways of constructing utterances in natural language use (2004: 28). One way, governed by what Sinclair calls the ’Open-choice principle’ builds up or analyses an utterance word by word. Each word is freely chosen and displays the same semantic properties as it does in isolation. This, according to Sinclair, is how utterance construction is viewed in ’standard’ lexical semantics. The obligatory-optional distinction is an indispensable one. One of the most important matters to know, especially about the target language, is what must be said in it as opposed to what can be said in it. It goes without saying that thorough knowledge of grammatical implications on meaning is a necessary prerequisite in any translational action.

The other way, governed by the ’idiom principle’, uses as basic building blocks - ready-made sequences of words, which are chosen en block.

The choice of individual words in these sequences is severely constrained and their semantic properties are suppressed, being subservient to the properties of the sequences. According to Sinclair, utterance building in the first way is relatively infrequent, and is in any case mainly confined to particular language genres, especially technical language and literature. In ordinary, everyday language, especially the spoken variety, the idiom principle holds sway (Cruse: 1999: 86). A particular language variety may be necessary, for example to compensate a feature of the source text that resonates an undertone which does not have a per se equivalent in the target language in order to reach the same level of expressiveness.

5.1. A matter of choice

A target language structure may sometimes appear to differ greatly from the source language structure, but it is possible that the target language has alternatives that are nearer to the source language ones while still conveying the same message. Take for example the English phrase Comparing apples and oranges, and Serbian Porediti babe i žabe which, albeit divergent in terms of lexical composition, are still comparable in terms of semantic implication. Or to compound it even further, consider The early bird catches the worm and the several optional renderings in Serbian Ko rano rani dvije sreće grabi; or Ko prvi djevojci njegova djevojka whereby the lexical departing is equally present in both renderings; semantic concurrence likewise, but the sociological pertinence would incline the speaker to use one or the other depending on the particular context and situation. To complicate matters further, an idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language. The way a language chooses to express, or not express, various meanings cannot be predicted and only occasionally matches the way another language chooses to express the same meaning (Baker 2011: 71).

In technical texts, where conveying information is the main consideration, this point is highly relevant and therefore affects the criterion
of adequacy, which therefore needs to be added to the aforementioned context and situation. One language may express a given meaning by means of a single word, another may express it by means of a transparent fixed expression, a third may express it by means of an idiom and so on. It is therefore unrealistic to expect to find equivalent idioms and expressions in the target language as a matter of course (2011: 71).

Generally one alternative is preferable to the other. More often than not, optional forms all tend to belong to a similar series (for example: ground, earth, country, soil, dirt, state and so on, which, depending on the context, can all be translated in Serbian as zemlja; or, conversely: štap, pritka, palija, klip all possibly translated in English as stick). They are synonyms or near synonyms, and only a deeper analysis can show which one is more appropriate for the particular utterance than others. Used in such a context, the role of the bilingual dictionary, and to some extent that of the monolingual dictionary, is to give approximations rather than true equivalents. There may be a one-to-one correspondence in a particular context, but the correspondence may just as easily be many-to-one or one-to-many.

The choice of a suitable equivalent will always depend not only on the linguistic system or systems being handled by the translator, but also on the way both the writer of the source text and the producer of the target text, that is the translator, choose to manipulate the linguistic systems in question; on the expectation, background knowledge and prejudices of readers within a specific temporal and spatial location; on translators’ own understanding of their task, including their assessment of what is appropriate in a given situation; and on a range of restrictions that may operate in a given environment at a given point in time, including censorship and various types of intervention by parties other than the translator, author and reader (2011:15). The deeper the analysis, the more likely it is to take us into the lexical realm or even into the realm of any situation.

6. Other approaches

Going through some of the most relevant approaches to contemporary translation only scratches the surface of the issue. Each of the approaches leverages useful tools to facilitate the translation process. Unfortunately, none of them provide a comprehensive clue. Equivalence is an approach that operates more at the level of beliefs, or fictions, or of possible thought processes activated in the reception of translation, and that is exactly what authors such as Gutt, Toury or Pym believe it to be – a belief structure. They therefore hint that the illusion of equivalence should actually reduce cognitive effort at the point of text use. Consequently, if translators are aware of the way equivalence works in reception, they can reduce and direct their effort accordingly. In other words, the illusion of equivalence may well enable a very efficient use of resources (Pym 2010: 40).

As a reaction against such vagueness and contradiction, numerous other approaches available as tools for facilitation and improvement of accuracy of translation, such as relevance theory (Gutt 1991) or descriptive translation (Toury 1995) began to appear in the second half of the twentieth century as attempts to redefine the concepts of ‘literal’ and ‘free’ translation in operational terms, to ‘describe’ meaning in scientific terms, and to put together systematic taxonomies of translation phenomena. The breadth of this paper was only sufficient to mention the most prevailing ones. Having said that, one should be prudent enough to know that whatever approach prevails today, may subside tomorrow. There is obviously some truth in all of these theories, but the greatest truth definitely lies somewhere in between.

7. Conclusion

A possible way to reconcile the issues outlined in previous chapters might be to combine the best aspects of the aforementioned approaches, and the work carried out on text typologies. Thus, Skopos would be used to determine what it is that we need to achieve with any given translation project. This, in turn, would provide us with a general overview of the strategy that should be deployed. Combining this with the knowledge of text typologies would enable us to proceed
with a clearer picture of what precisely that translation will look like, reflecting features such as style and terminology. Considering the cultural differences that are pervasive in every stretch of literary expression, the analysis of extratextual and intratextual factors seems to be unavoidable. It is uncontested that the process should be guided by means of source text analysis. An implication of this is that the outcome the translator is expected to deliver might be laden with additional analyses. Should the translator opt for a simpler approach however, such a simplification would only yield dubious outcomes, which would eventually require rectifications and, ultimately, an even greater amount of work.

Theoretical knowledge can equip us with tools for various levels of equivalence, not necessarily as criteria for comparing texts, but as guidelines, fed in by our understanding of the purpose of the target text facilitating the translation process. If the translator aims to convey the same impression which they received from the source text, this impression will also depend on the level of education and comprehension among the target text audience, and this may differ from the translator’s own understanding.

It would appear that the contemplation of purpose alienates our thoughts from the contemplation of equivalence and its different levels that the translator should strive to achieve. This issue is not new. In his preface to King James Bible of 1611, entitled The Translators to the Reader, the question is asked ‘is the kingdom of God words or syllables?’ It cannot be denied that translation is a transaction involving words, but so is talking to friends, so is delivering a lecture on the quantum theory or a speech in a play by Shakespeare. To say that translation is a replacement of words in one language by those in another is not more than the truth, and yet it is as informative as saying that speech is the uttering of one word after another. Words are a means of expressing something, of communicating something, and the purpose of the communication is the overriding concern. They function under strong restrictions and offer some resistance to individual manipulation. Words are means, but means with peculiar properties (Pinchuck 1977: 45).

It is important to realise that while none of the existing approaches to translation on their own can yield an infallible model of translation, they can provide adequate raw material that can be used to devise an informed and acceptable model to guide our practical work. The main endeavour here relates to exploring the diverse theoretical frameworks and practical extra-textual facilitations and then cherry pick those that appear to be most relevant for the given assignment. It is quite conceivable that all of the ingredients for a feasible and trustworthy approach to translation are already available. All that remains is to assemble the various pieces into a basic and yet practical approach.

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**PREVODILAČKE ZA VRZLAME – ŠTO JEDNOSTAVNIJI PRISTUP, UTOLIKO VEĆE KOMPLIKACIJE**

Rezime


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