Bell, Roger Thomas. 1991. *Translation and translating: theory and practice*. New York: Longman.

If you are looking for a book which can provide a perfect recipe of how to translate, i.e. a prescriptive approach to translation, you had better not read *Translation and translating: theory and practice*. As the author points out in the introduction and throughout the first chapter, the present book aims at describing the process of translation, based on theoretical assumptions provided by Systemic Linguistics and Cognitive Psychology.

Therefore, the first part of the book addresses the importance of adopting a descriptive approach towards translation, emphasizing the process rather than the product. In an attempt to be consistent with this perspective, the author provides a tentative model of the translation process, and outlines "the kinds of knowledge and skill" (Bell, 1991: xvi) translators must possess. The book is divided into three parts: *model, meaning* and *form*. Bell's decision of presenting his model of translation in the very beginning of the book (chapter 2) and, in the subsequent chapters, making explicit its linguistic and psychological basis does not seem satisfactory even to him, since the reader has to keep "moving back and forth between the model and the justification" (Bell, 1991: xvii). However, as he also argues, the other possible way of organizing the book: *meaning, form* and *model* would try the patience of the reader, who might become anxious to get in contact with the proposed model. In order to mitigate the reader's task of going back and forth through the seven chapters, the author keeps indicating the respective chapters and sections

where certain subjects are introduced or further developed.

Something interesting about the book is the remarkable review of issues concerning various areas of knowledge (e.g. discourse analysis, textual linguistics, speech acts theory, semantics, artificial intelligence). This review makes the book dense and it takes a certain amount of time for the reader to process such a huge amount of information. Nevertheless, the author's subtleties — introductory paragraphs, summaries and conclusions explicitly announced in each section and chapter — make this task less difficult. Bell also presents an index at the end of the book that can help the reader to use the book as a reference material to current terminology in the broad areas of linguistics and psychology, most of which are reiterated or dealt with under different perspectives throughout the book. Obviously, these subtleties can be regarded as tiresome by a reader who is reasonably acquainted with the updated theories of translation or any other related theories. Nonetheless, the way the book is organized suggests that (as the author himself proposes) it is directed especially to those who intend to start studying the complex and not-well-theoretically-supported area of translation.

Among the controversial issues discussed in the book, the reader gets acquainted with: the ambiguity of the term translation and how such ambiguity has influenced the traditional theoretical approaches to translation; the minimal unit to be analyzed by the translator; the dichotomy of literal versus free translation (how much of the Source Language Text you can preserve or change); what should be preserved: the form or the content; how psychological and linguistic models of text processing can account for the process of translation; as well as the kinds of knowledge a translator must possess.

Another positive aspect of this book, is that it tries to present some practical examples of the theoretical aspects it develops. Most of the examples of part 1 (model) and 2 (meaning) discuss problematic aspects of translating languages like German and French into English. Some examples are the asymmetric use of pronouns among languages (e.g. French *tu* and the German *du* signalling non-politeness, and their counterparts *vous* and *Sie*, indicating politeness, versus the English *you*); different syntactic and lexical choices made by languages to realize the "Participant and Process relationships" (e.g. the use of two — *ser/estar*

[Spanish and Portuguese] — versus one verb — *be* [English] to express two types of relational processes: *intensive* and *circumstantial*); the different ways of expressing "opinions on the probability of a proposition being true and its frequency" (Bell, 1991: 146), as for example, with the use of "modal particles" such as doch in German versus intonation in English.

Altogether, the author accomplishes his main goal — to build a model of translation based on linguistic and psychological issues. Yet, as he poses it, such a model cannot be regarded as the real expression of what happens in the translator's mind while translating a text, for his model, like the translation process as a whole, "could go on forever" (Bell, 1991: 213). Another important assumption is that, among the various linguistic and social skills that make up the translator's communicative competence, Bell emphasizes the translator's "ability to recognize the alternatives that are available in the original, the choices that can be found in the target language and the realization that choices foreclose others" (p.72).

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