Herding together: On semiotic-translational branches, fields, and disciplines

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Those 'who pursue a given branch herd together. They understand one another; they live in the same world, while those who pursue another branch are for them foreigners.' This quote summarizes how Charles S. Peirce not only characterized researchers in 1903, but also described how to classify different scientific branches. In the same Peircean vein, the article focuses on the essence of disciplinary fields and boundaries, and poses the question of whether semiotic translation research constitutes a field in which researchers understand each other and share the world of research both theoretically and methodologically. Semiotic approaches to translation can be divided into two: they contribute either to the semiotics of translation or to semiotic Translation Studies – a distinction that reflects the primary disciplinary adherence. Consequently, the question of herding-together-and-understanding is approached from two vantage points in search of a common ground: is it translation or semiotics as a discipline or a methodology that should be the combining factor? Evidence of reciprocal influence and understanding in general or the need for it is discussed with emphasis on five claims concerning the nature of the semiotics of translation.

Introduction

'Living doubt is the life of investigation,' maintains Charles Sanders Peirce (*CP* 7.315 = *W3*: 18; 1872). He believes that what prompts the kind of research and inquiry that settles an opinion or a belief are the following: a real, irritating doubt, a breach of an existing regularity, a discontinuation in expectations, a puzzling sign, and a surprise. Yet another potential catalyst for investigation and thinking is a feeling of growing perplexity and uncertainty. Investigation in turn leads to learning. And if learning is the main objective, then Peirce (*CP* 1.135; c. 1899) advises us 'not be satisfied with what you already incline to think.' It is thus advisable to rethink and re-evaluate your beliefs, at least occasionally. In the present article, the object of rethinking and critical review is the state-of-the-art confluence between semiotic views and translation, and the purpose of my contribution is to enhance disciplinary self-awareness and self-scrutiny.

Peirce also held that those 'who pursue a given branch herd together. They understand one another; they live in the same world, while those who pursue another branch are for them foreigners.' This quote (*CP* 1.99; c. 1896) reveals how Peirce perceived not only scientists, but also the diverse scientific branches. Following up on Peirce's observation, my article focuses on the nature of existing semiotic-translational domains and disciplines with their somewhat varying boundaries, and poses

the question of whether those who combine translation and semiotic approaches belong to a field in which researchers understand each other and share a common world of inquiry, both theoretically and methodologically.

However, we have to be aware of certain paradoxes. First, the existence of an academic discipline requires the erection of estranging boundaries, entailing certain inherent obstacles to reciprocal understanding. Second, some level of consensus concerning the justification of a discipline must exist; in other words, a discipline must be able to provide answers to questions that no other discipline addresses. Finally, in addition to unique research objects, a discipline is expected to develop a methodology of its own, even though methods can also be borrowed and modified. Translation Studies is an example of an interdisciplinary field, often described as an interdiscipline (see e.g. Snell-Hornby 2006: 70-72).

Disciplinary boundary-clearing is an instrument for separating those who herd together and represent the same branch from those who do not. The result of boundary-clearing is not always problem-free, and this applies also to semiotic-translational research. If Translation Studies exists as a discipline in its own right, do translation scholars have sole control over translation-related research and, correspondingly, do semioticians have the sole right to sign-theoretical studies? Boundaries, in all cases, seem to grant the right to stake out exclusive disciplinary territories. A familiar means of boundary-preserving gatekeeping is the academic quality-control mechanism of peer reviews, where the major objective is to get a manuscript accepted and ensure a researcher is acknowledged for his or her research.

 The question of boundaries can also be posed in a different manner: What do translation scholars think of the fact that semioticians and literature researchers conduct research on translation and translating? The reverse is a pertinent question, as well: what do linguists or literature researchers think of translation researchers who examine translated language and literature, conducting translation-related research using theoretical models derived from linguistics and literature? There is one final question, perhaps the most intricate and delicate of all: Contrary to what one might expect of the independent discipline of Translation Studies, does the state of translation-theoretical research attest to the fact that the field has not fully succeeded in developing its own unique methods and thus establishing its disciplinary integrity, so that, translation studies continue, in effect, to be contributions to other disciplines, for instance, to applied linguistics, comparative literature or cultural studies?

Given that these boundaries exist, we must cope with them, and, if need be, cross them regardless of the consequences. If you cross these boundaries in your inquiry, it follows that you are no longer in the place you set off from. In other words, if a scholar adopts methods from literary studies, will he or she then become a literature researcher, or does a particular choice of method only constitute a necessary yet *temporary* crossing? The pioneers of Translation Studies came from other disciplines, but the question is whether their boundary-crossing involves a *permanent* relocation. Furthermore, is a linguist who writes about translating unavoidably a translation researcher, or is every translation researcher, despite his or her education, also a linguist?

