Poetry Translation through Reception and Cognition
Poetry Translation through Reception and Cognition: The Proof of Translation is in the Reading

By

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## CONTENTS

Contents......................................................................................................................... v
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... xi
\ i Personal motifs................................................................................................. xi
\ ii Text linguistics and the study of literary texts.................................................... xii
\ iii Stylistics............................................................................................................. xiii
\ iv Ontology of the “text”....................................................................................... xiv
\ v Interpretation......................................................................................................... xiv
\ vi Interpretation of poems..................................................................................... xiv
\ vii Interpreting interpretations—a double labyrinth........................................... xv
\ viii The importance of the reader........................................................................... xv
\ ix The author and the reader—two worlds?........................................................... xvi
\ x The aim of the research...................................................................................... xvii
\ xi Why poems?......................................................................................................... xviii
\ xii Whose poems?.................................................................................................... xix
\ xiii Modus operandi............................................................................................... xx

Chapter One................................................................................................................... 1
The forerunners of textual analysis, translation theory and cognitive linguistics......................... 1

1.1 The Greek heritage............................................................................................... 1
1.2 The Roman (linguistic) Empire............................................................................ 2
1.3 Medieval times.................................................................................................... 3
1.4 India................................................................................................................... 3
1.5 The dawn of modern times—structuralism....................................................... 4
1.6 The Prague School............................................................................................. 4
1.7 Another structuralist.......................................................................................... 5
1.8 Generative grammar and what it “generated” in translation theory...................... 6
1.9 Hungarian text research..................................................................................... 8
1.10 The Hungarian pioneer in textual research..................................................... 9

Chapter Two................................................................................................................. 13
Background of Research............................................................................................. 13

2.1 Locales............................................................................................................... 13
2.2 Time allotted..................................................................................................... 13
Contents

2.3 Payment .............................................................................................. 14
2.4 Instructors ........................................................................................... 14
2.5 Readers and readings .......................................................................... 15
2.6 Background of subjects ...................................................................... 15
2.7 Texts used ........................................................................................... 16
2.8 Prerequisites ....................................................................................... 17
2.9 Questionnaire / worksheet ................................................................. 17
2.10 Task-related background information ............................................. 18
2.11 Aims and objectives ........................................................................ 22
2.12 Hypotheses ....................................................................................... 25

Chapter Three ........................................................................................... 27
Mind-reading and the Reading Mind........................................................ 27
Cognition and Interpretation..................................................................... 27

3.1 Interdisciplinarity ............................................................................... 27
3.2 Poetic/literary versus (?) common/practical language and
   cognitive consequences ......................................................................... 28
3.3 Mental concepts .................................................................................. 31
3.4 Cognitive conceptual units in fiction and non-fiction.......................... 34
3.5 A novel mental conceptual unit—PICTURE...................................... 39

Chapter Four............................................................................................. 41
Cognition – Translation – Poetry.............................................................. 41

4.1 Translatability..................................................................................... 41
4.2 Translator-Reader ............................................................................... 42
4.3 Translation and interpretation—parallel processes............................. 44
4.4 Translation and cognition ................................................................... 46
4.5 Translation across mental conceptual systems ................................... 49
4.6 Relativity of reality—chaos or cosmos?............................................. 50

Chapter Five ............................................................................................. 57
Assessment of Quality of Poetry Translation I......................................... 57
Conceptualisation on global level............................................................. 57

5.1 Readers' Titles Representing Interpretation on Global Level .......... 57
5.1.1 The textual status of the title............................................................ 58
5.2 Dickinson ............................................................................................ 59
5.3 Analysis of “986” (Weöres)................................................................. 61
5.3.1 Analysis of “67” (Gergely).............................................................. 63
## Contents

5.4 Ady, “On Elijah's Chariot”—parallel translations  
   (1. Nyerges and Makkai 2. Szirtes) ..................................................... 65
5.5 Nemes Nagy—parallel translations  
   (Makkai, Maxton, Egon, Zollmann) ................................................... 67
5.6 Petőczi—Confession with Strawberries (Zollmann) ....................... 68
5.7 Pilinszky—Fish in the Net (Makkai) ................................................ 70
5.8 Fenyvesi (Gyukics) ............................................................................. 71
5.8.1 The model cognitive-receptive and linguistic translation analysis .. 72
5.9 Statistical data on the title-related concepts ........................................ 72
5.10 Title-related mental conceptual units ................................................ 74
5.11 Further classes of mental concepts ................................................... 75
5.11.1 Literary and non-literary conceptualisation ....................................... 76
5.11.2 Pictures .......................................................................................... 76
5.12 Refinement of mental concepts ........................................................ 78
5.12.1 Exclusion of schema, plan and scenario ........................................... 79
5.13 Concepts in Poetry Reception and Translation ................................. 80
5.13.1 Transfer analysis of Dickinson “528” (Károlyi) ............................. 83
5.13.2 Transfer analysis of Dickinson “1078” (Tótfalusi)....................... 84
5.13.3 Transfer analysis of Fenyvesi “45” (Gyukics) ............................... 85
5.14 Concluding remarks.......................................................................... 86

