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M.A. IN PHILOSOPHY

Looking at the Curious Game of Translation

Exploring the Worlds of Alice, Wittgenstein and the Translator

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PREFACE

“Even if I did speak Irish, I’d always be considered an outsider here, wouldn’t I? I may learn the password but the language of the tribe will always elude me, won’t it?”¹

For most of my life, I have used language without giving particular thought to either its nature or manner of use. Of course, at particular moments, I have been very aware of the impact of language use: I have been flattered by declarations of praise; I have been captivated by the freshness of expression of a poet; I have been hurt by words of derision from a loved one. As to everyday language use, however, I rarely, if ever, was conscious of the multiplicity and diversity of linguistic contexts in which I participated.

Entering the arena of translation changed that. Moving to Cambodia in 2011, I sought to grasp the local language quickly, understanding it to be a window through which to see the behaviour, customs, cultural norms and assumptions of the people among whom I lived. With tourism being one of the most important sectors in Cambodia's economy, basic to elementary level conversational English ability is common for locals in Phnom Penh. Many expatriates, burdened by their own work demands, therefore rely on locals with language ability to facilitate communication.

Among the general foreigner community in Phnom Penh, I gained a unique level of linguistic ability in terms of oral and written reception and production. Without any formal translation training or studies, I somewhat naively applied for a role in a translation office. Over the next six years, working largely with similarly unqualified (in regards to specific translation studies) local colleagues, continuously I was made aware of language's propensity to shift according to context; the challenges of balancing transfer of informational content, preserving foreignness and creating a translation product that meets customer demands and needs; and, most significantly, the difficulties that arise from *doing* translation tasks without having a theoretical framework or philosophical foundation upon which to ground the work.

¹ Friel, Brian. (1982) *Translations*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, p. 409.

The latter has been particularly challenging when engaging in linguistic discussions in multi-cultural, multi-lingual translation teams. Like Yolland in Friel's *Translations*, I came to see that no matter my level of Khmer (or English), I was a stranger in a foreign land where grammar conventions held greater sway than first language speaker expertise. Yet, despite seeing the pitfalls into which we were falling through over-dependency on vocabulary lists, templates and linguistic tools, I lacked a 'language' to explain to my colleagues wherein those dangers lay. This dissertation is part of my journey of learning to "look!"² at language afresh so that I might play the "game"³ of translation with greater proficiency.

² Wittgenstein, L. (2009) *Philosophical Investigations [includes Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment]*, tr. by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker & J. Schulte, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, Section 66.

³ Ibid., Section 23.

ABSTRACT

The unfolding phenomenon of globalization, permeating the arenas of technology, politics and economics, necessitates greater levels of translation than ever before. The language services industry is becoming one of the world's fastest-growing industries.⁴ The extent of translation's penetration into so many aspects of human life thus demands careful evaluation, in terms of its precise purpose and methodology. Here, consideration is given to the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Lewis Carroll, in the belief that they offer mutually complementary guides to the world of language, a world that is organic, idiosyncratic and changing, a world that can neither be reduced to formulae nor controlled. By focusing on the particular nature and peculiarities of language that they highlight, and applying the lessons learnt therein, translators are better equipped to translate in our ever-changing world.

⁴ Common Sense Advisory estimated the size of the overall global language industry in 2017 as USD\$ 43 billion. The projected growth rate is 6.5-7.5% annually through 2018. ("The Language Services Market: 2017", Donald A. DePalma, Robert G. Stewart, Arle Lommel, Hélène Pielmeier, June 30, 2017) <https://www.commonsenseadvisory.com/AbstractView/tabid/74/ArticleID/39815/Title/TheLanguageServicesMarket2017/Default.aspx>.

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During years of international travel and living abroad my life intersected with countless brave, interesting individuals who have added a breadth of colour to the landscape of my thinking. To each I am grateful.

As to my parents... Wittgenstein famously wrote, "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."⁵ There are no words sufficient to convey my thanks.

⁵ Wittgenstein, L. (1990) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, tr. by C. K. Ogden, London & New York: Routledge, Section 7.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to the University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Wittgenstein:

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>CV</i> | <i>Culture and Value</i> |
| <i>OC</i> | <i>On Certainty</i> |
| <i>PI</i> | <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> |
| <i>PG</i> | <i>Philosophical Grammar</i> |
| <i>PR</i> | <i>Philosophical Remarks</i> |
| <i>TL-P</i> | <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> |
| <i>Z</i> | <i>Zettel</i> |

Works by Carroll:

| | |
|------------|---|
| <i>AA</i> | <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> |
| <i>TLG</i> | <i>Through the Looking Glass</i> |

INTRODUCTION

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could.⁶

We communicate. Among other ways, we have been communicating through the use of language for millennia⁷. These days the average person spends the majority their waking hours engaged in linguistic exchanges - speaking, listening, reading, writing, typing, texting, deciphering symbols and signs. With such a breadth of experience, it might be expected that we would have mastered the process.

Yet, despite the pervasiveness and immediacy of our linguistic interactions, language is not a phenomenon that can be easily systematised nor decisively rationalized. Language is relentlessly flexible. Success in linguistic communication involves both understanding and interpretation. Understanding is an ongoing process, guided by knowledge and learning, that requires openness and empathetic identification with a message. Interpretation depends on an individual's ability to accurately assess the linguistic context and, without having access to all possible information that could inform interpretation choices, it is often incomplete. Furthermore, because linguistic communication occurs as a normal feature of life, often we assume our own linguistic competency - at times, to our detriment or to the detriment of our audience.

Lewis Carroll and Ludwig Wittgenstein, writing more than half a century apart in the fields of literature and philosophy respectively, sought to demonstrate "misunderstandings concerning the use of words"⁸. They may have been motivated by entirely different purposes in their work - Carroll was perhaps writing his literary project to ridicule Victorian England's revived interest in correct English⁹ or to scoff at Oxford's

⁶ Carroll, L. (1998) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, ed. Hugh Haughton, p. 100.

⁷ Obviously, the origin of language predates recorded history. The earliest evidence of language in the form of writing is only about 5,000 years old. The origin of spoken language is a topic of great debate and conjecture.

⁸ *PI*, Section 90.

⁹ John Lynch, referring to Carroll, Lear and other nonsense writers, wrote that they 'were interested in parodying and challenging social conventions of their time – snobbery, self-importance, and the didactic and rather limited nature of

academic cronies; Wittgenstein was seeking to demonstrate the folly of his earlier philosophical agenda of reducing language to logic. However, George Pitcher in 1966¹⁰ and others¹¹ since have drawn attention to interesting similarities in the writings of the two men. Both of them were concerned with nonsense, logical confusion, meaning and language.

Neither, however, offered solutions to these problems. Carroll's dream-world, in which common references are challenged and figurative meanings are taken literally, bears the mark of Wittgenstein's description of philosophical problems as a demonstration of the dilemma: "I don't know my way about"¹². Both writers employ a self-conscious methodology: through "pictures and conversations"¹³, each sheds light on the varying ways in which misunderstanding can occur in any linguistic act. Clarification in relation to linguistic phenomena is facilitated through highlighting the nature of the confusion. In this way, Carroll and Wittgenstein challenge any reduction of language to mere analytical formulae. They want us to see the puzzles of language; they highlight that failure to see will result in failure to understand.

Lewis places Alice in a foreign land where the characters she meets use words that are part of the English lexicon and yet Alice, a native English speaker, is left completely baffled by their meaning. It is as if her companions make a game of subverting and challenging what is for her normative language use. They play with her; and Alice is left feeling "as if [she] already had a language, only not this one"¹⁴. Throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein seeks to show how linguistic acts are situated in the wider context of human interaction. Through many examples he highlights that failure to understand context can

a lot of writing for children', "Nonsense Verse" In: V. Watson, 2001. *The Cambridge Guide to Children's Books in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 517.

¹⁰ Carroll "exerted a profound influence on the later Wittgenstein" (Pitcher, G. (1966). *Wittgenstein: The philosophical investigations: a collection of critical essays*. Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Books, pp. 230-31).

¹¹ e.g. Jacqueline Flescher (1969) "The Language of Nonsense in Alice"; Lemos, M. (2009) "Language-Games in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Or:".

¹² *PI*, Section 123.

¹³ *AA*, p. 1.

¹⁴ *PI*, Section 32.

lead to a failure of understanding. For example, when philosophers extract language from its context and thus abstract a metaphysical theory of language, problems ensue.¹⁵

An appreciation of the nature and function of language is vital in any translation scenario. The act of translation necessitates an understanding of how language is variously used by members of the linguistic community, appreciating the nuances and variety of manners and style involved in everyday communication. A translator needs to be able to identify appropriately the genre in which any text is situated, know the communication 'rules' that are normative in particular language uses, and be familiar with divergent lexical choices according to the context in both the source and target languages.

The translation process involves having an awareness of the criss-crossing of the translation activity with other essential aspects of the communication process. Lack of appreciation of a source text context will impede understanding; lack of understanding of the context of the target audience will impinge upon the success of the translator in producing a successful translation product. The translators of *AA*, which has been translated into more than 70 foreign versions¹⁶, have to varying degrees showed an awareness of, and skill in, rendering a contextually appropriate translation. It presents unique challenges as a text replete with puns, parodies and language-specific humour. Chiaro notes that "the concept of what people find funny appears to be surrounded by linguistic, geographic, diachronic, sociocultural and personal boundaries"¹⁷. Successful translation of humour, as one example of the flexible nature of linguistic understanding, involves being able to situate oneself in the humour of a foreign culture and then render the humour in the local tongue. Wittgenstein himself referenced the complexity of translation of jokes. His conclusion was that "this problem can be solved; but there was no systematic method of solving it."¹⁸

¹⁵ "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use." *PI*, Section 116.

¹⁶ Cohen, M.N. (1995) *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, p. 135.

¹⁷ Chiaro, D. (1992) *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*. London: Routledge, p. 5.

¹⁸ Wittgenstein, L. (1981) *Zettel*, tr. by G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, Section 698.

My contention is that reading both the later work of Wittgenstein and Carroll's *Alice* books is informative for the conscientious translator. Each reveals ways in which failure to appreciate language *use* leads to confusion. Without an understanding of a source **text in context**, the translator cannot successfully engage in the translation act. Without due consideration of **the conveyance of meaning** in varying linguistic acts, the translator performs his task uninformed. Without appreciating **the 'power' of language to reveal and conceal, and the possibility for its manipulation**, the translator can be kicking a weighted ball unaware. Each of these issues will be addressed using the work of Carroll and Wittgenstein, and they will be illustrated by real-life examples of translation at work (the English-Khmer language pair will be the focus). The purpose is not to give a fixed formula for how to successfully complete the translation task. Instead, like Carroll and Wittgenstein, the approach is heuristic - showing translators the value of paying careful attention to the puzzles of language in order "to stimulate" the reflective translator "to thoughts of his own"¹⁹ that will allow for successful interlinguistic communication.