Boundary-crossing is prompted by the need to find suitable intellectual surroundings and the most appropriate frame of reference for one's inquiry. In many cases, this process is not so much a question of choice as of drifting or even of chance encounters. Boundary-crossing can also stem from other circumstances. For instance, a researcher can assess his or her own resources and limits as a test of courage, something comparable to a leap in the dark, into something unknown – a new way of thinking and acting. Alternatively, a researcher can aim at probing the resources and limits of other researchers and scholars, provoking and forcing them to spell out what they consider acceptable within a particular discipline.

To summarize our introductory remarks, several factors can be considered to be decisive in terms of what constitutes a unified branch. These factors include the research object, the method, the overall approach, the surrounding research community and its stance, and the researcher's view of his or her own academic identity.

Disciplinary divisions and fields

We can describe how semiotic views have been used in research on translation in a variety of ways. In the following, I will provide one interpretation of the state of the art (for a different and more comprehensive account see Hartama-Heinonen 2008).

The key approaches I wish to map here are *semiotic translation research*, or *semiotic approaches to translation*. With this clarification I signal my main emphasis and my disciplinary framework. These approaches can be further divided into two: they contribute either to the <u>semiotics</u> *of translation* (*semiotics and translation*; *semiotranslation; semio-translation*; *translation semiotics*; or *trans-semiotics*) or to semiotic <u>*translation studies*</u> (*semiotic approaches to Translation Studies*). This fundamental twofold distinction reflects the choice of the primary disciplinary adherence and starting point and this is often a cause of the current twilight state.

Within *Translation Studies* (TS), translation has been approached through its products, processes, agents, and contexts. Further subdivisions are quite possible. For example, important questions arise such as whether or not translating concerns natural languages, whether translations are human-made or machine-aided or whether the translators are professional. The field has undergone a dynamic development since its introduction in the 1950s, and can demonstrate a variety of paradigms as well as interdisciplinary approaches that are currently in use and I have included the semiotic ones among them (see Figure 1):

Research objects	Paradigm candidates	Approaches and theories (chronology) **1950** 1960 **1970** 1980 1990 2000 **2010**
Products Processes Agents Contexts	Linguistic Cultural Cognitive Sociological Technological Semiotic	Linguistic theories 　　　Communicative theories 　　Semiotic perspectives 　　　　Functionalist theories 　　　　　　*Translatorisches Handeln* 　　　　　*Skopos* theory 　　　　Cognitive theories 　　　　　Manipulation School 　　　　　　Descriptive Translation Studies 　　　　　　Postmodern tendencies 　　　　　　Multimodal perspectives 　　　　　　Pragmatics of translation 　　　　　　Sociology of translation 　　　　　　　Non-Western approaches 　　　　　　　Critical Translation Studies 　　　　　　　Translator Studies

Figure 1. Paradigms, approaches, and theories (an updated version of Hartama-Heinonen 2010: 71).

It is evident from this table that scholars engaged in translation-theoretical issues have been quite successful. First, they have succeeded in the very creation of this field of knowledge, and through its diversity, they have put it firmly on the map, demonstrating that it is relevant, necessary and well-founded. Second, they have succeeded in keeping the field relatively updated, and in doing so, proved that TS possesses the capacity for continuous renewal. However, the capacity for updating and renewal are both relative features. We need to bear in mind the interdisciplinary nature of translation studies, in that this field draws the power and energy for creating something new from other disciplines, just as the moon borrows its light from the sun. This observation also applies to the semiotics of translation, which needs semiotic perspectives and methods in order to succeed and develop. In both cases, the borrowings may result in theoretical and methodological refinements and innovations, even breakthroughs.

Semiotics has general, comparative, and applied forms. It focuses on the conditions, functions, and structures of signs and sign processes, on signs in general and all life systems as well as on the

diverse types of communication, information exchange, and sign usage (Posner 1987: ix). Semiotics – a discipline since the 1960s – is an approach, a methodology, a metalanguage, and furthermore, the 'international language of scholars' (NU). Concerned with all types of signs, sign systems, and semiotic practices, semiotics is, in fact, interested in everything. That is why semiotics may be referred to as an umbrella discipline, covering all other disciplines, but not a homogenous field of knowledge.

The role of translation in semiotics emerges as the *semiotics of translation* (SofT) or *translation semiotics*, both designations adopted by translation semioticians. Contrary to semiotic branches such as visual, legal, literary, educational, and bio- or zoosemiotics, translation semiotics has failed to receive significant acknowledgement within semiotics (see Hartama-Heinonen 2008: 70) – something that SofT can hopefully change in the future. Drawing on semiotic mainstream theories, SofT has been able to advance without any commitment to the achievements of Translation Studies. A translation-semiotic approach is anchored in semiotic fields that are philosophical (Peirce, Morris), linguistic/ sociosemiotic (Saussure), cultural (Lotman), post-structuralist (Barthes, Derrida), and existential (or neosemiotic; Tarasti). These and many other approaches to semiotics constitute the shared ground and thus, the common language of translation semioticians (TS has likewise sought to establish a shared ground, but has not had much success, see the debate in the journal *Target* 1/2000–1/2002).

