



# « ... the last refuge of a complex mind » (O. Wilde)

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- A warm thank you!
- For my little person (unimportant)
- But most of all...
- For this brilliant idea: simplify!
- Just what we are all looking for...

# Well, first...

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- A cognitive approach?
- How to deal with specialized domains?
- What kind of general knowledge do we need?
- No, not this time...
- But instead...
- **... How to deal with maths when maths never were your strong point in the first place?**

**In arguably unsimple ways**

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- Anything that can be counted, computed and measured
- Including in graphic form:
- ... tables, figures...
- **In other words:**
- **Maths for non-believers (anybody here?)**

**And what do we mean by  
maths, here?**

- Maths are not outside of culture
- They can be understood
- They help us reflect according to categories
- Their universe is, yes, reassuring
- We can model our reasoning and style according to them
- But first, we have to stop fearing them
- Our main focus, however: pragmatic translation (i.e. translation for communicative purposes)
- (but we are open to discussion)

**What do we want to hint at?** 5

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Taking inspiration from the funniest piece of XXth century literature

« [...] Sean fils de l'oncle de Jack, âgé de vingt et un ans, solide gaillard quoique hémophile également, et puis la fille de Franck (?) Bridie, âgée de quinze ans, pilier et soutien de la famille, ne dormant que le jour pour pouvoir recevoir la nuit, au tarif élastique de deux pences ou trois pences ou quatre pences ou même cinq pences ou une bouteille de bière l'étreinte, et cela dans la remise pour ne pas incommoder les siens, et puis l'autre fils de Jack Tom, âgé de quatorze ans, dont on disait diversement qu'il tenait de son père par la faiblesse de son esprit et de sa mère par la faiblesse de sa poitrine et de son grand-père paternel Jim par son goût des boissons fortes [...]. » (Beckett, 1968/1992, p. 105)

**First, overcoming unreasonable  
fears**

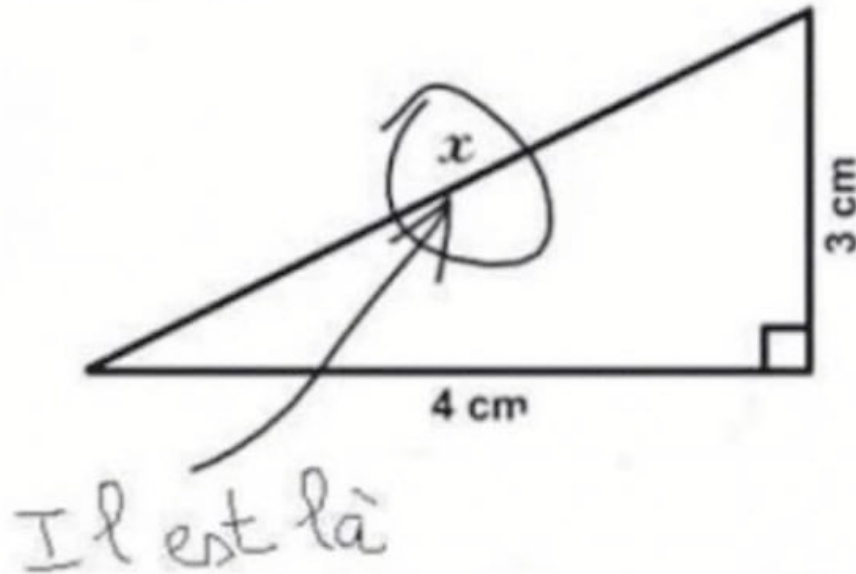
« Ces chiffres étant incorrects, les calculs en découlant sont doublement erronés. » (Beckett, 1968/1992, p. 106)

- It's not just funny
- It is (sadly) representative...
- ... of how we, translators, often relate to maths:
- ... decorative elements...
- ... which you don't necessarily need to understand
- And are often wont to despise

**And then the punchline (footnote)**

- Navigating shallow waters:

3. Trouver X.



**The consequence?**



- Things that are linguistically possible
- May be contextually implausible
- Do not turn a blind eye to the problem at hand (here, maths)
- ... and if you do...
- ... don't go complaining about low rates

**What those metaphors tell us**

- (trying to make new friends, here...)
- Because we can understand (“Yes, we can”)
- Because this is part of our agency
- Because ”No human thing is foreign to me” (Terence)
- Because pragmatic texts are written *around* maths (and not *vice versa*)

**Regarding maths, that  
would be pretty stupid...**

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So far the study of solar variability has identified five solar periodicities [...]:

– [...] solaires [...]:

– The 88 years Gleissberg cycle – [...]

[...]. Its length varies strongly over the centuries, with peaks of about 55 and 100 years [...].

The longer period prevailed between 1725 and 1850.

– Le cycle de Gleissberg, d'une période moyenne de 88 ans [...].

La durée de ce cycle varie fortement, de 55 ans minimum

jusqu'à plus de 100 ans [...]. La plus longue période eut lieu entre 1725 et 1850

# An example

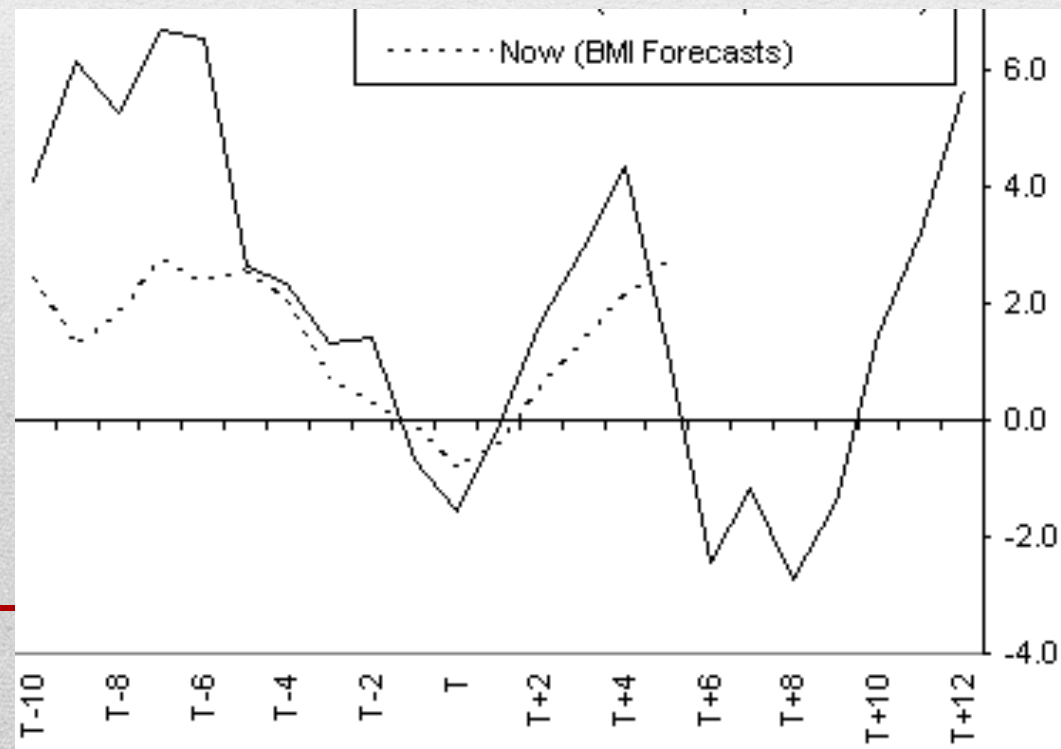
« Le texte anglais dit que le cycle dure entre 55 ans et 100 ans. Mais la phrase suivante “The longer period prevailed between 1725 and 1850.” vient contredire cela, puisqu’entre 1725 et 1850 il y a 125 ans et non pas 100 ans. J’ai donc choisi de traduire cette information par “plus de 100 ans”. »

In case of doubt, go for the figures!