¹⁹ Preface to *PI*.

WHY WITTGENSTEIN AND CARROLL?

Frege is a philosopher's philosopher, Sartre the media's idea of an intellectual, and Bertrand Russell every shopkeeper's image of the sage... But Wittgenstein is the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists...²⁰

Carroll reveal[s] an acute awareness of the way in which language as a system can trap man, while at the same time allowing him to deceive himself that he is free and in control of his own life.²¹

Many philosophers have given attention to the issue of language. Few have done so with the brilliance of Ludwig Wittgenstein. His novel, pithy, comical style of writing, challenging both long-established and contemporary lines of thinking, has established him as one among the philosophical greats of history. It is not just Wittgenstein's published texts that provoke fascination; the life and personality of this archetypal tortured genius have inspired music²², film²³, plays²⁴ and multiple biographers²⁵.

Responding, in the mid-twentieth century, to the focus being placed on analytical theories of language, the dominant theme of Wittgenstein's later work was that philosophy should aim to *describe* the use of words and sentences. He concluded that many conventional philosophical problems arise on account of language confusion. Challenging philosophers to "bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use"²⁶, Wittgenstein's writing questioned and influenced the development of analytic philosophy generally and several continental philosophers²⁷ specifically.²⁸

²⁰ Eagleton, Terry (1994), "My Wittgenstein", *Common Knowledge* 3, p. 153.

²¹ Ede, Lisa S. "An Introduction to the Nonsense Literature of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll." *Explorations in the field of Nonsense*. Ed. Wim Tiggers. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, p. 52.

²² c.f. Herbert Lomas' "Notes on Wittgenstein" in *A Casual Knack of Living*, Todmorden: Arc, p. 41.

²³ c.f. Derek Jarman's 1993 film *Wittgenstein*.

²⁴ c.f. Tom Stoppard's play *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoots Macbeth* (1980).

²⁵ e.g. Miles Hollingworth (2017), Brian McGuinness (2005), W.W. Bartley (1999), Ray Monk (1991), Norman Malcolm (1962), etc.

²⁶ *PI* Section 116.

²⁷ e.g. Jean-François Lyotard, Lee Braver.

²⁸ Dale Jacquette calls Wittgenstein a "trans-analytic-continental" philosopher. See "Wittgenstein as trans-analytic-continental philosopher" in James Williams (ed.), *Postanalytic and Metacontinental: Crossing Philosophical Divides*. Continuum.

Wittgenstein is not noted for his comments on translation. However, his work is informative because of the remarkable attention he gives to language and the irregularities of everyday language use. Without an adequate appreciation of the nature and working of language, the translator is as a mechanic trying to fix a machine without any working knowledge of the tools in his possession. Wittgenstein's common-sensical approach, replete with analogies, quips and practical examples, is neither superficial nor bland. He calls his readers to pay attention to what language does, and he offers the practical guidance that language should be studied, and thus translated, with a focus on its multifarious manifestations.

It is evident from a correspondence that Wittgenstein received from his sister in 1917²⁹ that both were familiar with Lewis Carroll's *AA*. Charles Dodgson, who wrote using the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, was an academic logician and mathematician with a passion for play and the absurd. Encouraged by the response of his companions to his fictional works, Dodgson published *AA* on 4 July 1862. An illustrated reprint was released in 2,000 copies in 1865. That the work was an immediate success did not deter Carroll, ever the pedantic perfectionist, from making 8 subsequent revised editions. Its sequel *Alice Through the Looking Glass* was published in 1871.

In 2015, 7,609 published editions were identified worldwide³⁰, making *AA* is the most frequently quoted and best known text in the world after the Bible, the Koran and some of Shakespeare's plays. Layered and rich in style, full of puzzles, humour, surrealism and curious characters, this iconic classic and its sequel continue to engage modern audiences and inspire new artistic interpretations. Even in the world of academia, many see in the *Alice* books a way into the worlds of psychology, philosophy and sociological issues. For the translator, Carroll's myriad of curious and comical examples of how language is used, and can be misused, has the potential to be both illuminating and instructive.

²⁹ Wittgenstein: *Gesamtbriefwechsel/Complete Correspondence* (2nd Release) (2011), Innsbrucker Electronic Edition.

³⁰ *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*, J.A. Lindseth and A. Tannenbaum, Oak Knoll Press, New Castle, 2015.

So, the works of Wittgenstein and Carroll are here placed together, in the belief that they are mutually complementary guides to the world of language, a world that is organic, idiosyncratic and changing, a world that can neither be reduced to formulae nor controlled. As each in turn points out spots of interests in the linguistic landscape from their respective tempo-spatial contexts, our attention is drawn to features of that vista which are sometimes too obvious to be seen. By focusing more clearly on these particulars of what language is doing in actual practice, and paying close attention to language in its specific context(s), we are better equipped to translate language for others.

LOCATING OURSELVES

*Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could.*³¹

*Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.*³²

When traveling from one place to another, it is useful to be able to orientate oneself according to the cardinal directions. Compasses have been used for centuries in navigation; the ordinal points allow one to locate one's geographical position in relation to the rotational axis of the Earth. The unchanging nature of the axis of direction³³ allows those skilled in compass use to read a map of the surrounding area effectively.

Navigational constants are important in identifying one's location in a new place. Mathematical constants are vital in geometry, number theory and calculus. Constants are essential in fine calculus in computing. In the area of human communication, however, an assumption of 'constants' is often unhelpful or even irrelevant. Lewis exploited this idea for the purpose of humour in his *Alice* books; Wittgenstein drew attention to it in *Philosophical Investigations*. Translators fail to pay heed to this to the peril of their work.

When Alice enters the Looking-Glass House, she finds herself in a land in which those she encounters speak English, and yet she is continually baffled by their language use. Examples abound, including the discussion between Alice and the Queen about jam:

"The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday — but never jam *to-day*."

"It *must* come sometimes to 'jam to-day,'" Alice objected.

³¹ AA, p. 100.

³² PI, Section 203.

³³ The experienced explorer knows to take declination into account.

"No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day: to-day isn't any *other* day, you know."³⁴

The Queen's temporal references leave Alice "dreadfully puzzled." Her confusion stems from the assumption that "today" and "tomorrow" refer to points of time. Hegel once wrote, "Time is precisely the existence of perpetual self-cancellation."³⁵ What he means is: the word 'now', immediately upon being spoken, becomes out of date. Wittgenstein addresses this issue by highlighting how the word 'now' functions in a completely different way from other designations of time or date.

Usually temporal references of this ilk are unproblematic. Wittgenstein explains that confusion ensues only when trying to understand the word 'now' outside of a specific language context, rather than within its actual 'language game'³⁶. The words 'today' and 'tomorrow' do not function as dates in the context of Queen's address to Alice. The role of the word is obscured for Alice, consciously so for the purpose of humour; thus, Alice's puzzlement. The same problem arises when ordinary words, such as 'time', 'today', and 'now', are brought under the philosopher's analysis; if scrutinised in the abstract, one can be left with the feeling of falling down a metaphysical rabbit hole.

In his early period, Wittgenstein thought that he could solve all the problems of language by correctly identifying its internal logic. In *TL-P* he attempted to demarcate the objective boundaries within which language might be meaningfully employed. Applying the rules of logic to the analysis of communication, he advocated direct reference theory and conjectured that language is a *picture* of reality³⁷. In his scheme,

³⁴ *TLG*, p. 65.

³⁵ Hegel, G. W. F. (2013). *Philosophy of Nature*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 257.

³⁶ Confusion may also arise when two interlocutors variously understand the specific 'language game' in which they are engaged. For example, the speaker may be attempting to employ humour while their conversation partner understands their counterpart to be engaging in criticism.

³⁷ "the picture is a model of reality" (*TL-P* 2.12).

language is essentially nomenclature³⁸. He illustrates the connection between words and reality as follows: "The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common."³⁹ Underlying Wittgenstein's logic was a perspective of reality that was simple and unchanging. Only language that operates according to this logic is considered meaningful; only language that operates in this manner is to be considered to be 'language' at all!

There is a certain appeal to identifying a 'logic of language'. Employing a formula to distinguish between correct and incorrect use of words would surely offer a solution to what is called in the *Notebooks* the 'one great problem'⁴⁰ of philosophy, namely understanding the nature of the proposition. If each of our propositions could be shown to have a specific, unchanging meaning, if each is identified as depicting something particular in reality or not, therein lies a basic guarantee of valid, comprehensible communication.

And yet, consider Alice's dialogue with the Mouse in Wonderland:

"Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.
"It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail;
"but why do you call it sad?"

Richard Kelly identifies that Carroll's purpose throughout *AA* was to "to defeat different systems of logic, to keep details from culminating into some meaningful order"⁴¹, thereby drawing our attention to the varied and multifaceted nature of language use. Carroll accomplishes this through taking everyday language and parodying any dogmatic application of literal-mindedness or logophilia. Alice's mistaking of 'tale' for its

³⁸ "An elementary proposition consists of names. It is a nexus, a concatenation of names" (*TL-P* 4.22).

³⁹ *TL-P* 4.014.

⁴⁰ The problems of negation, of disjunction, of true and false, are only reflections of the one great problem in the variously placed great and small mirrors of philosophy. (*Notebook*, p. 40) My *whole* task consists in explaining the nature of the proposition. (*Notebook*, p. 39).

⁴¹ Kelly, Richard. 2011. "Introduction", p. 23.

homonym 'tail', and the Mouse's failure to notice the mistake highlights how easy it is for miscommunication to arise among speakers of the same language.

Later, Wittgenstein abandoned the idea of a single, universal logic of language, his picture theory and other traditional theories of language, such as Augustine's view of the ostensive nature of language learning. He came to conclude that, where people are held captive by the idea of a picture "embedded in our language"⁴², they are unable to see words functioning in more than one way⁴³. This is unreflective of common language use. Words are not atomic units with fixed definitions.⁴⁴ Observation of word use shows the varied nature of the ways in which they are employed. Wittgenstein speaks of "ordinary language with innumerable kinds of words all looking more or less alike"⁴⁵ that have an infinite variety of functions. Examples he cites include: "But what about this: is the call 'Slab!' in example (2) a sentence or a word? - If a word, surely it has not the same meaning as the like-sounding word of our ordinary language, for in §2 it is a call."⁴⁶

Words are not only names. They have a family of meanings and uses; language is a labyrinth of paths⁴⁷ - different words have different kinds of uses; an individual word may have a variety of uses. However, our general lack of reflection upon language means that it can become the source of significant philosophical confusion. Learning philosophy is *really* an awakening or a reminding oneself of what we are doing when we use language.⁴⁸ Wittgenstein urges his readers to 'look'⁴⁹ at what is going on in language so that misunderstanding might be circumvented. Carroll seeks to show the same perspective with his playful use

⁴² Typescript from the *Nachlass* 220.