While there is semiotic research on translation within both TS and SofT, the overall visibility of this approach is not noteworthy. As a whole, semiotic translation research has not proved to be sufficiently progressive (or aggressive) and therefore it needs to demonstrate increasing field-internal critique and build up its self-awareness and future more actively. As for now, critical voices and explanations can be found elsewhere.

Critical views on multidisciplinary approaches

Some decades ago, André Lefevere (1993: 229-230) warned of the three interdependent childhood diseases of translation studies: researchers reinventing the wheel, not having made themselves properly acquainted with earlier studies within their field, and ignoring the history of their discipline (naturally these diseases are not unique because they are also found in other fields of knowledge). Briefly stated, due to researchers' possible lack of dedication and adequate knowledge, there are certain inherent problems in inquiry.

The combination of translation and translation-theoretical and/or semiotic thought constitutes multidisciplinarity. Kirsten Malmkjær, another translation scholar, refers to the problems concerning multidisciplinarity, the first one of them, unsurprisingly, that of:

> 'a little knowledge': for a translation scholar to achieve a sufficient command of another discipline to be able to draw profitably on it, is obviously just as difficult as it is for a scholar from another discipline to reach a sufficient level of understanding of Translation Studies to be able to contribute to it (or draw on it in their own discipline). (Malmkjær 2000: 165)

While a researcher can borrow an entire theory or only a single tool for a descriptive, explanatory, or investigative purpose, Malmkjær (ibid. 166-167) recommends the latter alternative. Borrowings may profit not only Translation Studies, but also, as Malmkjær adds, the feeder discipline. This is a circumstance that must be taken into account if the aim is to promote a particular field. The aforementioned quote demonstrates how demanding it is to conduct multidisciplinary research. It might, however, be difficult to pinpoint what this 'sufficient command of another discipline' consists of. Besides, this requirement must also concern the examiners, evaluators, reviewers, editors, and so on of any academic multidisciplinary contribution, because they must also have 'a sufficient level of understanding' to be able to assess contributions made to the field.

Malmkjær addresses some of the questions that I have discussed above, and appears to be rather confident about emerging multidisciplinary views:

> Researchers are generally aware of the need to keep translation as such clearly in focus, and these days most are professional translation scholars, rather than, for example professional linguists [...]. Nevertheless, it has, not unnaturally, become increasingly common for translation scholars to concentrate on the interaction between Translation Studies and one particular feeder discipline, so that there are now a number of quite distinct approaches to translation. This situation represents a natural and healthy division of labour, and there is really no need, in general, for proponents of the different approaches to consider themselves competitors: each approach contributes valuable insights to the entire body of knowledge which makes up the discipline of Translation Studies. (Malmkjær 2000: 165)

Malmkjær's views are particularly intriguing in our context because she explicitly refers to translation as a specific case and also mentions semiotics:

> But what is interesting is that, as far as I am aware, none of the scholars mentioned here have expressed much interest in what is special to translation, that is, in what translation does *not* share with the non-translational case, but has over and above it; this may not seem an obviously interesting question from a philosophical, literary or even linguistic point of view, but it is deeply interesting from the point of view of Translation Studies. The question is why it should not seem interesting from the philosophical, literary or linguistic point of view. Compare the relationship between semiotics and linguistics, for example: here it is quite clear that linguistics goes one step further than semiotics in concentrating on what is special to the *linguistic* sign – on what language has that other semiotic systems do not have – and I don't think that any discipline that acknowledged its relationship to linguistics would neglect to pay attention to language. (Malmkjær 2000: 168; emphases in original)

A Peircean-semiotic orientation to translation is, in fact, more interested in the features that interlingual translation as a product and process shares with other conceivable translational activities. In other words, what is specific becomes highlighted and understood against the background of what is common and general. In this respect, nothing is non-translational: translation, in all its possible forms, is a manifestation of a universal mechanism referred to as *semiosis* (dynamic sign action and sign interpretation). *Semiosis* can be defined as 'the general phenomena of sign processes'. Furthermore, it can be argued that '*everything that is is sign,* that whatever anything is other than its being a sign, it is also a sign' (Merrell 1996: 304, x; emphasis in original). A *sign*, in turn, 'is something by knowing which we know something more' (*CP* 8.332; 1904), 'a vehicle conveying into the mind something from without' (*CP* 1.339; n.d.). The fact that the translative *semiosic* mechanism is ubiquitous justifies the semiotics of translation as a semiotic pursuit and a joint intellectual adventure – any other interpretation and emphasis would not be meaningful. But Malmkjær somehow feels uncomfortable when translation is studied by another discipline using other methods:

> But when translation is the notion that is being borrowed, attention is absurdly directed away from Translation Studies and into the neighbouring disciplines: the pretence is that important questions about language, meaning, reading, writing, or whatever are now going to be illuminated by discussing them in translation-theoretic terms – only as there is no attempt at finding out just what those terms might be, a rather different effect is in fact achieved: it is taken for granted that the aforementioned important questions are questions of translation; in other words, the other discipline defines Translation Studies to suit its own purposes by imposing upon it its own questions. (Malmkjær 2000: 168-169)

We can turn this issue of whom the questions of translation properly belong to upside down: (translation) semioticians may feel uncomfortable observing how semiotics, semiotic questions and achievements are addressed within Translation Studies. Research on multimodal phenomena could be an example of this. For many scholars, multimodality is the same as semiotics, and often reduced to cover the visual mode. For example, the linguist and semiotician Roman Jakobson (1966 [1959]: 233) introduced the analytical and particular typology to translation research, translational multimodality *avant la lettre*: the 'three ways of interpreting a verbal sign'. As a translation theoretician and a translation semiotician, he was a forerunner, although a neglected one. In 2008, I remarked that multimodality 'hardly establishes a foothold in translation studies through semiotics, via the inter-semioticity inherent in Jakobson's typology or otherwise. Rather, the breakthrough into translation studies comes with the help of linguistics, which is not static, but a continuously developing field.' (Hartama-Heinonen 2008: 75-76). But the cornering had actually started far earlier, via Halliday, systemic functional linguistics SFL, and sociolinguistics, also known as social semiotics:

> Translation has been on the systemic functional research agenda for a long time [...]. Halliday (1956) drew attention to the significance of choice in translation, highlighting the value of the thesaurus as a lexical resource supporting choices in machine translation, and Catford's (1965) 'linguistic theory of translation', based on the systemic functional theory of that period, has become a classic. In that sense, translation studies is not a 'new direction' in SFL. (Matthiessen 2009: 41; see also, 21, 41-42)

As we know, SFL has provided linguistics with the impulse and opportunity to expand toward issues and phenomena of communication that have a linguistic core but simultaneously reach beyond the verbal realm, approaching combinations of diverse verbal, visual, and acoustic modes – in other words, semiotic modes and resources (on multimodality, see e.g. Kress 2010).

Critical voices similar to those above can be heard even within semiotics. Eero Tarasti (1991: 85) discussed the attitudes that some semioticians had during the 1980s toward researchers who *immigrate* from their own disciplines to semiotics without being (or becoming) semioticians proper. The danger was said to be that semiotic concepts then become too easily borrowed and employed, which has an impact on the quality of semiotic studies in general. Even here we encounter a lack of necessary background knowledge, and this lack can be observed within translation-semiotic studies as well – a cause for misunderstandings and disputes and an apparent sign of 'not-herding-together.' But as I have already maintained, this is also the danger in interdisciplinary Translation Studies; translation scholars might not be sufficiently well-informed about the disciplines whose ideas and concepts they apply or review. Therefore, whichever approach is selected, it is advisable to master the relevant terms, concepts, and methods.

Tarasti (ibid.), however, poses two questions that are highly relevant and logical in the context of the present article: Who is in a position to determine the borderline between good or bad semiotics? Who defines what is true or false semiotics? Tarasti's own position is that such boundary-clearing might only result in doctrinal disputes.

Translation-semiotic challenges

Henri Broms (2004: 103) presents a compelling analysis of Finnish semiotics that may also shed light on semiotics in translation studies. According to Broms, semioticians are Schopenhauerian *Selbstdenkers* and academically misunderstood. Semiotic works hardly benefit these independent thinkers, so their policy has instead been to export semiotic ideas to other disciplines. Although Broms focuses on the Finnish situation, I believe that the policy he identifies applies also to translation semioticians, and explains why and how they *also* contribute to Translation Studies. Moreover, it should be remem-

bered that the contributions of translation semioticians can be pioneering within both translation studies and/or within general or applied semiotics.

Another compelling statement was written by Tarasti as early as 1996 (1996: 14-15; see also the first chapter of Tarasti's *Existential semiotics* 2000). Tarasti (2000: 3) very clearly describes the position and dilemma that any semiotician faces today: first-generation semioticians such as Peirce, Greimas, or Sebeok, have become the classics of the field, whereas the second generation that includes Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva, and Eco, has relegated the classical semiotic foundation to the background without being able to propose new semiotic theories. Tarasti attempts to demonstrate that there is an apparent and immediate need for new answers and strategies. For Tarasti, the answer lies in third-generation neo-semiotics, represented by his own doctrine of existential semiotics. It must be noted, however, that Tarasti [2000: vii] does not reject the achievements of the classics of semiotics, but maintains, instead, that their findings must 'be preserved as an essential part of the semiotic heritage' in the present millennium.