# What does the translator say?

- A lot of texts are actually “translations” from mathematical of figurative expressions
- « Wall Street thinks a double-dip recession is more likely than V-shaped recovery »

**In fact...**



- There are words around terms too
- Heard about phraseology?

<b>let x be</b>	<b>soit x...</b>	<b>posons de que</b>	<b>partant</b>	
<b>where</b>	où...			
<b>knowing that</b>	or, on sait que...			
<b>hence</b>	il s'ensuit	d'où	on peut donc écrire...	

# Besides...

- Yes, there are differences (commas, dots, spaces, plurals...)
- *OK but why tarry on commas, for G...d's sake?!*
- Ask United Airways:
- Le chiffre
- 1,86 : Une virgule mal placée et c'est le prix sacrifié — en dollar — d'un aller retour sur des lignes intérieures d'US Airways.
- Source : Liberation.fr, 20 avril 2005

**Figures: it's not just literal translation!**

- A misplaced dot or comma can get someone killed, too (C. Balliu)
- And how do I translate this?
- *About a third of children under five suffer from malnutrition.*
- Yes, “Un tiers des enfants de moins de cinq ans...”

**It can also get less trivial, though**



- The National Rifle Association (NRA), the nation’s leading gun lobbying group, **increased its online ad spending sixfold** after the deadly mass shooting at a Parkland, Fla., high school last month, according to a new report.
- Is it “*multiplié par six*” or “*par sept*”?
- Depends on what you are focused on: “*increased*” or “*...fold*”
- Mathematically speaking, ...
- ... post-Parkland spending = pre-Parkland spending + (pre-Parkland spending x 6) = **7 x**

# And what about this?

- Not all of our authors, obviously
- And possibly not all translators either (just check Linguee on that...)
- So always check, and start from the figures

**Ok, but who is aware of that?**

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- ... then juggle
- The poor record of SMEs in training is historic: « **SMEs are much less likely** to provide formal training to their employees than larger enterprises. »
- Les PME n'ont jamais été de grosses consommatrices de formation continue. « **Statistiquement**, elles font beaucoup moins appel à la formation en bonne et due forme que les entreprises de plus grande taille. »

**And if words are just figures,  
translated**

- Always check
- Start with the figures, and the words will follow
- And remember that you learned how to count, way back when...

# **Therefore**

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- Think of recipes: spoons, cups, or ml?
- Or the way maths are taught in various countries: “Equivalence in difference” indeed (as Jakobson always sez...)
- And how do you transfer *first floor* into French (or Italien...)?
- In the EU: « rez-de-chaussée »
- In the UK: « 1<sup>er</sup> étage »
- And what about the US 13th floor?

## **II. Numbers do not exist outside of culture**

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- It's not the words; it's the situation!
- Use the context to reduce uncertainty...
- ... in both your and your client's understanding
- To make complex matters simple

# **In other words**

- “Mad cow” disease has had a negative impact on Cremonini, also due to the fact that the first BSE case in Italy was found in a cow slaughtered in the Group's Ospedaletto Lodigiano plant. The “mad cow” collective syndrome led to an impressive drop in meat consumption. In Italy volumes fell by 40%, prices by 20%, whereas in the same period Cremonini sales fell by 30%. **This implied a growth in Cremonini's market share.**
- What do I do with the last sentence?
- Has the author gotten it wrong?
- And how do I decide (for a start)?

