Translation and Translation Theory

1. Introduction
As the course title indicates, this course focuses on translation and translation theory.

The purpose is for you to gain insights into the principles of (advanced) translation theory, and for you to be able to apply the theoretical principles practically in translation. Now, we will of course not be able to cover all aspects of translation theory over the course of six weeks, therefore we will focus on a number of selected topics:

- The translation process
- Text analysis in translation
- Cultural differences in translation
- Translation of metaphors and idioms
- Componential analysis in translation
- Case grammar in translation

We will apply these practically in translation exercises in class and in take-home assignments, which should also provide you with contrastive insights into the differences between Danish and English.

2. Practical stuff

2.1 When and where?
When: Thursdays 12:30-14:15
Where: 3.104

2.2 Who?
Teacher: Kim Ebensgaard Jensen
Office hours: Tuesdays 12:00-14:00 in 2.214
e-mail: kim@hum.aau.dk

2.3 Reading material and course plan
We are going to read excerpts from the following books. Everything is available in the course compendium:

Note that you are not required to read the texts marked “optional” in the course plan below – they merely contain additional (very interesting) information that you might be interested in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1 (36) | Introduction | ● Bell, chapter 1: “Perspectives on translation”  
● Newmark, chapter 1: “Introduction”  
● Newmark, chapter 7: “Literal translation” (optional), chapter 8: “The other translation procedures” (optional)  
● Tytler: “Essay on the Principles of Translation” (optional) |
| 2 (37) | Text analysis and processing (workshop – assignment #1) | ● Bell, chapter 5: “Text and discourse”, chapter 6: “Text processing”  
● Newmark, chapter 2 “The Analysis of a Text” |
| 3 (38) | Culture I: culturally based presuppositions in translation | ● Ungerer and Schmid, section 1.3: “Context dependence and cultural models”, section 5.1: “Frames and scripts”  
● Robinson chapter 10: “Cultures” (optional)  
● Huang, section 3.1: “What is presupposition?”  
● Duranti, chapter 2: “Theories of culture” (optional) |
● Ungerer and Schmid, chapter 2: “Levels of categorization” (optional)  
● Chalker and Weiner: “Idioms” (optional) |
| 5 (40) | Words and sentences (workshop – assignment #2) | ● Bell, chapter 3: “Word- and sentence meaning”  
| 6 (41) | Mental processes in the translation process | ● Bell, chapter 7: “Information, knowledge and memory”  
● Robinson, chapter 4: “The process of translation”, chapter 5 “Experience” |

2.4 Assignments
You are required to hand in three assignments. The deadlines are as follows:

● Assignment #1: September 18, week 3 (37)  
● Assignment #2: October 2, week 5 (40)  
● Assignment #3: October 9, week 6 (41)

You may do the assignments in groups of 3 to 5 students. Assignments should be handed in in class in paper format, but if, for whatever reason, you can't make it, I'll be in my office till 4 pm. I will only accept assignment answers sent by e-mail in emergency situations.

2.5 Assessment
You will be assessed on the basis of a paper of 10 pages on a translation-related topic of your own choice – that is, you have to discuss it with me, of course, and I have to agree to it. Alternatively, you have the option of passing the course through “sufficient participation” in the course, which means at least 80% of attendance and handing in, and passing, all three assignments.

3. What is translation?
A simple answer would be something along the lines of “translation/translating is the transfer of a
text in Language A into an equivalent text in Language B”, a type of definition you will encounter in many dictionaries if you look up the verb “translate”:

- **turn words into different language**: to reproduce a written or spoken text in a different language while retaining the original meaning (*MSN Encarta*)
- to turn into one's own or another language (*Merriam-Webster*)
- to change words into a different language (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)
- to render in another language (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*)

But, as you know from your previous courses on translation, things are a bit more complicated than that. There are several factors at play in getting from A to B – and, of course, a host of terms to describe these factors. As mentioned, one of the main purposes of this course is to get some insights into the process of translation and its many facets so as to enable you to describe them and to practically apply them in your own work.

3.1 Goin’ bananas?

Two important terms, which you might already be familiar with, serve the purpose of distinguishing between the original language and text and the translated text and the language of the translated text. The term *source* applies to the original input text – the *source text* – and the language of that text – the *source language*. The term *target* describes the output text – the *target text* – and the language of that text – the *target language*.

The aim of translation is to achieve **maximal equivalence** between the source text and the target text. While the term 'maximal equivalence' might be self-explanatory, complete and total equivalence is virtually impossible, and some things will always be lost in translation, basically because languages differ from each other formally and functionally, and languages are “rooted in” different cultures.

There are two ways to achieve equivalence:

- **literal translation**: this is basically word-for-word translation in which the translator opts for **formal equivalence** – the consequence is that a lot of the content of the source text might not make it into the target text
- **free translation**: basically meaning-for-meaning translation in which the translator aims at getting the meaning of the source text completely across even if it mean radical formal differences between the source text and the target text (a.k.a. **functional equivalence**) – the consequence here is that intended formal features of the source text might not make it into the target text

Here is a well-known example of semi-free translation:

(1) **Bananas in Pyjamas** → **Bananer i Pyjamas**

Even though this is actually an instance of word-for-word translation, one important formal phonological property of the source text is left out of the target text – namely, the the rhyme of the original English title. The Danish translators went for functional equivalence (the content of the target text is identical to that of the source text). They could have gone for formal equivalence, retaining the rhyme:

(2) **Bananas i Pyjamas**
The problem here is that the meaning of the source text would be lost, since 'bananas' in Danish means 'crazy' or 'very silly' (this is a possible meaning of 'bananas' in English, too).