⁴³ "...what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or see them written or in print." *PI*, Section 11.

⁴⁴ "Think of the tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities." *PI*, Section 11.

⁴⁵ *The Blue and Brown Books* 79.

⁴⁶ *PI*, Section 196.

⁴⁷ *PI*, Section 203.

⁴⁸ Typescript from the *Nachlass* 213.

⁴⁹ "...look at that language game" *PI*, Section 37; "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its application and learn from that." *PI*, Section 340.

of names, meanings, and linguistic obscurity - Carpenter writes that Carroll pursues this "simple idea... with ruthless comic literalness to its very end"⁵⁰.

Throughout *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein shows the diversity of functions that words can have in different contexts. Given the wealth of functions, which can vary from language to language, and the variable tasks that words fulfil, it seems an unreasonable prospect to advocate that simple and rigid rules govern such manifold tasks. Rules, according to Wittgenstein, can only be advanced for context specific language - and even therein users may manipulate said rules for their own communicative purposes.

A look at AA illustrates the point: In Victorian tea parties, proper etiquette was essential. However, as Alice approaches the table at which the Hare and Hatter were enjoying tea, they shout, 'No room! No room!'. Carroll is playing with convention and obscuring meaning. Are the interlocutor's ill-mannered? Are they saying that Alice is not welcome at their table? Are they pointing out that the whole scenario is taking place outside rather than in an actual room? Unsure of the 'game', Alice interprets their words as a rude insult.

Yaguello writes,

The rules of conversation of Alice's world are constantly ridiculed and their stereotyped nature becomes evident. The courtesy formulas and the phrases destined to establishing or keeping contact are voluntarily misinterpreted. The automatisms of language have no place in Wonderland.⁵¹

Confusion arises in language exchange when an individual either, fails to appreciate the linguist context in which they are located, or fails to abide by the rules commonly adhered to therein⁵². Attending to identification of the context and purpose of any speech act assists in mitigating against such problems.

⁵⁰ Carpenter 1985, *Secret Gardens*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, p. 45.

⁵¹ Yaguello, cited in Márcia Lemos, "Language-Games in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Or:", p. 28.

⁵² "A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have *an overview* of the use of our words." *PI* Section 122.

Wittgenstein identifies language scenarios in which words are used according to simple grammatical models. An example is primitive language use of the ostensive nature as identified by Augustine⁵³. While Wittgenstein rejects Augustine's theory as an over-arching means of interpreting *all* language use, he accepts that language *can* have a naming function. The varied grammars of all possible language contexts within the totality of our language do not negate each other. They complement and build upon one another. Individual linguistic situations should not be viewed as isolated fragments of language. Each is at once discreet in itself and part of a larger linguistic framework. Individual language contexts, complete languages and the interactions between the two evolve, mutate and transform in relation to their spatial and temporal context.⁵⁴

The Importance of Context in Translation

Wittgenstein asked Malcolm how philosophy can have any value "if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life".⁵⁵ In both *TL-P* and *PI*, Wittgenstein declares his lofty aspiration to solve language confusions by showing "everything as it is"⁵⁶. If he is deemed successful, what he reveals will consequently have great significance for the translator.

TL-P offers a picture theory of meaning in which there is a "pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world"; this theory gives a simple "rule of translation"⁵⁷. According to this understanding of language, the job of the translator is to map direct pictorial equivalents between two languages. What is advocated here is an understanding of meaning as contained *within* propositions which must correspond to

⁵³ Augustine *Confessions*, Trans. Vernon J. Bourke. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1966, I. 8.

⁵⁴ We're talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, atemporal non-entity. *PI*, additional notation between Section 108 and Section 109,

⁵⁵ Recorded by McGuinness, Brian (ed.) (2008). *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911-1951*. Wiley-Blackwell, p. 320.

⁵⁶ *PI*, Section 124.

⁵⁷ *T-LP* 4.014.

reality⁵⁸ and "a name means an object"⁵⁹: the translator reads "she was pulling his leg" as representing some depiction of reality and renders it in the foreign tongue accordingly.⁶⁰

Such an essentialist translation approach is an example of how, as William James puts it, "the *theorising* mind always tends to the oversimplification of its material."⁶¹ As Carroll demonstrates time and again in Wonderland, propositions do not have static meanings independent of context. The Mouse speaks of his *tale* and Alice understands him to be referencing his *tail*; the Gryphon explains that lessons must, by definition, get shorter every day. These illustrations demonstrate the difficulties in maintaining a logical, picture philosophy of language.

Wittgenstein later acknowledged the inadequacy of his earlier theory of determining meaning even within a single language: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably"⁶². There are times when language has an ostensive or denoting function; but this is not all that language *can do*. Words do not have fixed definitions, linked to the world via logically determined, unwavering connections. Interlinguistic translators, who are dogmatically committed to a formal equivalence approach that emphasises fidelity to lexical details and grammatical structure of the original language (and lacks sensitivity to linguistic nuance in the manner illustrated herein and throughout the *Alice* books) are hampered in their ability to produce an intelligible Target Text.

In the translation English-Khmer pair, finding directly equivalent terminology is particularly problematic, for example, in the context of emotion words and psychological terms. During the Khmer Rouge Tribunal,

⁵⁸ "A proposition shows how things stand if it is true" (*T-LP* 4.022).

⁵⁹ *T-LP* 3.203.

⁶⁰ First language English speakers can immediately conceive potential problems here.

⁶¹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 31. Emphasis mine.

⁶² *PI*, Section 115.

Civil Parties who suffered harm as a direct consequence of the crimes investigated by the Court participated in interviews and took to the witness stand. Individuals testified to the immense suffering they endured. As the proceedings were overseen by Cambodian and international judges, prosecutors, and defence lawyers, three languages were used in the courtroom: Khmer, English and French.

Many victims spoke of feeling *thleak tuk chet*⁶³. This can be etymologically parsed in English as 'fallen water heart'. Most often translators pair this Khmer term with the English word 'depressed'. However, the nuances and shades of meaning imbibed in each language, influenced as they are by varied cultures, history and understandings of mental health issues, makes finding equivalents extremely challenging or even inappropriate. One experienced Court interpreter has explained the consequences that arise when such linguistic issues are not given attention. What she describes is reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Wonderland. Of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal she stated: "It's like comedy. Two people are trying to understand each other, but they come from different worlds. They mistakenly think they're communicating, but to anybody who knows both worlds, they're just creating absurdities."⁶⁴

In translation of novels or school textbooks, such a loss of nuance has perhaps only limited practical ramifications. Courtroom misunderstandings, however, can have implications in regards to the administration of justice and the reliability of the judicial process. Hinton's book exploring the operation of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal seeks to draw attention to the variety of ways in which language was (mis)translated, thus, in his mind, reducing the proceedings to something of a façade⁶⁵. Despite a common propensity to see language as a simple referential instrument, and translation as a matching exercise, reflection upon actual language use quickly highlights its syntactic flexibility and semantic fluidity. The

⁶³ ធ្លាក់ទឹកចិត្ត

⁶⁴ Claire Khatan, quoted in "Lost in the translation", Rachel Halliburton, *The Independent*, Wednesday 8 May 1996

⁶⁵ Alexander Laban Hinton, *The Justice Facade: trials of transition in Cambodia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

courtroom scenario highlights the potential risks inherent when a translator adopts the kind of essentialist approach which is the logical outworking of the view of language outlined in *TL-P*.

Were translation to be merely a process of matching a sentence in one language with a sentence in another language, it would be a relatively simple task. All that would be required for success would be competent use of a bilingual dictionary and a grammar guide. Gorlée warns against the inadequacy of a translation methodology of this kind; her reading of the later Wittgenstein prompts her to advocate a translation method combining "higher rationality, complexity, coherence, clarity, and determination"⁶⁶ and "cross-disciplinary and cultural studies"⁶⁷ with formal translation techniques.

Wittgenstein's later work, with its emphasis on context, suggests that translators adopt a richer, more open *modus operandi*. No longer are particular words, propositions and sentences to be considered as having a fixed meaning. Language operates in a manner specific to its actual context, these contexts being regulated by varying rules. Meaning is language *in use*; meaning in any spatio-temporal context is what the users are *doing* with their language.

An example would be a context in which a person asks a question without expectation of an answer; in fact, the giving of an answer in this context would be deemed inappropriate. In a scenario of family discipline, for example, a parent's question 'Are you really so stupid?' usually does not carry the expectation of a response. Carroll exploits the comically difference between the way words are normally used and their literal meaning:

‘Why do you sit out here all alone?’ said Alice...
‘Why, because there’s nobody with me!’ cried Humpty Dumpty. ‘Did you think I didn’t know the answer to *that*?’⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Dinda L. Gorlée: *Wittgenstein in Translation*, p. 18f.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *TLG* 116.

The two speakers understand the question in a different manner. Wittgenstein would explain this by highlighting that confusion has arisen because the two characters are playing different language games⁶⁹.

A plethora of examples of translation problems arising as a result of differences in cultural practice of language use could be offered. Nida says that such "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure".⁷⁰ In Khmer, the simple verb tenses and lack of singular and plural noun forms means that a correct understanding of a single proposition necessitates consideration of the context and the purpose of the speaker. The proclivity of dropping of a sentence subject further makes it impossible to know the direction of the speech act (who is enacting the verb) without taking the linguistic surroundings into view.

So, ability to identify context and the game being played in any instance of language use is essential for the translator. A brief look at the table below highlights the variety of ways the term 'head' (English) can be used. This list is by no means exhaustive. Wittgenstein seeks to draw his readers' attention to the arbitrary connections between signs and semantic meaning; he highlights that an individual word (or proposition) could have innumerable potential functions.

⁶⁹ *PI*, Section 3, 7, etc.

⁷⁰ Nida, E. & C. Taber (1969) *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 130.

noun (BODY PART)

A1 [C] the part of the body above the neck where the eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and brain are:

Put this hat on to keep your head warm.

He banged his head on the car as he was getting in.

She nodded/shook her head (= showed her agreement/disagreement).

[S] a person or animal when considered as a unit:

Dinner will cost £20 a/per head (= for each person).

I did a quick head count (= calculated how many people there were).

They own a hundred head of cattle (= 100 animals).

[S] a measure of length or height equal to the size of a head:

Her horse won by a head.

