Neither Morpheme nor Transleme …
Revisiting the Unit of Translation, Semiotically

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Abstract

Against the background of the disparities and disagreements across the spectrum of theory and practice about the unit of translation (UT), the purpose of this paper is to postulate that a semiotically - defined UT can fulfil the need of a concrete, viable and stable UT. Labelled textlet, the proposed UT is based on the semiotic triad of the sign, its meaning and its user. As a semiotic sign, textlet represents a particular meaning on the basis of similarity or dissimilarity to other textlets within the text. A textlet is a functional unit with an oppositional value defined by the communicative differences this opposition is capable of producing within texts.

Keywords: semiotics, textlet, semiotic triad, Unit of translation

Introduction

Though the study of translation has made significant strides over the past three decades or so, the issue that still causes controversy amongst translation theorists concerns the definition of a concrete and plausible unit of translation (hereafter, UT). The controversy relates to the search for answers to the question 'what should the UT be?' in terms of its nature and size. There are many reasons for the disagreement about the concept and definition of a UT but there are possibly four main ones:

1)   The heavy dependency of translation theory on linguistic procedures and inventories.
2)   The complexity of the frameworks of text analysis and the difficulty of relating them to translation.
3)   The indeterminacy inherent in the notion of equivalence which has long prevailed in translation theory.
4)   The almost complete exclusion of semiotics from translation theory.

Overall, the issue of the UT has been left to the intuitiveness and instinctiveness of translators, and when definitions are provided, they are usually based on particular theoretical frameworks (Ballard, 2010) and most have not received wide acceptance and/or currency (Huang & Wu, 2009). In the main, UT has been defined at the smaller ranks of language. Vinay & Darbelnet (1995: 21), for example, postulate "the smallest segment of utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually."

But and as Bassnett (1991) argues the requirement for a concrete and viable definition of the UT can only be established within frameworks of translation that are capable of providing, "general principles of the process of translation that can be determined and categorized, and, ultimately, utilized in the cycle of text - theory - text regardless of the languages involved." (11).

I would agree with Bassnett (1991) and Hawkes (1977) that the first step towards the formulation of theoretical frameworks of translation that would offer useful operands and tools for the definition of a plausible UT should be to accept that, despite the fact that translation utilizes an important core of linguistic procedures, it is effectively part of semiotics. Within semiotics translation is not viewed as mere transfer of words, phrases and sentences from a source text (ST) into a target text (TT) but rather as a process of producing compatible conglomerate structures in the TT after a systematic and purposeful interpretation of the ST.

Against the background of the problems faced by students of translation and translators and the disagreements between translation theorists, my purpose in this paper is to show that the unit, I call textlet, can fulfil the need of a concrete and viable UT. The formulation of textlet is mainly semiotically oriented and based on the semiotic triad that covers the relationship between the sign, its meaning and its user. As a semiotic sign textlet represents a particular meaning on the basis of similarity or dissimilarity to other textlets within the text. My coining of textlet from 'text' and 'let' in the manner of booklet, for example, intends to show that textlet is similar to text but inferior by being smaller in both size and scope. It has the same characteristics of the text in terms of unity but its unity only exists to let the upper unity of the text materialize. Textlet can then be defined as a functional unit with an oppositional value defined by the communicative differences this opposition is capable of producing within texts. The paper first explains why morpheme or transleme definitions of UT are not viable and then textlet is introduced and elucidated.

Neither morpheme

The morpheme view of UT has been advocated by many translation theorists. Catford (1965) for example postulates that equivalence between the ST and the TT should be established at the lowest level of grammar. In the same way, Nida in his early works (1964) resorts to syntactic units within procedures like constituent analysis, phrase structure grammar and transformational grammar for translational purposes. Similarly, Newmark (1988) argues that the basic UT should be as small as possible. Though he leans towards the sentence, Newmark takes the word, more than anything else, as the ideal UT (1988:140). The ultimate aim of basing translation on the morpheme or other similar units is primarily to seek formal equivalences in the target language.