In fact, the whole theme song from *Bananas in Pyjamas*, is a quite interesting study in free and literal translation strategies, because the Danish translators tried to retain the rhymes of the source text, but did so by changing the form and meaning substantially:

(3) Bananas in pyjamas are coming down the stairs, → Bananer i pyjamas på trapperne er klar
Bananas in pyjamas are coming down in pairs, → Bananer i pyjamas, de løber ned i par
Bananas in pyjamas are chasing teddy bears, → Bananer i pyjamas, på bamsejagt de tar'
'Cause on Tuesdays we all try to catch them unaware! → Men de ved jo godt at begge to er lig' til rar!

3.2 Texts, contexts, and contents

Equivalence does not only apply at the level of words and sentences, but also at text level. The translator must take (at least) the following textual features into account:

- **semantics**: the sense or meaning of each unit (words, phrases, sentences etc.) in the source text and the meaning of the text as a whole, which is typically more than just the sum of meanings of the combined units
- **communicative value** of the text: the intended purpose of the text
- **place in time and space** of the text
- **social context** of the text: the sender and the intended recipient and the social relations between them

A neat way of addressing these textual aspects, or **parameters of variation**, is to ask the following questions:

- **What?**
  What is the message of the text? What is its propositional content? What is its basic content?
- **Why?**
  What's the intention of the sender? What is the purpose of the text? What's the illocutionary force of the text?
- **When?**
  When is the time of communication?
- **How?**
  o What is the manner of delivery? What's the tone of the text? What's the register? What's the level of formality?
  o What's the channel, or medium, of communication?
- **Where?**
  What is the spatial location of the text?
- **Who?**
  Who is the sender? Who is the recipient? What is the social relation between them?

The factors addressed in these questions, most of which relate to the context of the text, influence the text in terms of style, tone, register etc., and these aspects of the source text should also be, if possible, transferred onto the target text; basically, they determine the writer's choice of forms. Consequently, they should also determine the translator's choice of forms, style, register etc. in the target language, so stylistic equivalence is also retained.
4. Process and product

The target text is the product of the translation process, and is an interesting object of study in itself, but another important part of translation is the translation process itself. It is important to distinguish between the process and the product as they are two different entities, but, unfortunately, the term 'translation' is ambiguous in that it covers both.

Therefore, some translation theorists use the following terminology:

- **translating**: the process
- **a translation**: the product (basically the target text)
- **translation**: a concept that encompasses both

4.1 The translator and the good translation

The translator is obviously an important agent in the translation process since it is the translator that does the translating. As you can imagine, the translator has somewhat of a responsibility since the recipient's understanding of the text depends solely on the product of translation.

Therefore, some scholars, such as Tytler, argue that there should be some criteria for the good translation. Tytler's standards are based on the notion of the two extreme forms of translation:

- Embellishing translation: where the translator makes use of free translation to actually make a target text which is a better or improved version of the source text
- “Copy-cat” translation: in which the translator seeks to preserve every aspect of the source text (even including mistakes)

Tytler's rules of translation basically place the good translation somewhere in the middle between these two extremes.

- The target text should represent all of the content of the source text
- The style of the target should be equivalent to that of the source
- The target should be structured/composed like the source (and it should be as easy to read as the source)

Basically, a lot of **prescriptive translation theory** deals with ways of observing these principles, while a lot of **descriptive translation theory** deals with ways of describing how translators observe (or fail to observe) them.

4.2 The translator in the translation process

The translator is basically a communicator (that is, a participant in a communicative situation). The normal **monolingual communicative situation** looks like this (see a more complex figure in Bell's chapter, p. 11):

![Diagram of monolingual communicative situation]

The translator's role is somewhat different from the **sender** and **recipient** in the normal monolingual communicative situation, because the translator must both **decode** and **encode**, and the translator works within the framework of two **codes**, or languages, in what is called the **bilingual**
communicative situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source language</th>
<th>Target language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SENDER</td>
<td>MESSAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(source text)</td>
<td>(target text)</td>
</tr>
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Thus, the translator, in the decoding process, analyzes the language specific source text into a non-language-specific idea, or conceptual representation (basically, the content of the text). Then in the encoding process, the translator synthesizes the representation into a language specific target text.

5. Translation procedures

Here is an overview of central translation procedures and strategies (for more, read the two supplemental Newmark chapters on literal translation and other translation procedures):

- Literal translation
- **Transference**: transferal of a word or expression from the source language/text directly into the target text without translating it at all
- **Naturalization**: basically transference in which you apply target language spelling and morphology (and pronunciation) to the expression or word in question
- **Cultural equivalent**: translating a culturally rooted word in the source text/language with a roughly equivalent culturally rooted word of the target language/text
- **Functional equivalent**: translating a word in the source language/text with a functionally equivalent target language word (i.e. a word which has the same meaning)
- **Descriptive equivalent**: translating a source language/text word using a description of the concept it refers to in the target language
- **(Near) synonymy**: translating a source language/text word or expression with a target language expression that is nearly, but not completely, functionally equivalent
- **Through translation**: literal translation of collocations and combinations
- **Shift/transposition**: translation of a source language/text expression into a target language expression which involves change in grammatical structure, such that a specific target language structure is used
- **Modulation**: change of viewpoint or substantial conceptual concept in the translation, for instance, using the name of a category for a specific member of the category, using a part for the whole (and vice versa), active for passive etc.
- **Recognized translation**: using a well-known accepted target language translation for a specific source language institutional term
- **Translation label**: provisional target language translation of a source language term that does not have any conventional translation in the target language
- **Compensation**: making up for the loss of something in the source text, by adding something else in the target text
- **Componential analysis**: splitting up a lexical unit into meaning atoms
- **Reduction/expansion**: adding or removing elements in translation (essentially a type of shift)
- **Paraphrase**: amplification or explanation of meaning in target text