Paul is a head taller than Andrew.

noun (MIND)

B1 [C] the mind and mental abilities:

You need a clear head to be able to drive safely.

What put that (idea) into your head? (= What made you think that?)

I can't get that tune/that man out of my head (= I cannot stop hearing the tune in my mind/thinking about that man).

Use your head (= think more carefully)!

Harriet has a (good) head for figures (= she is very good at calculating numbers).

(UK) Do you have a head for heights (= are you able to be in high places without fear)?

noun (LEADER)

B1 [C] someone in charge of or leading an organization, group, etc.:

the head of the History department

the head chef

his first season as head coach

A2 [C] (mainly UK) a headteacher

head boy/girl (UK)

noun (TOP PART)

C2 [S] the top part or beginning of something:

the head of the queue

the head of the page

Diana, the guest of honour, sat at the head of the table (= the most important end of it).

[C] the larger end of a nail, hammer, etc.

[C] the top part of a plant where a flower or leaves grow:

a head of lettuce

[C] the layer of white bubbles on top of beer after it has been poured

[C] the upper part of a river, where it begins

[C] the top part of a spot when it contains pus (= yellow liquid)

noun (COIN SIDE)

heads [U]

the side of a coin that has a picture of someone's head on it

noun (DEVICE)

[C] the part of a tape or video recorder (= machine for recording sound or pictures) that touches the tape to record and play music, speech, etc.

noun (GRAMMAR)

specialized language

[C] the main part of the phrase, to which the other parts are related

noun (LAND)

[C] specialized geography a narrow area of high land that sticks out into the sea:

the chalk cliffs around Beachy Head

Idiom(s)

a head of steam

an old/a wise head on young shoulders

be banging, etc. your head against a brick wall

be in over your head

be off your head

bite/snap sb's head off

bury/have your head in the sand

can't get your head around sth

can't make head nor tail of sth

come to a head

do sb's head in

from head to toe

a full, good, thick, etc. head of hair

get it into your thick head

get your head down

get sth into your head

get/put your head down

give head

give sb their head

give sb a heads up

go over sb's head

go to sb's head

have your business, sensible, etc. head on

have your head (buried/stuck) in a book

have your head in the clouds

have your head screwed on (the right way)

head and shoulders above

head first

head over heels (in love)

heads I win, tails you lose

heads or tails?

heads will roll!

keep your head

keep your head above water

keep your head down

laugh, shout, scream, etc. your head off

over your head

put their heads together
take it into your head to do sth

verb (GO)

B2 [I + adv/prep] to go in a particular direction:

I was heading out of the room when she called me back.

We were heading towards Kumasi when our truck broke down.

He headed straight for (= went towards) the fridge.

I think we ought to head back/home (= return to where we started) now, before it gets too dark.

verb (LEADER)

B2 [T] to be in charge of a group or organization:

She heads one of Britain's leading travel firms.

Judge Hawthorne was chosen to head the team investigating the allegations of abuse.

verb (TOP PART)

C1 [T] to be at the front or top of something:

The royal carriage headed the procession.

Jo's name headed the list of candidates.

verb (SPORT)

[T] to hit a ball with your head:

Rooney headed the ball into the back of the net.

Phrasal verb(s)

head for sth

head off

head sb/sth off

head sth off

head sth up

-head

suffix

a person with a particular strong interest or addiction:

a crack-head (= someone who depends on the drug crack)

**(Definition of "head" from the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus,
Cambridge University Press)**

Knowing how to make the right translation choice when presented with a single word with so many potential meanings demonstrates decisively how essential sensitivity to context and use is in correctly understanding any term. Prior to making any translation, the translator must assess these influencing factors: he/she must determine the language game being played; he/she must also remain conscious that in the act of translation they are also engaged in another language game.

Wittgenstein specifically identified translation as an example of a language game context. Translation is not a process that can be abstracted from language. It is a linguistic activity with its own rules and modes of application. In turn, it interacts and clusters with the language game of the source text, simultaneously seeking to provide a target text that will be suitable for use in the language game being played by its target audience.

This identification process is never easy. Slogans and idioms are examples of everyday language use in which meaning is heavily influenced by factors such as religion, geographical location, ideology, superstition, history, culture and social class. The *Collins English Dictionary* (2006) defines an idiom as "an expression such as a simile, in which words do not have their literal meaning, but are categorized as multi-word expressions that act in the text as units". Baker says that the competent translator is one who has a good functional knowledge of both source and target languages at a series of levels: *at word, above-word, grammar, thematic structure, cohesion and pragmatic levels*⁷¹. Wittgenstein, however, urges us to look at an additional *contextual* level, being mindful of the ever-changing, fluid nature of meaning across space and time.

Continuing to give attention to use of the word 'head' (in Khmer '*kbaal*'), one Khmer slogan referenced frequently in the Khmer Rouge Tribunal documents was "*sok aa na kbaal aa nung*"⁷², which might be translated using formal equivalence as "whoever's hair, the same person's head" or more dynamically as "if it's their hair, then it's their head". It is interesting that explanations of the meaning of this term vary according to the user; variations seem to be influenced by age, social background, etc. Literature related to its repeated use during the Khmer Rouge period suggests a much different meaning to the manner of its

⁷¹ Cited in Munday, J. (ed) (2009) *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, p. 95.

⁷² សក់អាណា ក្បាលអាហ្នឹង.

subsequent use. Ms. Prak Yot, in her statement before the Tribunal, said that the Khmer Rouge communist regime's use of "their head, their hair" meant that each person was responsible only for himself and no others - no one can guarantee for, or protect, one's relatives. This contrasts with an article appearing in 2015 on the website of the news agency *Thmey Thmey* which claims that use of this slogan promotes "a spirit of selfishness and unhelpfulness"⁷³. Here, and in other sources, contemporary use of the phrase generally seems to express something more akin to 'you reap what you sow'; your hair is your own, you cannot claim it is anyone else's. You must bear responsibility and punishment for your own misbehaviour or misadventure. Furthermore, in general conversation with locals, they will freely admit that they know the phrase, use the phrase and yet, are not certain of any fixed meaning that the phrase may have. Wittgenstein would hardly be surprised by this. His *Investigations* illustrates time and again that the particular context of the particular use of any communication is an intimate and determining part of the linguistic act.

Another key aspect of context in communication that must be considered is 'form' (which might include gesture, volume or tone). Wittgenstein wrote, "Meaning is a physiognomy"⁷⁴. Carroll's original manuscript of *AA* includes a poem, commonly called *The Mouse's Tale*, which works as a calligram - its shape mimics its subject matter. Wittgenstein regards visual features to be important in conveying meaning. In the case of the poem, we are referring to the physical shape of the poem which resembles a long, curving, mouse's tail. In the case of speech, bodily gestures and facial expressions are key indicators. The words and the manner of expression, whether in written text or mode of speech, need to be considered as aspects of the communicative act. Where an interpreter fails to appropriately mimic tone, for example, humour can be lost or inappropriately injected. When a text is produced with a different format, it is valid to conclude that *something* is lost in the translation.

⁷³ "«សក់អាណា ក្បាលអាហ្នឹង»ជាពាក្យស្លោកដ៏គ្រោះថ្នាក់សម្រាប់ជាតិខ្មែរ" 03 Oct 2015.

⁷⁴ *PI*, Section 568.

For Wittgenstein, awareness of these things is but one part of being a competent linguist. Understanding *how* to actively participate in the communicative context is vital too. Participation is neither imitation or parroting, but creating novel new sentences, new metaphors, finding relevant connections. Understanding linguistic competence in this way has implications for the translator, who must not only be able to identify the specifics of the game at hand, but also must have an understanding of *how* the game is to be appropriately played. Foreign language learners often come across sentences in which they understand the grammatical structure and know the individual lexical items, and yet the meaning of what has been said alludes them. Despite their language competency in the formal learning environment, they find themselves in a linguistic context in which they lack understanding of actual language use that can only come through active linguistic community engagement. Awareness of the necessity of being able to navigate individual linguistic contexts ought to dissuade translators from accepting translation tasks from unfamiliar sectors, particularly in scenarios, like the courtroom, in which the implications of mistranslation can be weighty.

Translation work for the Khmer Rouge Trial is an example of what Wittgenstein referred to as the "a complicated network... of overlapping and criss-crossing"⁷⁵ language games. In this context there is a convergence of the game of witness reporting of events, giving testimony, translating into a foreign language and translating into a judicial form. Tymoczko, influenced in her work by Wittgenstein, refers to each game being played in a source text as acting as a "lens that filters perception of particular phenomena and permits clarity of focus and description".⁷⁶

Wittgenstein's writing highlights that layering is a fundamental feature of the use of language. While he suggests there is a way around this for the translator, in his typical anti-theoretical style, he does not outline a definitive methodology for how this might be done. Translation studies experts have long wrestled with

⁷⁵ *PI*, Section 66

⁷⁶ Tymoczko, M. (2005). Trajectories of Research in Translation Studies. *Meta*, 50(4), p. 1082–1097.

this issue. Christiane Nord advocates that the translation process should be governed by the purpose that the target text is intended to fulfil in a particular target-culture situation.⁷⁷ She maintains that "the function of target text (TT) is not arrived at automatically from the analysis of the source text (ST), but it must be pragmatically defined by the purpose of the TT"⁷⁸. Hinton, however, reflecting specifically on the Khmer Rouge Tribunals, and the translation decisions adopted there, argues that the result of this kind of approach is testimony that is "exile-in-the-making"⁷⁹ as it is slowly chipped to accord with the understanding of the foreign legal team and judicial orders. Discussing how the witness' testimony in the courtroom is concurrently translated from Khmer to English, and from English to French, he writes "...emotive disposition is "exiled" in translation, becoming something "other" that points "home" to his emotion disposition but is unable to return to it since it involves a complicated semantic network, the "bushy undergrowth" of a particular context that is masked by the justice façade"⁸⁰. The words spoken are appropriated and recast in order to serve the *function* of the courtroom rather than the *function* of doing justice. Wittgenstein never refers to language 'in exile' but he does reference the difficulties arising from context mistakes as 'when language *goes on holiday*'⁸¹. The translator must avoid assuming that a word in one context must have the same meaning and perform the same function in a different context.

Context, both explicitly and implicitly, impacts almost everything we do with language. Furthermore, contexts interweave and overlap. Failure to perceive the context in language use can cause problems. We have demonstrated this using a variety of examples. It must also be acknowledged that, although contexts interweave, in general individuals are able to navigate between them and engage in *meaningful* discourse. The meaning of 'meaning' in this regard warrants explanation.