If it is assumed that the morpheme is the basic UT so why not translate morpheme for morpheme? Certainly the answer is that there are no one-to-one correspondences either between the morphemes of different languages or between the relations among the morphemes themselves. But one may argue that if more context is taken into account to choose the appropriate arrangements of morphemes in the TT that represent the same content as the ST, then why not translate them context-sensitively, but still one by one? Unfortunately this is easy said than done; it is almost impossible.

The impossibility lies in the fact that translating morphemes, even context-sensitively, would assume that all higher level structures like, words, syntagmata, clauses, sentences and texts are made up of morphemes combined in regular ways only. This is not so in human language because it would require that texts be totally decomposed down to the morpheme level and this entails full decomposability on the content side as well. The latter form of decomposability is not feasible and one would say it is impossible for it would imply the existence of limited lists of semantic relations between morphemes and if it were, it would be a clear contradiction of the infinite expressive capacity of human language. The exact semantic relations of some morpheme combinations or sets of words cannot be read from any rules or the content of their constituting elements as in the following examples,

1   die, dies, died, dead, death, deadly.
2   dead right, dead on time, *dead ugly, die hard, deadly sin, drop dead beautiful.
3   cabin air pressure.
4   ridiculous reduced prices.

For the first set of words, we can say that there is a relationship between die, dies and died but the relationship stops there. It becomes loose and difficult to establish when we move to dead, death and deadly whose meanings become dependent upon users. For sets 2, 3 and 4, one can say that it is almost impossible to derive the meanings of the structures in the sets from the mere juxtapositions of the meanings of the morphemes that constitute the structures. What is the morphemic relationship between beautiful, drop and dead put together in one construction?

It would be stating the obvious to say that languages differ and that complete symmetry between the linguistic systems of two languages is entirely coincidental. Translation involves more than finding pure linguistic correspondences in the target language and the equation of UT with linguistic categories like the morpheme. Translation involves social and semiotic dimensions which motivate and mediate choices within the linguistic system of the target language.

Though the concept of equivalence in translation has developed in a number of ways like dynamic equivalence, it still assumes the primacy of the ST and implies that the aim of translation is to primarily meet the surface characteristics of another linguistic system (see Baker, 1993).

Nor transleme
Though transleme has been around for some time, Rabadán (1991) detailing her dissatisfaction with both formal linguistic units like the morpheme and text based units such as Beaugrande's (1980) processing unit and Toury's (1980) texteme; suggests transleme as a UT. Basing her transleme on a model of translation equivalence that underlies both the ST and the TT, she defines transleme as

> ... any bi-textual unit, of any type and level, constituted by the same sense and two different but mutually binding, formal manifestations, and whose existence depends on the global relation of translation equivalence underlying every textual pair TT-ST. (p.47) (Rabadán's italics)

Rabadán's transleme certainly transcends the limits of mere linear linguistic arrangements by engaging macro textual dimensions. The transleme is also suggested as an operand for text segmentation which aims at mapping semantic configurations onto linguistic categories. But the way Rabadán defines transleme and the lack of illustrations to show how it works, points to some sort of discontinuity in the concept.

Transleme, according to Rabadán, can be of any type and level and is constituted by the same formal manifestations. This way the transleme remains without real boundaries within the text and difficult to delimit since it can take any form or shape. Moreover, the notion of 'global relation of translation equivalence' underlying the transleme as a UT is itself a major area of debate. The transleme is also said to underlie every textual pair TT-ST and here one would safely assume that this way we can end up with as many translemes as there are translation tasks. Transleme is also not abstract enough to provide the kind of principles capable of equipping translators with skills that can be transferred from one translation task to another.

This discussion, by no means exhaustive, of the morpheme and transleme oriented definitions of the UT clearly shows how the formulation of a concrete and viable UT remains a controversial issue that has exercised translation theorists for a long time and still does. The remainder of this paper attempts to show how textlet could fulfil the requirements of a plausible UT.