In the following quote, Tarasti begins to draft the framework of the much-needed new semiotic theory, a theory that, according to him, not only enhances semiotics, but engages with and answers to the needs of the modern world characterized by constant change and flow:

> Is it possible that by enriching first-generation semiotics, by adding there, perhaps, the Heideggerian 'timefilter,' we might construct a new approach? Or shall we completely reject the old sign theories and rebuild them on a radically new basis? If the answer to the last question is 'yes,' then why should we continue speak of 'semiotics' at all? There are, naturally, schools that persist in believing that things are this or that because Peirce or Greimas said so, and not because things *are* so. Every now and then, the semiotician wandering around the world meets such sectarians who, like the Amish people in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, strive to maintain their doctrine untouched. I am afraid they have become the 'arteriosclerosis' of semiotic circulation. Semiotics has to be renewed if it wants to preserve its position on the vanguard of thought. (Tarasti 2000: 4; emphasis in original)

Probably the most influential semiotic approach to translation and simultaneously the most comprehensive semiotic translation theory thus far – the *semiotranslation* introduced by Dinda L. Gorlée (1994) – is essentially based on the work of Charles S. Peirce. My own research has also contributed to Peirce scholarship, semiotics, and Translation Studies. This is why Tarasti's standpoint provides food for thought for those who base their research on Peirce: 'There are, naturally, schools that persist in believing that things are this or that because Peirce or Greimas said so, and not because things *are* so.' This is why Peircean translation scholars must be particularly careful not to justify their theoretical findings, or for that matter, empirical findings simply in terms of Peirce's views, even if their research draws on Peirce. My own approach relies on the type of evidence (if theoretical constructions and arguments can be considered as evidence) that attempts to demonstrate that, ultimately, things are so, that they can be seen or described in a certain, Peircean way. In this context, Peirce is neither an authority nor a justifier, nor are his interpreters doctrine-preservers. On the contrary, applied Peirce studies aim at finding support for Peirce's ideas, which are by no means considered final or unequivocal, but rather continuously updated and therefore put to the test to prove their validity in new areas and new contexts, such as the field of translation.

This is in fact what Peirce himself emphasized. His overall goal was:

> to outline a theory so comprehensive that, for a long time to come, the entire work of human reason, in philosophy of every school and kind, in mathematics, in psychology, in physical science, in history, in sociology, and in whatever other department there may be, shall appear as the filling up of its details. (*CP* 1.1; 1898)

It is this filling-up that Peircean semiotranslation scholars achieve for their part. However, we must work hard to avoid misunderstandings within disciplines and debates about how to justify research and what types of arguments are acceptable within semiotics on the one hand, and within translation semiotics on the other.

Toward more unified discourses on the semiotics of translation

We have thus far touched upon issues which are relevant to the theme of *translation in semiotics* and provide a framework for my article. The relation, and perhaps a hidden tension, between Translation Studies and translation semiotics may have its impact on those who approach translation through their use of semiotic tools; this tense relation may result in a situation that prevents mutual understanding and thus interaction and dissemination of research results between disciplines and even across and beyond them. This section focuses more clearly on translation semiotics, although with relevant references to Translation Studies. The topic remains the same: do the researchers understand each other, is the field theoretically and methodologically homogeneous enough, and what might be the obstacles that reduce uniformity and slow down or even hinder development?

The following discussion stems from some of the aspects that have been discussed earlier. By way of an introduction, I will present two approaches to Translation Studies that are emphasized by translation scholars. For translation semiotics, however, they will serve as a potential mirror image. The first is a position advocated by Lefevere who (1993: 230) considered that 'Translation studies would greatly benefit from a more unified discourse, one which all researchers in the field might view as relevant, if not immediately central, to their own endeavor.' As a means of achieving this, Lefevere (ibid.) suggests the following three factors: that this unified discourse should be culture-based, conform to scientific expectations, and result in knowledge-advancement – general factors and requirements that can certainly be extended to refer to any translation-semiotic discourse. The second approach relates to diverse fields of knowledge and, with respect to translation semiotics, leads to the following questions: For whom are the findings of a discipline ultimately intended and who ought to acknowledge them? This issue is beyond the scope of this article, but must be mentioned nevertheless because it is relevant. Kaisa Koskinen (2010: 18-24) has proposed four sociology-inspired subfields for Translation Studies. The first subfield (*professional/scientific TS*) concentrates on scientific research results, the second (*critical TS*) continuously investigates and questions the foundations of the discipline, and the third (*policy/pragmatic TS*) takes into account extra-academic actors and agents and whenever the outcome proves to be successful, develops translational practice. The fourth area (*public TS*) is concerned with furthering public dialogue and widening the scope beyond scholarship:

> No matter how interesting findings scientific Translation Studies can unearth, no matter how sharply critical Translation Studies reflects on the foundations of TS research programmes and on the state of the art in the professional world, none of this is of much value unless we are able to communicate these beyond our own small cadre of TS scholars. (Koskinen 2010: 23)

While the dialogue aims at reaching out to the extra-academic and designated public, it can also have other objectives, 'a sustained dialogue with neighbouring disciplines might have spared us some misunderstandings,' the conclusion being that 'as a discipline we cannot matter to others unless we communicate with them' (ibid.). As we see, Koskinen's attitude is conciliatory, and she prefers dialogue across scientific boundaries, as this type of dialogue lies in the disciplines' own interests. In my view, the semiotics of translation has not yet succeeded in establishing a dialogue with its neighbors, and this has resulted in a permanent need for self-evaluation within the discipline. The

present article strives to promote this process of self-assessment (for an earlier assessment, see Hartama-Heinonen 2008: 25-80).

In the following, I will present five partly interdependent claims and interpretations of the state of the art. These interpretations, reconsidered and complemented by relevant clarifications and actions, should eventually contribute to a more unified discourse and an advanced reciprocal understanding within the semiotics of translation. In the long run, this development might also extend to how translation semiotics and its achievements will be received and approached within Translation Studies and vice versa.

Semiotics is both too all-inclusive and too fuzzy as a concept.

Semioticians analyze the life of signs. In Peirce's words, 'the life we lead is a life of signs' (unpublished manuscript 1334: 46, 1905, as cited in Gorlée 2007: 218). Consequently, semioticians work with the signs of life, they share their lives with signs, and furthermore, like all interpreters, they give life to signs. From this perspective, semiotics appears to be an all-encompassing discipline; in the broadest understanding of semiotics and translation-semiotics, anything can be a sign and become translated. However, in order to complete its semiotic signhood, a sign must meet certain criteria, namely, representability and interpretability/translatability. In other words, a sign must be able to represent its object, to address the mind of an interpreter, and to determine an interpretant or a chain of interpretants, thus producing an interpretation and a translation which is 'perhaps a more developed sign' (*CP* 2.228; c. 1897). All in all, it would seem that a researcher in the field of semiotics must possess a deep commitment to the cause of semiotics – admittedly, a very ideal picture that more or less equates semiotics with a lifestyle.

On the other hand, it is no easy task to define semiotics from a more restricted and even individual viewpoint. Tarasti (1990: 10) has claimed that there are almost as many approaches to semiotics as there are semioticians. From this orientation, nearly every semiotician creates his or her own sign theory. To conclude, an outsider can experience semiotics as a fuzzy, vague, and elusive concept and rather monolithic in its comprehensiveness.

Semiotics cannot, however, be whatever one wants it to be. This became evident when *The semiotics of subtitling* by Zoé de Linde and Neil Kay (1999) was reviewed in two translation studies journals by a translation semiotician (Gorlée and Heikkinen 2003) and by a translation scholar (Mason 2003). These reviewers found next to nothing in the book that could be called proper semiotics, if semiotics at all. In brief, all that is presented or referred to as *semiotic(s)* does not have to be semiotic(s) or accepted as such (see Gideon Toury's definition of translation: 'any target-language utterance which is *presented* or *regarded* as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds' [Toury 1985: 20; my emphases]).

Used by non-semioticians as well, the terms *semiotics* or *semiotic* are merely words, and do not necessarily reveal anything about the user's further commitments to sign-theoretical views. In the same manner, semioticians can refer to *multimodality* or *multisemiotics* without committing themselves to systemic-functional or other approaches. To avoid a flavor of fuzziness and pseudo-semiotics, *semiotics* must be given a relevant meaning-content both within semiotics and by semioticians, and this definition has to bring added value and advantage to a study which in turn advances semiotic knowledge-creation (see Lefevere's view above). Moreover, semiotics as an approach, a methodology, and a language must constitute the unifying factor for translation semiotics.

The translation-semiotic conception of translation is both too comprehensive and too narrow.