⁷⁷ NORD, C. (1991) "Text Analysis in Translation" - Amsterdam: Rodopi. Transl. from the German by C. Nord and P. Sparrow. German original: (1988) *Textanalyse und Übersetzen*.- Heidelberg: Julius Groos.

⁷⁸ Nord, C. (1997) *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, Manchester: St Jerome, p. 77.

⁷⁹ Hinton, A. (2018). *The Justice Facade: Trials of Transition in Cambodia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 169.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

⁸¹ *PI*, Section 38.

SAYING WHAT YOU MEAN

*"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least I mean what I say that's the same thing, you know."
"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter.⁸²*

But how do you do this: how do you mean that while saying "Slab!"? [...] And why should I translate the call "Slab!" into a different expression in order to say [9] what someone means by it? And if they mean the same thing, why shouldn't I say, "When he says 'Slab!' he means 'Slab!'"? Again, why shouldn't you be able to mean "Slab!", if you can mean "Bring me the slab!"?⁸³

What is it to *mean* something? Like Alice, most people claim to know what they mean in their everyday spoken interactions and, generally, the responses of their companions suggest that meaning has been successfully conferred. In local contexts, language tends to function in an unproblematic way. Individuals speak and are understood. Instances of mishearing or semantic ambiguity undoubtedly arise, but mutual understanding in dialogue within a linguistic community tends to be normative.

However, when an individual finds themselves detached from their linguistic home(s) and in an unfamiliar linguistic context, confusion and miscommunication can quickly arise. Similarly, when philosophers detach language from its context of use, problems occur. This problem is illustrated in the Mad Hatter's Tea Party scene and in Wittgenstein's Builders' Language example. Each passage provokes questions as to how one can determine the meaning of an expression. The issue of meaning is pertinent to the interlanguage translator. Here consideration will be given to the linguistic exchanges in each of the aforementioned examples in an attempt to identify where meaning is located in the words that we speak and how this meaning might be successfully conveyed in the translation of one language into another.

⁸² AA, p. 34.

⁸³ PI, Section 19

The Tea Party

In Carroll's ludic Wonderland, Alice encounters characters who literalise idioms, manipulate words and mock the conventional speech forms of her linguistic home. The narrative begins in a context of certainty. Alice has lost interest in the book her sister is reading. She cares little for plain text; her entertainment preference is literature replete with illustrations and discussions. Suddenly a doddering White Rabbit introduces uncertainty into her world. His presence frames the beginning and end of the plot; and, throughout the narrative, he provides a stark contrast to Alice in his age, fearfulness and indecisive hesitancy.

Following the White Rabbit into Wonderland, Alice is plunged into new surroundings where even her sense of identity is challenged. In the face of psychological disorientation, she attempts to recite a didactic poem, hoping its familiar conventionality might help her to find her bearings as she falls through time and space. Already confused, her loss of linguistic ability is even more discombobulating. She cries, "those are not the right words"⁸⁴, her inability leading her to question her identity *as Alice*.

As she journeys through Wonderland, Alice is repeatedly left flummoxed by others who are at home in what seems to her a nonsensical linguistic setting. In this strange land, encountering those who talk a foreign tongue, it is as though she has "a language, only not this one"⁸⁵. This is particularly illustrated when, following the advice of the Cheshire Cat, she arrives at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. From the outset, the conversation that ensues is fraught with ambiguity. How is the retort "No room! No room!"⁸⁶ to be understood? There *are* plenty of available seats; there is no *physical* 'room' in which the event is taking place! Alice's breach of etiquette in sitting down without an invitation is met by a retaliatory impeachment of proper protocol in the offering of unavailable wine. With each of her attempts at meaningful dialogue

⁸⁴ AA, p. 96.

⁸⁵ PI, Section 32.

⁸⁶ AA, p. 21.

being responded to in an unconventional manner, Alice interprets the ensuing conversation as a series of insults and offenses.

This is exemplified in the exchange regarding the Hatter's riddle. Alice, hoping to break the social tension, tries to find an answer. Her enthusiasm is quickly dampened when the Hare starts to question her semantics.

The details of the discussion are noteworthy:

'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles. I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on.

'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know.'⁸⁷

Alice's 'controversial' statement involves a chiasmic reversal of words: I say what I mean; I mean what I say. For her, should 'say' and 'mean' be interchanged, her utterance remains semantically the same; the terms are synonymous. Her companions, however, do not agree! They choose two arbitrary, unrelated verbs respectively⁸⁸; they parody her sentence; they declare that Alice's proposition is illogical.

Alice's statement that saying what one means is the same as meaning what one says is, in fact, not unusual English; it has the nature of common parlance. Spoken interactions are rarely interrupted by either the speaker or the listener pondering the distinction between the *said* and the *meant*. Within a speech community, people *understand* the varying ways in which propositions can be employed and make interpretive judgements accordingly. In Wonderland, however, literal meaning reigns and Alice's accusers declare that she *does not "mean [exactly] what [she] says"*.

⁸⁷ AA, p. 96.

⁸⁸ 'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I **see** what I **eat**" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!'.

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I **like** what I **get**" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!' 'You might just as well say,' added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, 'that "I **breathe** when I **sleep**" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!' AA, pp. 97-98.

Actually, this is a basic truism of everyday conversation and it is one aspect of the paradoxical nature of language that Carroll regularly exploits to comic effect. In the UK, "I'm hitting the hay" involves neither violence nor vegetation, and "keeping one's eye on the children" certainly does not entail enucleation. Words are often used idiomatically, figuratively, rhetorically and sarcastically without necessitating significant semantic analysis. Carroll exploits common place language phenomena to comic effect. In doing so, he spotlights features of language so familiar that they rarely merit our focus, but that, once brought into the light, we cannot fail to see.

The Building Site

Illustrating the inadequacy of a naïve Augustinian view of language⁸⁹, Wittgenstein asks us to:

...imagine a language [...] meant to serve for communication between a builder A and an assistant B. A is building with building stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs and beams. B has to pass him the stones and to do so in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose, they make use of a language consisting of the words "block", "pillar", "slab", "beam". A calls them out; B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.⁹⁰

In his references to this *primitive* 'builders' language' and others, Wittgenstein points out the flaw in contending that words are: primarily ostensive in function, carry fixed semantic content, and are 'uniform'⁹¹ in nature. He points to 'words' in common usage that have no meaning. He gives the example of such terms as "'Tra-la-la' in a song"⁹² (here referencing Lewis Carroll). Although the designation of 'tra-la-la' as a 'word' is debatable, he successfully demonstrates that the things we say are more sophisticated than just simple

⁸⁹ Wittgenstein takes an observation from Augustine about how children learn language and asserts it as Augustine's entire theory of language (possibly in a hyperbolic manner), to draw his readers' attention to the complexity of the issue of meaning.

⁹⁰ *PI*, Section 2.

⁹¹ *PI*, Section 11.

⁹² *PI*, Section 13.

signifiers. Words can name; they also command, call, question, amuse, report, and have *countless*⁹³ other functions.

Few serious philosophers would dare to mount an attack on the patent position that words generally have an ostensive function. Wittgenstein's strategy betrays an air of intentional exaggeration. His *entire* imagined builders' language consists of just four terms. In a manner reminiscent of Carroll, he seems to challenge that which is obvious⁹⁴ in order to unearth the idiosyncratic nature of everyday language use. In this example, his argument is that when builder A says 'Slab!' to assistant B, builder A is not simply naming the object at hand, but he is giving a command. In sections 19 and 20 Wittgenstein asks his readers, therefore, to consider the relationship between "Slab!" and "Bring me a slab" and assess their sameness of meaning (or otherwise). Is 'Slab!' an example of ellipsis, a conventionally shortened form of the *actual* sentence "Bring me a slab"? Is one proposition standard and the other degenerate? Do the sentences convey identical content? Does builder A *mean* what he says?

Wittgenstein begins section 19 by asking if 'Slab!' is a sentence or a word. The answer to this question in the context of Wittgenstein's imaginary (nonsensical) narrowly-limited sympractical language, which surely would be impossible to defend as a 'language' at all, is inconsequential. The primary issues for consideration are twofold. The first is that the meaning of a proposition is dependent on use in a specific context, not on logic. The word 'slab' in the context of a children's picture book, for example, simply names a construction material. In Wittgenstein's *game*, 'Slab!' signals a command. Within the framework of English as a language the meanings of the two propositions are connected, but not in a manner that can be deduced logically.

⁹³ "There are *countless* kinds; countless different kinds of use of all the things we call "signs", "words", "sentences".", *PI*, Section 23.

⁹⁴ "B brings the stone which he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call." *PI*, Section 19.

The second is: what is it for two expressions to have the same meaning? And, what is meaning? The interlocutor says, "'Bring me a slab!' cannot mean the same as 'Slab!'"⁹⁵. This runs contrary to normal assumptions; an ellipsis is commonly supposed to be but a shortened form of an expression. However, when consideration is given to the implications of such a perspective, it commits one to the position that 'Slab!' is dependent upon the longer phrase. How can this be so? The interlocutor suggests that the answer is that when builder A says "Slab!" he is *actually thinking* "Bring me a slab!".

The logic of this presents difficulties for Wittgenstein who, throughout *PI*, rejects any philosophical solution that relies on a speaker's *inner* world: "But when I call out "Slab!", then what I want is *that he should bring me a slab!* — Certainly, but does 'wanting this' consist in thinking in some form or other a different sentence from the one you utter? — "⁹⁶ Here and elsewhere in *PI*⁹⁷ he seeks to demonstrate that the intention of the speaker is not the locus of meaning. He denies a mentalistic solution to this philosophical-linguistic conundrum.

In the end, Wittgenstein's resolution instead involves replacing the interlocutor's contention about dependency of meaning with an explanation focused on grammar. 'Textbook'⁹⁸ language guides us to consider the fuller proposition as paradigmatic. The linguistic formula employed in the longer formulation *may* offer greater clarity in terms of informational content, particularly in the context of dialogue involving an individual unfamiliar with the linguistic conventions of the particular language game in hand. To propose so, however, may lead us down yet another rabbit-hole. Because all linguistic explanation is linguistically bound, the explanation is no less immune to being misinterpreted than any condensed version.

⁹⁵ *PI*, Section 19b.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ e.g. *PI*, Section 38.

⁹⁸ conventional forms

Wittgenstein links 'meaning' here to the *sense*⁹⁹ of an expression, which he explains in relation to sameness of use. In this particular linguistic context, builder A's command has a *sense* and the practical outcome of the assistant's response, whether on the basis of the lengthier command or the ellipsis, would likely be the same (this being dependent on assistant B's familiarity with the builder's speech and the general and conventional grammatical command forms of the same language). The content of the expressions is equivalent, but the wording is different. For the observer who is not part of this linguistic community, identifying and understanding this relationship may be challenging.