Textlet: A semiotic UT
I said earlier that the definition of textlet lies within semiotics. Semiotics refers to the general theory of signs taking into account both their social and logical functions. The argument which tries to limit any semiotic enquiry to the investigation of highway codes, for example, is non sequitur because the scope of semiotics is crystallized in the scope of the definition of semiotic systems as 'systems for communication' (see Mulder, 1968). Besides languages, semiotic systems embrace other systems of communication: animal communication (zoo semiotics), machine communication (cybernetics), communication of living cells (bionics), etc. Sless (1986) gives the following definition of semiotics:

Semiotics occurs whenever we stand back from our ways of understanding and communication, and ask how these ways of understanding and communication arise, what form they take, and why. (p.1)

It follows that all the constituents of the communicative environment which we either produce or receive, offer a very rich diversity but, at the same time, we always assume that these diverse constituents have something in common. It is this something in common that semiotics tries to establish by studying communication and understanding and the processes by which communication and understanding materialize. Within semiotics there is an indivisible triad of the sign, its meaning and its user and what we need for a semiotics of translation is the classification of signs into a plausible sign system compatible with the meanings users give them. For the classification of a sign system within which textlet breeds, I suggest a system that includes macro and micro signs (see figure 1). The macro signs (language and discourse) are difficult to perceive or distinguish directly but the micro signs (text and textlet) are accessible to direct and immediate processing (see Eco, 1976).

Apropos of the system shown in figure 1 two points are in order: first, the plural marker (S) after the signs discourse, text and textlet indicates that these signs can occur more than once. But one single occurrence is needed to warrant their processing as full signs. Second, the terms operate, manage and realize listed under 'function' are used here in their ordinary sense and do not refer to the meanings assigned to them within artificial intelligence or as used by Beaugrande & Dressler (1981).

Semiotic Sign	Sign Function
LANGUAGE	Potentially occurring
↕	↕
DISCOURSE(S)	Operate (s) language
↕	↕
TEXT(S)	Manage (s) discourse (s)
↕	↕
TEXTLET(S)	Realize (s) text (s)

Figure 1 **The semiotic system**

The semiotic system should be seen as an ensemble within which the signs (its constituents) exist at different levels (here levels corresponding to the signs) which are distinguished according to their position or 'point of entry' within the system. In general terms, the system attempts to integrate the four signs into a semiotic relation of inclusion: textlet is included in text, text in discourse and discourse in language.

The four signs are signifiers correlating with respective signifieds. But to this correlation should be added, as Hervey (1982) argues, a mode of signification. This mode of signification transcends the conventional relation between the signifier/signified dichotomy to a more motivated relationship. The motivated relationship is catered for by the other two parts of the semiotic triad: meaning and user or what is generally referred to as the pragmatic dimension of sign use. That is what does the sign mean and why is it used by a user to mean what it means? Before turning to the meaning and the user of the sign, a bit more about the four signs first.

Language, as a macro-semiotic sign level, represents the ensemble of all potential choices and systems available to its users (producers and receivers alike). But language is too large a sign level to be immediately accessible for processing and a more accessible sign level is required: discourse. But, discourse itself which operates language is still too seamless to make linguistic communication actual. Still discourse is an important site for analysis and represents the process of semiotics rather than the product; the product being the text. Discourse is always managed by (a) text(s) and is inseparable from it (them) and the processing of (a) text(s), by extension, refers to the processing of discourse (see Eco, 1976 and Hodge & Kress, 1988). The sign text conveys interwoven contents within discourse. The interwoven contents are represented by textlets which coexist within the text. The contents, represented by textlets, can only be defined and materialized by taking into account their pragmatic dimensions. A text can then be defined as a string of contents (equated with textlets) and is assigned its semiotic unity through a pragmatic input. The second micro-sign level, textlet, refers to a pragmatically clearly defined content within the text. Generally, textlets correlate together to realize a text and are crucial in the production and reception, including translation, of language as they enable us to parcel up the tasks of producing and/or receiving linguistic communication into manageable activities within the tasks.

For the other two parts of the semiotic triad, sign meaning and sign user, I echo the pragmatic postulate that there is an intrinsic relationship between the user and the meaning assigned to a sign. Signs become meaningful only when they are activated by their users who can be either producers with intentions to communicate or receivers with expectations to satisfy. Within the conventional signifier/signified dichotomy, a vital ingredient has been excluded. This ingredient, generally referred to as the pragmatic dimensions of sign use within modern linguistics, covers the users of the sign. And, without users there would be no signs and indeed no semiotics. But the problem is that there are no widely accepted formulations of these pragmatic dimensions of sign use since pragmatics itself remains, "the area of language study which probably at present enjoys the smallest degree of agreement as to what it includes and how to study it" (Channell, 1994:31).