In order to be faithful to its semiotic mission, the semiotics of translation needs to address questions that refer to all types of translating and translations. To accomplish this, translation must be assigned the widest possible definition, as maintained above. It is important that this definition in-

cludes all conceivable types of translative actions, and not only the most obvious, the *interlingual* type, or *translation proper*, as Jakobson (1966 [1959]) described it. This semiotic view of translation as the translation of any sign, or *sign* translation, presents certain problems that are readily observed. Namely, it is not always easy to convince researchers, particularly those who are not semiotically oriented, of such an all-embracing concept of translation, the idea that 'translation is translation and beyond.' Many researchers consider this type of definition to be too wide and general and, as an all-encompassing approach, exceedingly vague: translating must be studied as a manifestation or representation of something particular and special. But generality and recursiveness constitute a Peircean-semiotic category and thereby, a distinctly semiotic starting point.

Surprisingly, a parallel tendency of widening conceptions, from a purely linguistic direction to one that is more semiotic, can be observed in Translation Studies. For example, almost thirty years ago, André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett (1995 [1990]: 12) considered that Translation Studies had refined its research object: a translation is approached in its own context of signs from the source and target cultures, so that the discipline 'has been able to both utilize the linguistic approach and *to move beyond* it' (my emphasis). The same idea of 'moving beyond' is expressed by Mary Snell-Hornby (2006: 85) when she refers to multimedial, multimodal, multisemiotic, and audiomedial texts as texts that 'go "beyond language".' Liisa Tiittula and Maija Hirvonen (2015: 252) share this view, arguing that translation is traditionally defined as translating a verbal message into another language. But today, as texts increasingly consist of oral, written, visual, kinesic, and other alternative modalities, translators must take into consideration other sign systems beyond the mere verbal one; a narrow conception of translation does not fulfill current needs (ibid.).

These statements remind us of how translation semiotics has, from the very beginning, considered its domain to be what Jakobson (1966 [1959]) described as the three ways of interpreting verbal signs: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation. The crucial and pioneering message in Jakobson's proposal was the idea that the sign systems involved in a translation can be either verbal or non-verbal. Contrary to Jakobson's position, which originally focused on verbal signs, translation semiotics is often presented as a field that only concentrates on one type, intersemiotic translation, so that this field is simultaneously both comprehensive and narrow in its definition of translation, its research object. But the relationship with intersemiotic translation has also been given another, semiotranslation-theoretical interpretation. Semiotranslation was, from early on, intended to focus on intersemiotic translation and sign processes, and consequently all possible intersemioses. In other words, the objective was to focus on translations between verbal and non-verbal sign systems and, furthermore, on those translations that do not involve a language at all (Gorlée 1994: 226). What is decisive here is what we want to include in our conception of *intersemiotic*.

The scope of the semiotics of translation is too wide and therefore translation semiotics is, as a concept, too vague.

The discussion above demonstrates that the scope of translation semiotics is wide. It is so wide, in fact, that it might be impossible for translation semioticians to investigate all that could now be included in its realm. While such a project may appear exceedingly ambitious, the problems arising from narrowness become evident in the light of another definition.

In his *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (1975), Anton Popovič introduces conceptions that can be regarded as visionary. Popovič (1975: 12, 16 and 17) refers, for instance, to the *linguistics of translation,* which is concerned with the linguistic levels of translations (this designation has not gained currency in TS), and to the *sociology of translation,* which 'explores translation as a fact of social and cultural consciousness' (a designation frequently used today). The following entry is likely the first definition of *semiotics of translation* ever introduced:

> *Semiotics of Translation.* The semiotic nature of the translation process. Translation is, in relation to the author's literary activity, a derived secondary activity. It is a metacommunication in relation to the receiver. The semiotic aspect in translation is concerned with the differences met within the process of translation which are a consequence of a different temporal and spatial realization of the translated text. (Popovič 1975: 16)

In this definition, the semiotic orientation to translation is reduced to the changing of spatio-temporal conditions, and 'the semiotic nature of the translation process' receives a definition that focuses on language. This is a semiotically restricted yet an expected viewpoint, since the topic was literary translation. We may conclude that from a semiotic-translational point of view, a scope that is too wide or too narrow easily becomes a double-edged sword.

The semiotics of translation is too dependent on Roman Jakobson.

Peeter Torop (2001) claims that the research on translation experienced a semiotic shift as early as in 1959, when Jakobson made his seminal proposal of the three ways of interpreting verbal signs – a rather old shift compared to the others (see Figure 1 above). For those representing translation semiotics, it may be impossible to think of their field today without thinking of Jakobson, so influential has his role been. It is, therefore, no surprise that there is still an active interest in Jakobson and his contribution not only to semiotics, but to Translation Studies as well (see, for instance, the articles on the semiotics of translation in *Sign Systems Studies* vol. 36.2 [2008]). Nonetheless, the fundamental question is whether adherence to Jakobson has become an obstacle for the development of translation semiotics.