Wittgenstein offers this example to "disperse the fog"¹⁰⁰ that inhibits a clear understanding of language. He is not offering an alternative language theory; he creates scenarios that force certain questions back to his readers, thus challenging their assumptions on the essence of language and the locus of meaning. In some ways, he is dispelling the mystery of language use while simultaneously highlighting that its nature cannot be reduced to logical formulas or scientific analysis.

Wittgenstein parenthetically illustrates this further by indicating the differing grammatical structures of individual languages: "(In Russian one says "Stone red" instead of "The stone is red". Does the sense they grasp lack the copula? Or do they add the copula *in thought*?)"¹⁰¹ The individual words stated in any proposition take on a meaning in relation to their situation within a grammatical structure and the tempo-spatial linguistic context. Utterances have meaning that is dependent on their use. Each word spoken does not necessarily convey informational content; some do, others function grammatically, others have a particular meaning or use according to the specific language game. The overall meaning can be explained as the proposition's function. For example, if two expressions, such as 'Good morning!' and 'Hello!', are used as a general polite greeting on a particular occasion, we can say that they mean the same thing.

⁹⁹ *PI*, Section 20.

¹⁰⁰ *PI*, Section 5.

¹⁰¹ *PI*, Section 20.

It is informative to bear in mind what Wittgenstein writes in Section 16 of *Zettel*: "The mistake is to say that there is anything that meaning something consists in." In so doing, he seems to pull the carpet from under anyone who would reduce his own writing to a purely "use-based theory of meaning". Invoking *use* alone is insufficient. The reality is that we mean sentences in various ways; meaning is not universally localized in one particular. It depends on the utterance, the speaker and the circumstances of the speech act which "criss-cross in every direction"¹⁰². Wittgenstein does not offer a theory of the essential nature of language; in fact, he makes it clear in this example and others that, in so doing, we are likely to misconstrue language in an inappropriate way.

Translation

Understanding the way meaning is conveyed in language is vital for successful translation. Yet, this is not always immediately obvious. Stecconi refers to the challenge of "how to define, locate and look for the meaning in source texts, that shadowy thing that translators are expected to carry over into their new texts".¹⁰³ If a translator is prone to an understanding of language as a basic sign-signifier system, they will be prone to regularly misunderstand and misinterpret their source 'text'¹⁰⁴. Hearing a language that is not their first tongue, their assumption will be that the words used possess a static meaning, in the manner in which words are taught through vocabulary lists in basic second language acquisition lessons or in the way they are displayed in a bilingual dictionary.

Translators must appreciate that words are significantly more flexible and that statements can only be successfully understood and translated when appreciation is given to the ordinary language context in which they are located. They must be taught to see the anomalous features of their own language; they must be

¹⁰² *PI*, Section 66, 67.

¹⁰³ Stecconi, in Gambier, Y., & Stecconi, U. (2019). *A world atlas of translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Here 'text' may refer to both written and oral sources for translation/interpretation.

reminded that other languages operate with similar anomalies. Carroll narrates Alice's confusion in a linguistically mediated world in which she is a foreigner. A stranger walking into the context of Wittgenstein's builders, upon hearing a random, isolated shout of 'Slab!' (without any visual of the speaker), would be unlikely to know whether the exclamation is a call for a slab or a warning that one is falling from a height. Undoubtedly the potential for misunderstanding is present for a native language speaker and a foreigner here. For both, there is a necessity to succeed in the challenge of correctly setting the words in, and understanding them in relation to, their actual context.

In a translation team, a translator who fails to appreciate language's mercurial nature can be difficult to manage and may produce work that lacks integrity, irrespective of their ability in grammar and vocabulary testing. For example, the translator who, translating subtitles for a TV soap opera, refuses to make amendments to his literal translation of 'bite the bullet', because he feels he has offered a lexically and grammatically accurate rendering, will manufacture a very unusual translation product. A desire to communicate in an 'ideal' or 'correct' manner can lead to a linguistic naiveté or arrogance that can have the result of trivialising what language *really means*. Wittgenstein's anti-theoretical stance on meaning is instructive here in heightening awareness to language. However, how does this awareness practically aid the translator in the completion of their task?

Translation is a means of bridging linguistic, cross-cultural communication divides. Differing linguistic communities (whether within a single language or between languages) experience, divide and interpret life, and live life, differently. They make different word-world relationships¹⁰⁵ and the translator needs to find a way to navigate the divergence. There are methodologies which help in the task; however, the malleable nature of language in its actual contexts also necessitates creative flexibility. Wittgenstein describes the

¹⁰⁵ Different languages divide colours into differing numbers of basic colour categories. Inuit contains hundreds of snow related lexemes. The Khmer language contains words for the processes involved in harvesting rice for which have no direct equivalents in the English speaking world where rice harvesting is not normative.

activity as akin to "Solving a problem in practical arithmetic"¹⁰⁶ - it is problem-solving and works towards producing a concrete solution. One might say that, in some cases, it is like "Guessing riddles"¹⁰⁷.

Here one is reminded of Charles S. Peirce, who advocated a 'translation' methodology based on abductive guessing; in communication, we must take into account all surrounding factors influencing the speech act and then offer our best guess at what is being said. He describes this critical common-sensism in approaching linguistic signs as a "guess[ing] at the riddle"¹⁰⁸ of language which has a practical outworking. As Wittgenstein had also, Peirce abandoned his initial commitment to absolute epistemological certainty, instead contending a pragmatism of probable knowledge and sensible inference in language and translation. Without descending down the rabbit-hole of a rigorous analysis of Peircian semiotics at this late stage in the chapter, it is worth considering generally how this approach might be implemented:

Literary translation

In approaching a source text and considering the manner of production of the target result, the translator will ask:

- What is the context of this piece of writing?
- What crucial cultural beliefs might influence the writing in this text?
- What are the normative written forms in this context and does this source text conform to the norms?
- How might the answers to these questions inform understanding, interpretation and translation to the target text? Where are the points of ambiguity between the source and target culture of which one must be aware and perhaps resolve for communication to be rendered intelligible in the final translation?

¹⁰⁶ *PI*, Section 23.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Guessing riddles is one of the language games Wittgenstein lists in *PI* 23. In *PI* 32 he writes further, "Someone coming into a foreign country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive explanations that they give him; and he will often have to *guess* how to interpret these explanations; and sometimes he will guess right, sometimes wrong."

- Where are the points of connection between two linguistic communities that can be exploited for the benefit of communication?
- Do I (the translator) have any prejudices or biases of which I need to be aware so that I might limit how these influence my understanding of the text?
- How have previous interpretative texts rendered these propositions and narrative? What translation 'habits'¹⁰⁹ might be helpful in informing my translation approach so that abduction is tested through further induction and deduction?

In this way the translator engages in 'problem-solving' the meaning of the text and conveying the text in a second language. Invention is inevitably involved, but within the bounds of hypothetical reasoning. The *potential* for miscommunication at all stages is something of which translators must be aware and take best efforts to mitigate against on the basis of the information that they have at hand. This works with a logic somewhat similar to what Wittgenstein wrote in *On Certainty*:

I do not explicitly learn the propositions that stand fast for me. I can discover them subsequently like the axis around which a body rotates. This axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility.¹¹⁰

To illustrate the challenges and the process involved in translation, an example is offered. In the area of translation, pronouns can be problematic. As each language articulates and organizes the world and the people in it differently, Newman and Nida advise that "one must be very sensitive to the use of pronominal forms, since they frequently carry rather subtle connotations"¹¹¹. In cultures that place emphasis on hierarchy, social requirements can mean generic second person designation is not regarded as appropriate or correct; encoding of other pertinent information in referencing is also necessary. Specifically, the speaker may need to encode his/her position related to his addressee via (anti-) honorification, or reference to gender, age, social role or profession. Often pro-drop is a marker of politeness.

¹⁰⁹ Peirce, *Collected Papers* (vols. 1-6 in 4), ed. by Hartshorne & Weiss, Cambridge (Mass.), The Belknap Press of Harvard U. (1931-35); 5.464-496.

¹¹⁰ Section 152, *On Certainty*, p.153.

¹¹¹ Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), p. 58.

This is an issue in the translation of second person pronouns in Khmer to English translations. The official language of Cambodia is Khmer, a Sanskrit-based language, belonging to the Austro-Asiatic language branch. It is a grammatically simple language without verb tenses or plural forms of nouns. However, the vocabulary for expressing relationships, status, and respect is far more extensive than that of English. A study on agreement and anaphora in Khmer argues that "Khmer has an agreement system which encodes respect, or lack of respect, for a referent"¹¹². There are words for old and young, laymen, monks and royal family members. The appropriate word is chosen according to an individual's status, age, and sex. Thus traditional Khmer language expresses social hierarchy.

The personal pronoun 'you' in English translates into 10 different Khmer words depending upon the age, sex, and status of the speakers, including specialized forms for 'you' in the case of a Buddhist monk or a member of the Royal family. These differences in second person reference, which include linguistic expression of politeness, pose a challenge for the translation enterprise. Should (a) the terms of reference of the source text be retained despite the strangeness in the target text; (b) there be a normalizing of the text, the pronoun being domesticated as a simple referential designator; (c) there be a substitution of a more familiar alternative noun in the target text; or d) should the target text include an explanatory metalingual comment?

United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT) provides technical assistance to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). The ECCC is a domestic court that has brought to trial senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea during the period from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979. In the face of the challenges inherent in translating witness testimonies from Khmer to English, UNAKRT published 'Guideline for Translation Agencies'. Regarding translation of pronouns, they advise

¹¹² Mayaprimavera Flores, "The Syntax of Respect", 2015.

the avoidance of gender-specific language: "Resort to alternatives like "he or she" only if there is no way to write the sentence without the pronouns. In most cases, one can rewrite any sentence to avoid the need for gender-based pronouns."¹¹³ Further, they instruct, when possible, to change the subject from singular to plural. "When not referring to a specific individual, but to a type of individual, avoid both gender-specific pronouns and the incorrect use of the pronoun "their" by using a plural subject."¹¹⁴ They place emphasis on a target text that follows normative grammar conventions and is natural for the first language English speaker to read. Venuti is one of many writers on translation who highlights that such domestication in translation "put[s] the translated in the service of the translating culture".¹¹⁵ He warns against any assumption of the transparency of translations and points to multiple examples of how rarely translation choices are objective and value-free. These are vital issues to which the translator must give consideration.