Putting the disparity in the study of pragmatics aside, I use the term pragmatic purpose (PP) to refer to users' intentions and expectations which give the signs their communicative raison d'être. There are a number of classifications of PPs but for our purposes we suggest four main PPs which are adopted with modifications after Bell, 1991; Hatim & Mason, 1990; Zidatis, 1982 and Werlich, 1976. The four PPs are:

1   [+evaluative]
2   [-evaluative]
3   [(+option) instructive]
4   [(-option) instructive].

These four PPs and the signs are inextricable and to identify something as a sign is by the same token an interrogation of its meaning because it is in the nature of signs to have meaning (see Hervey, 1982). But the meaning of a sign is intrinsically related to the user of the sign and meaning and user become one. Here one could argue that for a theory of semiotics we would only need two parts namely, the sign and use with the latter embracing both the meaning and the user of the sign. But this is not the concern of this paper. It should also be pointed out here that the interaction between the meaning of a sign and its user always entails cultural and ideological dimensions. The task of translators is to look for any cultural, ideological or other colours users give or add to the meaning of a sign. Of course a text may display more than one PP because of the hybrid nature of texts but there is always one dominant PP for every text.

Decision-making in the handling and processing of text and textlet depends on the concept of completion or threshold of termination. Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) write,

> In principle there is no cut-off point where production is definitively accomplished, but at most a THRESHOLD OF TERMINATION where the producer finds the outcome satisfactory for the intended purpose. ... There would be no absolute end to reception, but rather a threshold of termination where utilization appears satisfactory. (emphasis in the original. (Pp 34-35)

A very mild example of the system outlined above can be a newspaper. Any newspaper stands for the sign language, French for example, where all of the linguistic choices are available to users. The various sections within the paper stand for the sign discourse(s) where the choices are made operational as each section within a paper normally deals with a given area: home news, international news, sports, and so on. Within each discourse (section), every article represents the sign text which manages the section/discourse. Within each text there are textlets. The classification of each sign depends on its function within the higher sign within which it is included, the dominant PP as well as the concept of threshold of termination.

Given the postulate of translation as a semiotic practice, the sign textlet is seen here as a capable concept that can fulfil the requirements of a concrete and viable UT. Seen as such, textlet establishes transitory relations in the realization of the text. A textlet dissolves within the text and relies on the linguistic code and the PP in its own realization. The aspect of singularity in the delimitation of each textlet stems from the relationships between it and other resembling and/or differing textlets or simply from its absence. The function of textlets is to communicate ideas that serve to realize the overall idea of the sign text. This way textlets assist in the articulation (breaking down) of texts into manageable constituents (i.e., textlets themselves). Textlets are also the smallest units that can have an independent material (linguistic) and pragmatic existence and follow a vertical order of subordination within texts rather than horizontal subordination order (conventional syntagmatic relations) (see Hervey, 1982).

The concept of textlet as a UT refers, at the same time, to a final product, a process and a force in the production, reception and reproduction of texts. Moreover, the raison d'être of a textlet as a UT stems from the mediating relationships it creates within texts. The mediating relationships are the successive links between different textlets, the linguistic code, the PP and the notion of completion or threshold of termination in both the production and reception of texts. But, a part of a

text is considered a textlet only if it manifests itself as a sign function by being different from other sign functions and assisting in the structuring of other sign functions (see Eco, 1976).

To elucidate the concept of textlet, texts 1 and 2 are first discussed and then ramifications for translation are outlined. Note that t = textlet, T = text and { } represent textlet boundaries within the text (note that the sources and copyrights of the 2 texts used here for demonstration could not be located. The copyrights of the sources are duly respected and acknowledged).

Text 1
Text 1 appears in its original structure as follows:

> Two years ago, when police pulled over a car in Palermo and arrested Salvatore Riina, the Mafia's 'boss of bosses,' after a manhunt that had lasted more than two decades, they believed they had dealt the Cosa Nostra a fatal blow. But last week Italians learned to their dismay that the Mafia was back-with a vengeance. Four people were murdered in Sicily by Mob hit men, bringing the number of deaths in the Mafia's latest killing spree to nine in 10 days.