Jakobson (1896-1982) was, without a doubt, a visionary in translation-theory. In 1959, when he formulated his idea of translation as the intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic interpretation of verbal signs, he simultaneously yet preliminarily staked out the field of translation, charting what could be included in future conceptions of translation, translation research, and translation theory (for a different categorization of translation studies, see Holmes 1988: 71-78 and the discussion in Toury 1995: 9-19). In addition, Jakobson was both semiotically and translation-semiotically innovative because, perhaps inspired by Peirce, he indirectly emphasized the nature of translation as *sign interpretation* and *sign translation* as well as an *action across sign systems*. Jakobson's proposal can be interpreted afterwards as concentrating on sign theory, although he explicitly focused 'on linguistic aspects of translation', as the title of his 1959 essay reads.

Jakobson was therefore a pioneer. With his typology, Jakobson demonstrated that interlingual *translation proper* is only one way of interpreting verbal signs, the others being *rewording* and *transmutation*. Implicitly, he also proposed that it is possible to translate within the same sign system (intralingually, within a *language,* which we so often forget is a semiotic system among many others). Besides, Jakobson's view of intersemiotic transposition (1966 [1959]: 238) included the possibility of translating from a non-verbal to a verbal sign system, and even between non-verbal sign systems. Thus, the only alternative that Jakobson's typology did not actually include is the intrasemiotic one, translation within the same non-verbal sign system. In addition, we should not ignore the fact that in this context, even *intra-* can be understood as a type of *inter-*. An intralingual process includes a *from-to* sign transfer, albeit within one language. Through a deeper analysis, all translating proves to be a fundamentally intersemiotic activity, as the process involves a transfer from one sign to another, and definitely occurs between signs. This is, however, an interpretation that is neglected, although in my view, it sincerely honors the classical semiotic heritage.

Since Jakobson referred to signs and sign systems in his classification, it is not surprising that his contribution has evoked a response within semiotic research. In fact, his position is still regarded as one of the cornerstones of translation semiotics. Jakobson is also known within the field of Translation

Studies (see, for instance, Sütiste's article [2008] on the Jakobsonian legacy). The intra- and intersemiotic translation types, though not directly related to Jakobson, have found support in some new practices, such as intermodal print interpreting or audio description as well as multimodal and intra-/interlingual subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (see further, Tiittula and Hirvonen 2015).

The problem with Jakobson's typology of translation lies in the fact that its focus is obviously on language rather than signs (a notion that also applies to any linguistic reading of Charles S. Morris' semiotic views). Still, while the typology has been heavily criticized (see e.g. Hartama-Heinonen 2008: 57-66), the discussion and analysis have somehow become frozen, and no substantial change has occurred. The translation scholar Gideon Toury is one of these critical voices. He blames (1986: 1113-1114) Jakobson's typology for 'the traditional bias for *linguistic* translating' (emphasis in original) and for being concerned only with (verbal) texts. Toury suggests a clearly semiotics-tailored approach to translation as *cross-systemic transference* with two main types of translating between semiotic systems: *intrasemiotic* translating (consisting of an *intrasystemic* type, such as intralingual translating, and an *intersystemic* type, such as interlingual translating) and *intersemiotic* translating. This suggestion with its simple basic categories and further distinctions could well be suited for translation semiotics, since the semiotic aspect of translation is addressed in a balanced manner.

The semiotics of translation is more than intersemiotic translation.

For some reason, translation semioticians are keen to emphasize that intersemiotic translation is for them 'translation proper'. Of course, such an understanding emphasizes the semiotic facet and not the linguistic one, unlike the other two Jakobsonian types. However, with reference to the above discussion, one may wonder whether this line of development will, after all, turn out to be counter-productive. While translation semiotics cannot neglect the possible role of language in translating, it must, under all circumstances, remember its debt to its 'master science'.

To herd together or not to be heard and understood

Translation semiotics suffers from the same type of internal dilemma and ambivalent identity as Translation Studies. Therefore, it is advisable to maintain a balanced and healthy attitude toward one's own area of research, striving for the self-understanding that arises from self-reflection and self-criticism. On the other hand, one must also beware of becoming overly critical; there is no reason to needlessly challenge one's actions and thus create unnecessary problems.

In the present article, I have endeavored to draw attention to several factors that deserve further discussion if we wish to establish and advance the semiotics of translation (or, perhaps, *a* semiotics of translation). The central question has been whether we belong together and understand each other. It may not be possible to measure the level of understanding, but it is possible to discuss reasons for potential misunderstandings and non-understandings. Another challenge for translation semiotics is whether we need each other and a mutual dialogue, or whether semiotics can consist merely of detached, fuzzy terms without an unambiguous semiotic theory as anchorage. The question of ownership is also fundamental: Who owns translation, and who owns semiotics? Or even, who owns Jakobson?

Translation semiotics deserves to exist, and the questions of its existence must be solved by those who conduct translation-semiotic research.

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