

look), fixed expressions (e.g. *from time to time*) and semantically linked groups (e.g. *to glance away*). In the later, English, version of the book, new analysis gives units that are rather longer: for example, the groupings *si nous songeons* > *if we speak of* and *en Grande Bretagne, au Japon* > *in Great Britain, Japan* are each given as a single unit (1995: 321).

To facilitate analysis where oblique translation is used, Vinay and Darbelnet suggest numbering the translation units in both the ST and TT (for an example, see [Table 4.1](#) in the case study section at the end of this chapter). The units which have the same number in each text can then be compared to see which translation procedure has been adopted.

4.3 Exploration: A Chinese perspective

One criticism of Vinay and Darbelnet's model is that it can less easily be applied to non-European languages. Read the article by Zhang and Pan Li (2009) on the ITS companion website which considers Loh's (1958) model for Chinese<>English translation. Summarize the main differences between the two models.

4.2 Catford and translation 'shifts'

Translation shifts are linguistic changes occurring in translation of ST to TT. Although Vinay and Darbelnet do not use the term, that is in effect what they are describing. The term itself seems to originate in Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), where he devotes a chapter to the subject. Catford (1965: 20) follows the Firthian and Hallidayan linguistic model, which analyses language as communication, operating functionally in context and on a range of different levels (e.g. phonology, graphology, grammar, lexis) and ranks (sentence, clause, group, word, morpheme, etc.).⁵

As far as translation is concerned, Catford makes an important distinction between formal correspondence and textual equivalence, which was later to be developed by Koller (see [Chapter 3](#)):

- A **formal correspondent** is 'any TL category (unit, class, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the "same"

place in the “economy” of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL’ (Catford 1965: 27).

- A **textual equivalent** is ‘any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion . . . to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text’ (ibid.).

Thus, formal correspondence is a more general system-based concept between a pair of languages (e.g. the noun *belongings* and the Spanish *efectos personales* [‘personal effects’]) while textual equivalence is tied to a particular ST–TT pair (e.g. *he searched through my belongings* translated as *examinó mi bolso* [‘he examined my bag’]). When the two concepts diverge (as in *efectos personales* and *bolso*), a **translation shift** is deemed to have occurred. In Catford’s own words (1965: 73; 2000: 141), translation shifts are thus ‘departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL’.

Catford considers two kinds of shift: (1) shift of level and (2) shift of category.

- (1) A **level shift** (1965: 73–5; 2000: 141–3) would be something which is expressed by grammar in one language and lexis in another. This could, for example, be:
 - aspect in Russian being translated by a lexical verb in English: e.g. *igrat’* (*to play*) and *sigrat’* (*to finish playing*); or
 - cases where the French conditional corresponds to a lexical item in English: e.g. *trois touristes auraient été tués* [lit. ‘three tourists would have been killed’] = *three tourists have been reported killed*.
- (2) Most of Catford’s analysis is given over to **category shifts** (1965: 75–82; 2000: 143–7). These are subdivided into four kinds:
 - (a) **Structural shifts:** These are said by Catford to be the most common and to involve mostly a shift in grammatical structure. For example, the subject pronoun + verb + direct object structures of *I like jazz* and *j’aime le jazz* in English and French are translated by an indirect object pronoun + verb + subject structure in Spanish (*me gusta el jazz*) and in Italian (*mi piace il jazz*).
 - (b) **Class shifts:** These comprise shifts from one part of speech to another. An example given by Catford is the English *a medical student* and the French *un étudiant en médecine*. Here, the English pre-modifying adjective *medical* is translated by the adverbial qualifying phrase *en médecine*.

- (c) **Unit shifts** or **rank shifts**: These are shifts where the translation equivalent in the TL is at a different rank to the SL. 'Rank' here refers to the hierarchical linguistic units of sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme.
- (d) **Intra-system shifts**: These are shifts that take place when the SL and TL possess approximately corresponding systems but where 'the translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system' (1965: 80; 2000: 146). Examples given between French and English are number and article systems – although similar systems operate in the two languages, they do not always correspond. Thus, *advice* (uncountable) in English becomes *des conseils* (plural) in French, and the French definite article *la* in *Il a la jambe cassée* ['he has the leg broken'] corresponds to the English indefinite article *a* in *He has a broken leg*.

Catford's book is an important attempt to systematically apply advances in linguistics to translation. However, his analysis of intra-system shifts betrays some of the weaknesses of his approach. From his comparison of the use of French and English article systems in short parallel texts, Catford concludes (1965: 81–2) that French *le/la/les* 'will have English *the* as its translation equivalent with probability .65', supporting his statement that 'translation equivalence does not entirely match formal correspondence'. This kind of statement of probability, which characterizes Catford's whole approach and was linked to the growing interest in machine translation at the time, was later heavily criticized by, among others, Delisle (1982) for its static contrastive linguistic basis. Revisiting Catford's book twenty years after publication, Henry (1984: 157) considers the work to be 'by and large of historical academic interest' only. He does, however, (*ibid.*: 155) point out the usefulness of Catford's final chapter, on the limits of translatability. Of particular interest is Catford's assertion that translation equivalence depends on communicative features such as function, relevance, situation and culture rather than just on formal linguistic criteria. However, as Catford himself notes (1965: 94), deciding what is 'functionally relevant' in a given situation is inevitably 'a matter of opinion'.

Despite the steps taken by Catford to consider the communicative function of the SL item and despite the basis of his terminology being founded on a functional approach to language, the main criticism of Catford's book is that his examples are almost all idealized (i.e. invented and not taken from actual translations) and decontextualized. He does not look at whole texts, nor even above the level of the sentence.