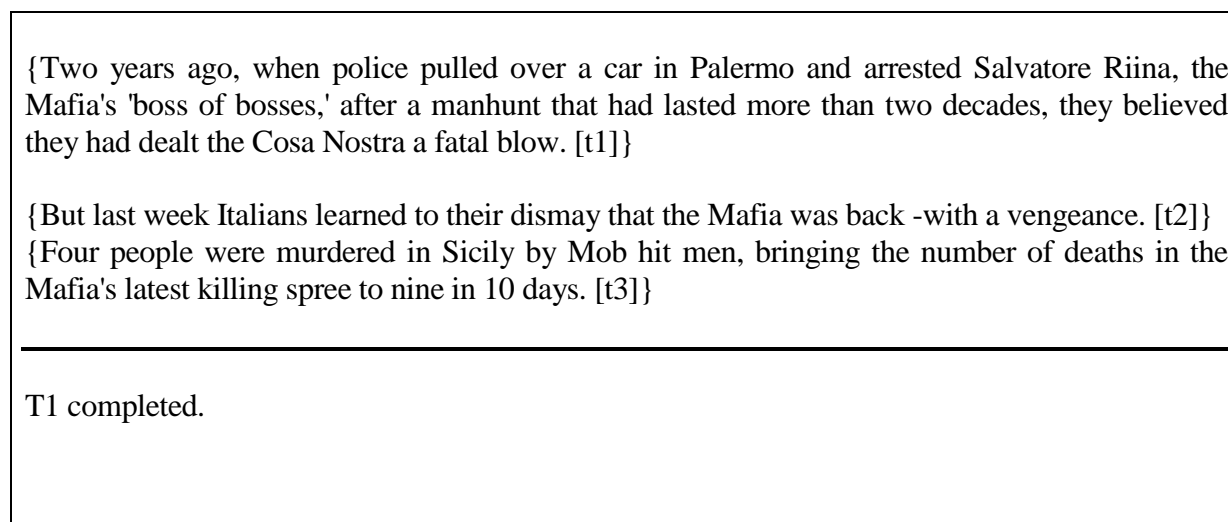An articulation (breaking down) of text 1 in terms of textlets is shown in figure 2.

{Two years ago, when police pulled over a car in Palermo and arrested Salvatore Riina, the Mafia's 'boss of bosses,' after a manhunt that had lasted more than two decades, they believed they had dealt the Cosa Nostra a fatal blow. [t1]}

{But last week Italians learned to their dismay that the Mafia was back -with a vengeance. [t2]}
{Four people were murdered in Sicily by Mob hit men, bringing the number of deaths in the Mafia's latest killing spree to nine in 10 days. [t3]}

T1 completed.

Figure 2 **Textlets of Text 1**

Text 1 makes its receivers believe that the Mafia in Italy was dealt a severe blow and probably that was the end of it. But the text changes its attitude and tone by introducing and elaborating something different: the Mafia in Italy is still 'alive and killing'. Text 1, therefore, evaluates the information it presents to the receivers and thus has a [+evaluative] PP. In order for text 1 to appropriately serve its PP, it needs a structure in terms of textlets as follows: a first textlet to function as an idea introducer, a second textlet to function as the opposer to the idea and a third and final textlet to function as the elaborator of the second textlet and concluder of the text.

Table 1. *Functions of Textlets of Text 1*

Textlet	Function
t 1	Idea: Mafia dealt a severe blow in Italy.
t 2	Anti-idea: But, Mafia back with a vengeance.
t 3	Substantiates t2 and concludes T2.

Unlike texts similar to text 1, texts that display [-evaluative] PP generally exclude any evaluation of the information they provide. A text about the history of translation in the 7th century for example, would start with a textlet setting the aspects of translation in the 7th century it covers. Succeeding textlets would each deal with one particular aspect as introduced by textlet 1 until a completion is reached.