**An (old) example (1997)**

- “Mad cow” disease has had a negative impact on Cremonini, also due to the fact that the first BSE case in Italy was found in a cow slaughtered in the Group's Ospedaletto Lodigiano plant. The “mad cow” collective syndrome led to an impressive drop in meat consumption. In Italy volumes fell by 40%, prices by 20%, whereas in the same period Cremonini sales fell by 30%. **This implied a growth in Cremonini's market share.**
- Volumes: tonnage (for instance)
- Prices: speaks for itself, doesn't it?
- Sales: the combination of those two

# **Let's get concrete**

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- [...] **This implied a growth in Cremonini's market share.**
- Year 1, sales = volume (3 000 animals) x prices (2 000 € per animal). Therefore 6 millions euros
- Year 2 : Italian market as a whole:  $(3,000 -40\%) \times (2,000 -20\%) = 1,800 \times 1,600 = 2,880,000 \text{ €}$ .
- Hence, a 52% drop for the whole market!
- Therefore, if Cremonini only loses 30%...
- ... its relative share of the market is increasing
- So buy its shares NOW!

**So, a stylized calculation** 25

- [...] **This implied a growth in Cremonini's market share.**
- Ce qui se traduit **en fait** par une croissance de la part de marché de Cremonini.
- Why, « en fait »?
- For those (like me, at first), who didn't get it firsthand
- NB: could also be « donc », depending on how maths-savvy your readers are

**Hence, the translation**

- Use reality as a sieve between source and target document
- This is the essence of pragmatic translation
- To do that...
- ... inquire about your readers' system of values
- How do they see (and measure) the world?

**Yes, context and  
communication!**

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- Also in the USA the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standard [...] forecast reaching and maintaining a standard of **55.2 miles per American gallon (mpg) in 2025**.
- Miles to kilometers; gallons to liters: that's the easy part
- But it would still be useless on the European continent...
- Toujours aux États-Unis, la norme *Corporate Average Fuel Economy* (CAFE) [...] prévoit de plafonner durablement la consommation d'essence à **4,261 litres pour 100 kilomètres** (soit **55,2 miles par gallon, mpg**) à partir de 2025.

## **Another example**

- Including orders of magnitude
- Sopra has just announced the acquisition of Organizacion Guver, **a small Spanish company. This company (EUR6m, 120 employees) is based in Bilbao and Barcelona and is specialised in banking, industry and government.**
- Two traps orders of magnitude can help us overcome
- Sopra vient d'annoncer l'achat de l'Espagnol Organizacion Guver. Installée à Bilbao et Barcelone, cette entreprise **de taille modeste (EUR 6 m, 120 salariés) est spécialisée dans les services auprès des banques, de l'industrie et des administrations publiques.**

**V. Think according to categories**



- From a linguistic universe...
- ... to a pragmatic one
- Approaching the digital by analogical means (let us remain realistic about our maths abilities...)
- Simple calculations, differentiating between stocks and flows, the works...
- Use Groucho Marx for inspiration: « Either this man is dead or my watch has stopped. » (Monkey Business, 1931)

**The stakes, here (again)**

- From categories to systems
- Whatever the domains...
- ... the basic components are similar
- Just like maths help us compute any kind of objects
- Those are unifiers: they make our life simpler (yes...)

**One step beyond...**

- Really?!
- Well, maybe not for everyone, at least at first sight
- Definitely for our authors, and readers: industrialization, forecasting, guiding action...
- Through abstract means, though...
- ... and there's the rub

**A basically reassuring universe**



- The valuation looks undemanding: P/BV 22E is 1.5x for an ROE of 17%.
- How do you read that, in the first place?
- And what can it possibly mean?
- Deconstruct!
- Everything has a precise meaning (and the second part explains the first...)



**Yet another financial example**

- The valuation looks undemanding: P/BV 22E is 1.5x for an ROE of 17%.
- La valorisation semble attrayante [**the share is unexpensive at the moment**] : le ratio cours **actuel** [**added precision, for clarity**]/actif net par action fin 2022 [**projection**] est estimé à 1,5, pour un rendement des fonds propres de 17 %.
- Complex at first, and then more and more easy:...
- ... it gets simple after a while