For now, we will conclude that Lewis, Wittgenstein and also Peirce, in their various ways, suggest that no communication, much less no translation, is immune to the potential for mistranslation – in the sense of rendering the original fully and accurately in the target language. Choices have to be made that often involve a bargaining process. The issue of concern is how choices are made and where does the authority to make such choices lie. "'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all!'"¹¹⁶

¹¹³ UNAKRT 'Guideline for Translation Agencies'.

¹¹⁴ UNAKRT 'Guideline for Translation Agencies'.

¹¹⁵ Venuti, L. (1998) *The Scandals of Translation*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ *TL-G*, Ch. VI.

WHO IS THE MASTER?

“When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all”.¹¹⁷

Modern linguistics has made very little headway in convincing those who have not made a special study of language that language is a living thing, our possession and servant, rather than an ideal toward which we should hopelessly aspire.¹¹⁸

In chapter 6 of *TLG* Alice unexpectedly encounters Humpty Dumpty who is perched precariously on top of a thin wall. She inadvertently insults him by referencing his ovum stature; his crotchety rejoinder confirms his offence. In the face of potential conflict, Alice resorts to her preferred coping mechanism: reciting the most immediate rhyme that comes to mind¹¹⁹. What ensues is a discussion on poetry, names and semantics.

In Humpty Dumpty, Carroll constructs a character who at once alleviates and exacerbates the problems of language. Humpty Dumpty acts as Alice's semantic nemesis. He is adamant that proper names should have meanings; for Alice, they are trivial. Contrariwise, Alice views words such as 'glory' as having a fixed meaning; Humpty Dumpty deems it to be perfectly reasonable to invest such a word with whichever definition suits one's purposes.

Evoking memories of Alice's words "I mean what I say"¹²⁰ at the tea party in *AA*, Humpty Dumpty proclaims, "When I use a word, [...] it means just what I choose it to mean".¹²¹ With an air of authority, he declares that prescribing the definitions of words is entirely feasible. Many analysts regard the character of

¹¹⁷ *TLG*, p. 124 (underline mine).

¹¹⁸ Algeo, J., Butcher, C. A., & Pyles, T. (2014). *The origins and development of the English language*. Boston, Mass.: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, p. 177.

¹¹⁹ She begins to recite the nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty.

¹²⁰ *AA*, p. 98.

¹²¹ *AA*, p. 124.

Humpty Dumpty to have been inspired by Carroll's academic contemporaries who intentionally obscured their language in order to wield intellectual clout. Carroll, working as a professor of Mathematics at Oxford, was familiar with contemporary literary and philological debates, and may have constructed his narratives with the aim of exploring, for example, Trench's semantic perspective which allowed that in given contexts words can be made to mean whatever the user wishes.¹²² In a personal correspondence, Carroll wrote, "No word has a meaning inseparably attached to it; a word means what the speaker intends by it, and what the hearer understands by it, and that is all."¹²³ Regardless of the actual extent of Carroll's conviction on this position, he urges consideration of *who* determines meaning in language.

Humpty Dumpty's statement of this position raises, for Alice, a profound and complex question: what is the relationship between language and the language user? At this, Humpty Dumpty declares that the real question to be asked is "Which is to be master[?]"¹²⁴ Language is a human construction. Yet, people are born into an already existing linguistic world and community which shapes their basic conceptual categories and perceptions. Wherein does authority to determine valid language use lie? Humpty Dumpty, looking down from his high wall, believes that power sits with him.

Humpty Dumpty's dogmatic conviction that an individual can determine linguistic meaning is hardly reflective of our experience. While language is to an extent fluid and unstable, the world includes a *system* where people find a way to make themselves understood. If Humpty Dumpty's theory of individually determined semantics defined our general use of words, language would be impractical and destined to failure as a mode of communication. Hence, Alice's scepticism of his position is well-founded. The exchange also highlights the possibility that in communicative interactions one may naïvely fall under the domination of an Other by the nature of the Other's language use.

¹²² Trench, *On the Study of Words* (1851), *English Past and Present* (1855).

¹²³ Blake, Kathleen, (1974) *Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, p. 75

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

Wittgenstein, too, wrestles with issues of authority in relation to meaning in language use. In Section 11 of *PI*, he uses the analogy of a toolbox to illustrate how words can have different roles. He writes,

Think of the tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. - The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities.) Of course, what confuses us is the uniform appearance of words when we hear them in speech, or see them written or in print. For their *use* is not that obvious. Especially when we are doing philosophy!¹²⁵

Monk tells us that, while Wittgenstein never had any architectural training, it was an area in which he showed interest, and in the one project in which he was practically engaged, he supervised the work "with an almost fanatical exactitude"¹²⁶. The theme of building is present throughout his work. When he compares language to a toolbox, he highlights the diversity of both tools and words. In a toolbox one might find a hammer, a spanner and a ruler. Each has a different form and a particular designated use. Successful building requires a builder to know how to use the tools in his possession. Under the control of the builder's hands, the tools perform the task required.

The speaker has the possibility of a multiplicity of different types of words that he can use to perform his communicative task. Humpty Dumpty, in his explanation of semantics to Alice, comically references the diversity in the nature of words: "...verbs, they're the proudest — adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs"¹²⁷. Wittgenstein's toolbox analogy illustrates his slogan that "meaning is use"¹²⁸. If words are like tools, and if the meaning of a word is its use, for example in explaining, chastising or instructing, then the meaning of a tool is made visible in the use of a tool by the user in a particular linguistic context. Wittgenstein warns that "one cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its application and learn from that."¹²⁹ We must 'look!' at how the speaker is using language in order to ascertain meaning. The

¹²⁵ *PI*, Section 11.

¹²⁶ Monk, R. (1990) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Cape, ch. 10.

¹²⁷ *TLG*, ch. 6.

¹²⁸ *PI*, Section 43.

¹²⁹ *PI* Section 340, 116e.

meaning will be uncovered through observation of the linguistic *activity*; it is not uncovered by any explanatory generalizations or fixed definition.

The builder is vital to this analogy. Without the builder, the inanimate toolbox serves no purpose. Similarly, just as the builder chooses the tools appropriate to the mechanical project and employs them accordingly, so the speaker chooses words and exploits them according to his communicative needs in the particular tempo-spatial context. Power to convey meaning lies with the speaker, according to his level of linguistic competence. S/he controls the manner and content of the speech act.

The presence of the 'other' also has importance. If the primary role of language is communication, speaking without an audience seems somewhat akin to brandishing a hammer through the air.¹³⁰ Given that most commonly people desire to communicate clearly, Wittgenstein urges us to see communication failure as arising out of incorrect or unusual means of speaking, mishearing or misinterpreting the words of another, or misreading the linguistic context. The listener needs to take context into consideration to be able to distinguish the differing meanings of *lighter* in the following examples: "White is lighter than black" and "She is lighter than him". "Could you pass me the salt?" is usually a request rather than an enquiry about ability. Awareness of context and familiarity with common linguistic conventions ensures that language does not baffle the language users.

There can be occasions when the listener could be flummoxed or manipulated by clever words or deceitful language use on the part of the speaker. Individuals with linguistic competence can exploit language to exert dominance over their audience. Wittgenstein perceived that philosophers and intellectuals were guilty of extracting words from their linguistic context and creating universal logics of language which were thus a distortion. In Section 116, he wrote,

¹³⁰ It may be argued that there is meaningful language use that does not require the presence on an 'other', i.e. the writing of a diary.

When philosophers use a word a “knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition/sentence”, “name” - and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home? - What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.¹³¹

Like Humpty Dumpty, philosophers can use technical terminology and highfalutin rhetoric to obfuscate their intellectual inferiors. Awareness of this manner of language use and the ability to perceive this kind of phenomenon can, according to Wittgenstein, help us to avoid "the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language"¹³².

In the everyday use to which Wittgenstein refers, specific tools have a normative purpose. There are, no doubt, scenarios in which the builder may use a hammer as a crude jack-device, and, while this may indicate resourcefulness and ingenuity, it is hardly conventional. Tools are designed to most efficiently perform a task. Language works similarly. In any linguistic community, communication is arbitrated by normative use. This use has been implicitly agreed by the members of the linguistic community, and may change and evolve through the authority of common assent. So 'senile' previously employed in reference to old age generally, nowadays refers specifically to those suffering the loss of mental faculties.

Understanding the relation of authority and power to meaning in language use alerts the translator to the role of language, speaker and the linguistic community in the communicative act. A translator who fails to incorporate this awareness into his professional activity, may unwittingly invite an ill-disposed master to govern his work.

¹³¹ *PI*, Section 116.

¹³² *PI*, Section 111.

Words are not the master.

Words, in themselves, have no power. They assume power through use. When they are treated as fixed abstract entities, they are inadvertently granted power. Alice's lament "I'm not myself, you see"¹³³ articulates a logical impossibility in grammatically correct English. We understand nonetheless her words as an example of meaningful, non-literal discourse.

The translator who can only conceive that 'kicking the bucket' refers to the activity of a foot making contact with a container, and who will not listen to contrary semantic explanations, is under the kind of linguistic bewitchment that Wittgenstein urges us to avoid. Those who are developing machine translation platforms equally must acknowledge the machine's incapacity to break the spell because their fully-automatic high-quality translation systems are unable to 'see' the specific language context of the given proposition. The 'human factor in communication'¹³⁴, determining the manner and context in which language is used, is where we locate meaning. By giving attention to this, the translator ensures that neither language detached from context, nor a machine with linguistic limits, can assume an inappropriate role of power in the translation process.

Maintaining an appropriate 'power' balance, the translator understands that words do not refer to definite, abstract ideas, but are grounded in specific practice and linguistic contexts which determine meaning. The astute translator learns to view the various 'tools' at play in the language activity in which s/he is engaging. They consciously understand that it is futile and inappropriate to attempt to reduce the tools to a single function. Translation is a discipline that requires sensitivity to difference. In the field of science, the composite noun (ᠭᠢᠯᠠᠴᠢᠷ ᠠᠨᠢ ᠶ᠋ᠢᠨᠠᠨᠢ) references a glacier, not 'river (of) ice' as would be the literal translation of its phonemic parts. In colloquial dialogue, 'crossing the river' in reference to a pregnant woman means

¹³³ AA, p. 48.

¹³⁴ Tabakowska, E. (1993). *Cognitive linguistics and poetics of translation*. Tübingen: Narr, p. 10

'to give birth'. So, "has she 'crossed the river' yet?" is an enquiry as to parturition rather than geographical location. Taking any of the aforementioned terms out of context grants the *term* an ambiguity that it does not have when viewed in its linguistic home.

Competent translation requires experience in the respective linguistic homes of the translation language pair. Thus they can correctly identify and understand polysemous words, figurative language, idioms, and the "countless different kinds of use of all the things we call 'signs', 'words', 'sentences'"¹³⁵. Poking fun at the unreflective and overly analytical language interactions of Alice, the *foreigner* in Wonderland who is far from her own home, is a game Carroll enjoyed; translators may benefit from seeing the manner in which he is able to manipulate language for comic purpose.