Text 2
Text 2 appears in its original form as follows:

IBM AS/400 ADVANCED SERIES
Any changes you make won't be a shock to the system
The AS/400 is unlike any other computing system.
It was designed with change in mind. So even with today's constantly moving technology, you can keep your existing application software whenever you decide to upgrade your hardware. And you'll never have to recompile your programs - not even when we introduce 64-bit RISC next year. Who else can offer you that?
But it isn't just highly adaptable. It can save you money too: as much as 60% of your IT costs.
No wonder more and more people (275,000 and rising) use the AS/400.
It's never been easier to change the system. To find out how, call IBM on 0800 400 000.
IBM
There is a difference.

The PP of text 2 is [instructive] which is further characterized by (+option). This is because text 2 belongs to the discourse of advertising and aims at influencing and encouraging receivers to follow a given course of action. In the case of text 2 the end is to attract the receivers to the product advertised (AS/400). But receivers of text 2 and other similar ones that convey [(+option) instructive] PP are not bound to do what the text tries to make them do: they have the freedom (+option) to either phone IBM on 0800 400 000 or do nothing at all and completely disregard the text. A processing of text 2 in the manner utilized for text 1 above is given in figure 3.

{IBM AS/400 ADVANCED SERIES
Any changes you make won't be a shock to the system
The AS/400 is unlike any other computing system. [t1]}

{It was designed with change ... easier to change the system. [t2]}
{To find out how, call IBM on 0800 400 000. [t3]}
{IBM
There is a difference. [t4]}

T2 completed

Figure 3 **Textlets of Text 2**

Or, alternatively text 2 can be represented by table 2 which shows the functions of its textlets.

Table 2. *Functions of Textlets of Text 2*

Textlet	Function
t 1	Singling out the product (unlike any)
t 2	Qualities of the product
t 3	Instruction (course of action to follow)
t 4	Linking up with t1: IBM AS/400 the best

For most texts similar to text 2, four textlets are normally required to serve effectively the [(+option) instructive] PP. As table 2 shows the first textlet functions as a text opener or specifier with regard to the product; the second textlet covers the 'unique' qualities of the product generally by comparing it with other similar products; the third textlet introduces the course of action (to influence behaviour) the text producers hope the receivers would follow and the fourth and final textlet links up with the first one to reiterate and stress the superiority, excellence and uniqueness of the product. But receivers of texts like text 2 have the freedom (+option) either to opt in or out: either to follow the course of action given or not.

Texts that convey [(-option) instructive] PP include formal treaties, agreements between individuals or institutions (a bank loan agreement, for example), political and military communiqués, marriage certificates and decrees. These texts are abiding and receivers have no choice (-option) but to observe the terms covered by such texts. These texts normally need four textlets: the first textlet introduces the parties involved; the second textlets states the postulates upon which the agreements, etc. are based; the third textlet covers the articles, orders, etc. of the text and the fourth textlet concludes the text by giving details of the date, place and time of going into effect.

Given the processing of texts 1 and 2 in terms of textlets, we can notice that though the semiotic function of a textlet in a text may resemble that of other textlets, such a function should, however, be viewed as separate and independent. A textlet is a portion of the semiotic and pragmatic functions of the text and should be treated as a unity within it. If taken out of the text, a textlet still has its own meaning but needs to unite with other textlets to realize the text meaning. The delimitation of textlet does not necessarily coincide with writing conventions (paragraphing, punctuation, etc) because these conventions are not always helpful when it comes to processing the flow and logical clustering of information within textlets and by extension texts.

Ramifications for translation

What are the ramifications of textlet for translation?. Translation is a very complex activity and it would be claiming too much if one were to presume what it really involved. More safe and modest assumptions are then what one would hope to postulate. In very crude terms, translation involves two production stages and a central reception/processing stage. A text is first produced as a ST and then received by translators prior to being produced as a TT.
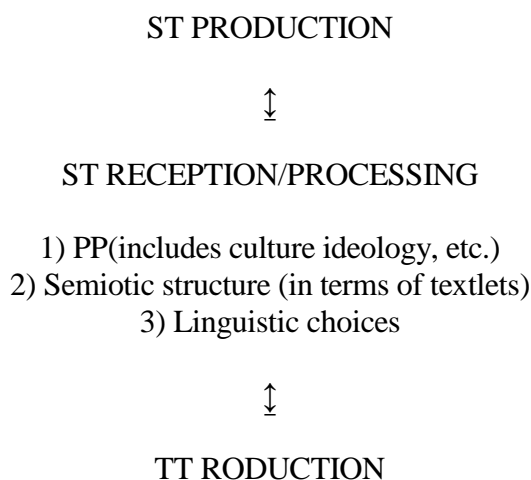