**And the results is...**

- Never give up on your understanding abilities!
- Not exactly the same as in literary translation...
- ... where the full meaning might never be exhausted
- In pragmatic translation, we aim at rendering the full, complete, overall intention – with full clarity
- « Traduire, pour les ciblistes, c'est prendre en compte le lecteur et produire un texte qui n'aura pas besoin d'être décrypté, car l'interprétation se fait au moment de la traduction. » (Enora Dessagnat, ILTS student, 2021-23)

**The very least, for that**

- If everything gets that simple...
- ... why would the world still need translators?
- How do we overcome this last contradiction?
- By replacing unreflective simplicity by the simplicity of expertise
- Which leads us (at last) to four conclusions

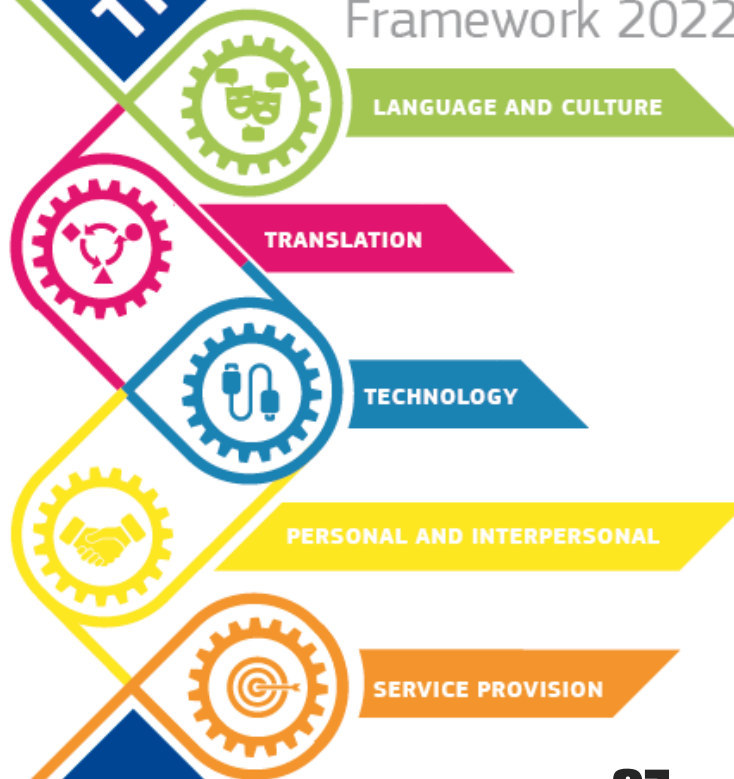
**OK, but...**

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**This is  
important!**

# EUROPEAN MASTER'S IN TRANSLATION

Competence  
Framework 2022





francebleu.fr

La reine Elizabeth II est morte

   82

7 commentaires • 25 partages



Cindy

Il est morte 🤔 c est plutôt elle est morte

10 m J'aime Répondre

**The conclusions, then**

- From translating *texts* to translating *documents*
- A whole new definition of the task
- With different compensation methods (words or hours, for instance)
- A translator is a provider of multilingual solutions

**Redefining the job at hand**

« What, then, to raise the old question once more, is mathematics? The answer, it appears, is that any argument which is carried out with sufficient precision is mathematical, and the reason that your friends and ours cannot understand mathematics is not because they have no head for figures, but because they are unable to achieve the degree of concentration required to follow a moderately involved sequence of inferences. [...]. » (Gale and Shapley, 1962, p. 15)

Remember the Romans' *tuctor*... (the one that certifies the quality of the product): that's us, today and tomorrow

# **A heuristic model**



- Pragmatic translation: all about reducing uncertainties
- Maths (including under graphic form): intrinsic clarity
- So maths offer a template for achieving clarity...
- ... both for us (translators) and for our readers
- Pragmatic translators' fantasy turned real...
- Provided you cease to be afraid of them

# **A stylistic model**

**And do not  
under any  
circumstances  
read this!**

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Nicolas Froeliger

Les noces de l'analogique  
et du numérique

*De la traduction pragmatique*



Traductologiques  
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