The translator is not the master.

While Shapiro has defined "translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated"¹³⁶, it is recognized by most experts that transparency in translation is an illusion; the translator, negotiating between differing cultural and linguistic spaces, inevitably leaves authorial marks on the translated text. Tasked with the goal of producing a text that will be intelligible to the target language reader, the translator needs to negotiate balancing facilitating clear communication and acting as a conduit.

At times, maintaining that balance is as exacting as the rotund Humpty Dumpty's task of perching on his narrow wall. Choices need to be made; some determined by the demands of accuracy, others by preference. For example, difficulties arise in translation between English and Khmer in relation to vocabulary for expressing relationships, status, and respect. The pronominal system is complex, full of honorific variations, reflecting a Cambodian society that is hierarchical and deferential. There is generally no single pronoun appropriate for all situations, the choice of pronoun being based on age, gender, and relationship.

¹³⁵ *PI*, Section 23.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 1.

Translating such terms in English renders a target text that seems awkward, clunky and certainly foreign. The translator, wanting to 'create' a text s/he regards as good English, may be tempted to disregard the encoded content in the Khmer source. A smoother read may result, but in taking their knife to the text, something is certainly lost in the translation produced. Venuti, concerned for fidelity to a source text, warns of instances in which "the translated text seems 'natural,' that is, not translated"¹³⁷.

With numerous semantic possibilities before the translator, influenced by varying cultural assumptions and interpretive choices, the translator must continuously choose to resist being influenced by their own linguistic and ethical prejudices and biases. Recognizing that absolute neutrality is a myth, they must adopt "absolute humility towards the text"¹³⁸, honestly and critically 'looking' at their practice to mitigate the influence of their own personality, using all the knowledge at their disposal as "guardrails of responsibility"¹³⁹ so that they do not, wittingly or otherwise, become master in the translation process.

Is the client the master?

Just as builder most often builds according to the instruction of the employer, the translator usually translates in service of another. The necessity to satisfy the demands of the patron has always had an influence on the translation process. Translation, used as a mechanism for facilitating colonization, has historically been a one-way process, dominated by the colonizer who controls the type of texts to be translated and the manner in which it proceeds. Ideologies and prejudices have often been pushed or enforced by those who commission translations. Nivanjana references typical ethnocentric, impartial translations, motivated to offer a "representation of the colonized... to justify colonial domination"¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁷ Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 5.

¹³⁸ Weinberger, E. & O. Paz (1987) *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, London: Asphodel, p. 17.

¹³⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Aporias*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford University Press: Stanford, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ Niranjana, Tejaswini, (1992) *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 33-34.

Today, those with political and financial power encourage translations that they consider acceptable and reject those that fail to comply with their standards. The dominant social group may: wield influence in the choice of texts for translation; control the strategy by which the foreign text is rendered in the domestic tongue, perhaps privileging domestic values and the domesticating of texts; erect criteria for "translation accuracy" through giving preference to word banks and linguistic smoothness over retaining linguistic and cultural differences. Venuti, for example, warns that,

Institutions, whether academic or religious, commercial or political, show a preference for a translation ethics of sameness, translating that enables and ratifies existing discourses and canons, interpretations and pedagogies, advertising campaigns and liturgies - if only to ensure the continued and unruffled reproductions of the institution.¹⁴¹

The influence of the patron on translation is not limited to choice of content alone; it extends further to what is deemed acceptable in terms of style and form. Berman notes¹⁴² the tendency in western translation to prioritise transfer of meaning, leading translators to produce translations that are clearer and more elegant than their source. Ezra Pound notes how translators often aim their writing toward the lazy reader¹⁴³. This tendency is an act of power play that Venuti regards as a scandal¹⁴⁴. That many translators fail to be aware of the potential to inadvertently distort a translation in this manner is equally scandalous.

The translator, desiring best practice and outcome, must accept that textbook grammatical sentence structure does not need to bind him in his translation tasks. Authentic translation may necessitate the exploiting or manipulation of traditional grammar, syntax or word choice to convey the style of the original best. Venuti, for example, made a conscious choice in his translation of *Fantastic Tales* to Italian to purposefully include archaisms to indicate the temporal remoteness of the source material from the

¹⁴¹ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 82.

¹⁴² Berman, Antoine. (2012) Translation and the Trials of the Foreign. In Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* [transl. by Lawrence Venuti], 240–253. London–New York: Routledge., p. 288.

¹⁴³ Pound, E. (January 01, 1929). Guido's relations. *Dial*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁴ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 240.

linguistic world of the modern reader¹⁴⁵. He urges translators to find creative ways of rendering a source, resisting the structures and discourses of the receiving language and culture, while interrogating the structures and discourses of the foreign language. Seeking to maintain the balance between fluency and fidelity, a translation ought to highlight the differences between source and target language and culture. Taking this approach risks client dissatisfaction and may necessitate educating clients about the complexities of translation. In so doing, the client is invited with the translator into the translation process, without the client being granted the role of master.

The community as master.

Wittgenstein states in *PI* 242, "It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is required for communication by means of language."¹⁴⁶ It is the participants in a linguistic context who determine the manner in which language might be used and how meaning is conveyed. Wittgenstein does not deny that language has a systematic side that can be learned in relation to general language use (for example, in containing *kinds* of words, for example), however, he goes to great lengths to show that meaning is located in the particular social setting in which people are collectively engaged. This is the yardstick that the translator must use in rendering a source text in a target language.

A very simple example is: Cambodians normatively end a polar question with '...or not?', as in 'Do you understand or not?' This helps indicate that a clause is a question¹⁴⁷ and thus it is standardly, though not necessarily, employed. In an interpretation context in which a translator is facilitating a discussion between a Cambodian and a British national, a literal translation which includes the 'or not?' construction may sound very abrupt to the English speaker. His linguistic community understands 'or not?' to be implied in the

¹⁴⁵ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ *PI*, Section 242.

¹⁴⁷ Colloquially Cambodians normatively ask 'Understand or not?', without a subject, thus omission of 'or not?' leaves 'Understand?' which necessitates appropriate intonation on the part of the speaker and sensitivity to intonation on the part of the hearer for mutual understanding.

question and, thus, if these words are levelled at him, the British national may feel some implied disrespect. The translator sensitive to what is deemed acceptable in each linguistic community¹⁴⁸ can mitigate unintended offence by translating in accordance with the accepted forms. He engages with the tools of language in the manner in which they are intended and for the appropriate purpose.

So, translation competence requires awareness of linguistic aspects, familiarity with the form of life of the source and target text, awareness of the rules that are normative in both linguistic contexts, and the ability to make informed choices. Wittgenstein acknowledges the challenge in his reference to the translation of jokes. He offers no systematic solution to this problem specifically, nor does he outline a doctrine or method of translation generally. Instead, he illustrates the importance of being aware of multiplicity in and among linguistic phenomena that are comprehended through observation of the "stream[s] of life which gives linguistic utterances their meaning".¹⁴⁹ These 'streams of life' act as the master to which the translator must submit in the translation task.

Boase-Beier wrote that 'What training of translators involves is showing them how language works, above all how literary language works, so that in any individual case they will have at their disposal the means for understanding how the particular text works'.¹⁵⁰ Highlighting the potential power dynamics in translation highlights how language can be manipulated in translation, consciously or otherwise; thus, inclusion of this matter in the Translation Studies curriculum is vital. "In a society whose communication component is becoming more prominent day by day,"¹⁵¹ awareness of the possibilities of power plays in language is not just important for those working in the field of translation, but for all individuals, so that they might not be conned by the "illusion of transparency" in interlinguistic context.

¹⁴⁸ The inclusion of the participle here would not be grammatically incorrect. However, the consensus of community may be that it is an unacceptable form of phrasing in polite dialogue.

¹⁴⁹ Monk, R. (1990) *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, London: Cape, p. 261.

¹⁵⁰ Boase-Beier, J. & M. Holman (1999) *The Practices of Literary Translation*, Manchester: St. Jerome, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 14.

CONCLUSION

Is my understanding only blindness to my own lack of understanding? It often seems so to me.¹⁵²

Since time immemorial philosophers have drawn attention to humanity's propensity to blindness... to blind acceptance and to the inability to perceive that which is in plain sight. In his unique brand of philosophy, Wittgenstein stands on the shoulders of giants who have called us to 'look' at reality and attend to our own inability to see things as they are.¹⁵³

Interlinguistic translation without due attention to the nature of the task at hand is akin to attempting to build a house without knowledge of architecture or engineering. It is to seek to build without understanding how to utilise the tools at one's disposal. The builder can get the job done, but it is dubious whether the final structure will provide the safe, comfortable, attractive accommodation that we most desire.

Wittgenstein, using both didactics, dialogue and multiple real-life illustrations, focuses our sight on the way in which language is used. Self-consciously aware of the failure of his own efforts to systematise language¹⁵⁴, he urges us to avoid the temptation to displace language from its rightful home. Similarly, Carroll reveals, through nonsense, parody and the absurd, that language cannot be circumscribed as fixed across all localities. What we do with language is influenced and determined by context, for both the speaker and the listener. The presence of the community agreement in meaning is vital to how language functions. Collectively, mankind is certainly the master of language; individually, he is not.

¹⁵² *On Certainty*, Section 418.

¹⁵³ In *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* i.94, Wittgenstein talks of the need for 'new conceptual glasses' in order to see things as they really are.

¹⁵⁴ *Blue Book*, "the man who is philosophically puzzled sees a law in the way a word is used and trying to apply this law consistently, comes up against cases where it leads to paradoxical results." p. 27.

Reading Wittgenstein and Carroll will certainly not equip the translator with the various strategies necessary for the fulfilment of their assorted translation tasks. What they can do is to strip us, as translators, of our blindness to our own lack of understanding of how language works. The translator who is awakened to the need to understand **context**, the nature of **meaning** and the **power-plays** that are normative, will know the necessity of identifying the *ground* of specific use of a source text. From here, constructing various approaches to *how* to do translation in diverse contexts is possible.

In his early work, Wittgenstein said "that of which we cannot speak, we must pass over with silence"¹⁵⁵. As a species, we have never exhibited a desire to be silent. We keep talking. We long to communicate and engage. Undoubtedly, interacting linguistically - with those from our community and with 'foreigners' - is something we need to learn to do better. In the interim, the presence of competent translators, who can see the nature of language and the translation game in which they are engaged, allows for the potential to engage cross-culturally and navigate the Wonderland of communication.

¹⁵⁵ TL-P 7.

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