ST PRODUCTION

$\updownarrow$

ST RECEPTION/PROCESSING

1) PP(includes culture ideology, etc.)
2) Semiotic structure (in terms of textlets)
3) Linguistic choices

$\updownarrow$

TT RODUCTION

Figure 4 **Translation Stages**

As figure 4 shows, it is at the reception/processing stage that decisions are made with regard to the semiotic structure and PP allocation of the ST as well as setting hypotheses for the production of the TT. If the decisions made at the reception/processing stage are appropriate, then the transformations of the output into an input in the production of the TT would be effective. Translating a text is in effect translating a number of smaller texts (textlets) within the text. This is because, even though the text is the main end product of translation and the main unit of semiotics as Hatim & Mason (1990) argue, translation involves other mini units that go into the realization of the text. These mini units are represented by textlets and if we manage to establish a viable and plausible definition of these mini units then the translation process will be more reliable and effective. Once a ST is processed, transformations from it to a TT can be carried out keeping in mind the outcome of the processing/reception stage of the ST. In this processing each textlet is delimited in relation to other textlets within the text and the processing is aided by the codes (linguistic codes) which animate the discursive aspects of the textlet.

The treatment of texts 1 and 2 above only focuses on the processing in terms of textlets (being the main object in this paper) and no attention is given to the linguistic properties which, as mentioned earlier, animate textlets. Examples of such linguistic properties as occurring in the two texts are:

Text 1: the use of 'but' to indicate opposition ([+evaluative] PP).

Text 2: the use of comparatives and words of excellence and uniqueness such as, 'advanced series, unlike any other computing system, highly adaptable, save you money, etc.'

These linguistic properties among others certainly need to be looked at vis-à-vis the types of PP and the semiotic functions of the textlets where they occur. But the consideration of these linguistic properties should not be taken as the defining factor of textlets and their functions within texts. Such an exercise would otherwise be traditional register analysis revitalised (see Widdowson (1983) for an account of register analysis).

In their concluding chapter, Hatim & Mason (1990) stress the role of translators as mediators. But mediation without proper and effective tools cannot be established even in the spiritual sense. Translators need help to be able to mediate. They need tools that assist them arrive at appropriate decisions at the reception/processing stage. This paper attempts to show that textlet (as both an analytical and procedural UT) and given proper training can equip translators with skills that can be transferred from one translation task to another. As a semiotic sign, textlet is a functional unit with an oppositional value defined by the communicative differences this opposition is capable of producing within texts. As a UT, textlet mediates between the different 'moves' of the flow of information within texts and it should be seen as,

1)   ST oriented
2)   TT oriented
3)   process oriented
4)   embedded within an overall semiotic system for linguistic communication; and,
5)   a mediating tool.

The viability of textlet as a UT lies in the interpretations it yields when applied to translation. As such textlet could be useful in establishing principles to understand how texts are structured and help us break down these 'monster' texts into manageable but self-contained units, i.e., textlets, for effective and appropriate translation results.

Conclusion
Translation theory is still a young enterprise and the definition of a UT has caused controversy for a long time and still does. And when you add to this the fact that semiotics is itself still unfolding, textlet and the semiotic system should be seen as a modest contribution to ever changing fields of translation and semiotics. What translation now needs as Baker (1993) argues, is a move away from individual and scattered research to 'powerful generalisations' so that the distinction between the theoretical and applied sides of the discipline can become clearer and more interactive. In this line of argument, this paper argues for a semiotically defined UT: textlet. Textlet acquires its

plausibility from the communicative differences it represents within texts. But the paper is primarily a mere attempt towards establishing a semiotic perspective for translation and its UT with both theory and application in mind.

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