Chapter Six ............................................................................................... 89
Assessment of Quality of Poetry Translation II ........................................ 89
Local levels, Form, Subjective Judgement .................................................. 89

6.1 Interpretation on the level of stanzas .................................................. 89
6.1.1 Interpretation of stanzas: Dickinson, Nemes Nagy,  
   Petőczi, Pilinszky ........................................................................... 89
6.2 Conceptualisation and semantic fields ............................................... 96
6.2.1 Semantic model of translation and conceptualisation ..................... 97
6.2.2 Dickinson ......................................................................................... 98
6.2.3 Ady, “The Lost Rider” (Horne) and “The Lost Horseman”  
   (Ny&M) ......................................................................................... 100
6.2.4 Nemes Nagy—Winter Trees ............................................................ 102
6.2.5 Petőczi—Albert Szenci Molnár in Delirium (Zollmann) ............... 103
6.2.6 Pilinszky ........................................................................................ 107
6.3 Correlation of form and content ....................................................... 108
6.3.1 Correlation of title-related concepts and rhyme patterns ............... 110
6.3.2 Analysis of “435” (Károlyi) .......................................................... 111
6.3.3 The Prayer of van Gogh (Csokits & Hughes) ............................... 113
6.3.4 Correlation of stanza-related concepts and rhyme patterns ........... 115
6.3.5 “214” (Tótfalusi)................................................................. 115
6.4 Originality of poems and translators' achievement...................... 118
6.5 Correlation on all levels—adequacy of poetry translation—
translatability ............................................................................. 119

Chapter Seven........................................................................... 123
Conclusions ............................................................................... 123
Suggestions for Further Research.................................................. 123

7.1 Transfer operations in poetry translation.................................. 123
7.1.1 Complex poetic transfer operations ..................................... 124
7.1.2 Summary—the end of a beginning ...................................... 126
7.1.3 Literalness and adequate translation ................................... 126
7.2.1 How is the schema of 'poem' built up in readers? ............... 128
7.2.2 Plans, scenarios in reading poetry and prose .................... 129
7.2.3 Refinement of scene—further categories expressing
actions and events ...................................................................... 129
7.2.4 Refinement of script—series of homogenous vs.
heterogeneous actions............................................................... 130
7.2.5 Reception of subjects with different levels of schooling .......... 130
7.2.6 Reception of subjects of different age ............................... 131
7.2.7 Reception of subjects of different sex ................................. 131
7.2.8 Level of abstraction in different literary genres ............... 132
7.2.9 Optional constituents in poetry translation ....................... 132
7.2.10 English stative constructions vs. Hungarian dynamic
constructions.............................................................................. 133
7.2.11 Reception of poetry in real time ....................................... 133
7.2.12 Delayed reception—reading fragments (stanzas)
at different times ........................................................................ 134
7.2.13 Reception of translators' own poetry and their translations .... 134
7.2.14 Metaphorical use of content words in ST and TT poems .... 135
7.2.15 Internal conceptualisation in reading poetry ................. 135
7.2.16 Cognitive analyses supported by linguistic analyses and
vice versa ................................................................................... 135
7.2.17 Complex poetic transfer operations ................................. 136

Tables and figures ..................................................................... 137
Appendix .................................................................................. 139
References ............................................................................... 181
Sources ................................................................................... 189
Notes......................................................................................... 191
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It is with great pleasure that I learned how our anthology of Hungarian poetry entitled "In Quest of the Miracle Stag" had inspired this dissertation. Any translation of poetry is perhaps an even greater literary challenge than writing the original poetry itself. Some might argue that a poem cannot be rendered in another language. If this was true, we wouldn’t today enjoy the gems that poet-translators have produced over the centuries. Translators are usually interested in the effect their work has exerted on the audience. This work pioneers a way to observe this effect by analysing the readers’ interpretation. It thus makes a most valuable and innovative contribution to poetics, linguistics and translation theory.

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INTRODUCTION

If it be true that “good wine needs no bush”
'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue.
William Shakespeare, As You Like It

i Personal motifs

As a student at the Teacher Training College in Pécs in the first decade of the 1980s I enjoyed studying psychology because I realised that human beings are not only inquisitive—want to know everything—but they are selfish too—want to know everything about themselves. Also, the most interesting things in the world are the ones that are laborious to gain—e.g. in-depth knowledge about the brain. At that time, I would not have thought that this interest would be revived some 20 years later. As a lecturer in linguistics at Veszprém University, I have realised that the formal descriptions that are provided about language somewhat detach us from reality. I have seen it especially in the students' eyes—linguistics is dry, hard to digest and boring. Literature is fine, it is about us, our emotions, thoughts, adventures and desires, but language is only a tool, a medium, let it be our mother tongue or the foreign language we would like to pass on to our students. And there come difficulties in transmitting our emotions, thoughts, adventures and desires to attain another language, with the challenges of translation. I therefore decided to combine all these in my PhD dissertation—I wanted to merge psychology, linguistics and translation. The amalgamation of cognitive studies and linguistics is not a novelty in itself. Nevertheless, the cognitive approach to translation is a relatively new field of research. The hitherto unsolved mystery of translation theory is equivalence / appropriacy / adequacy / similarity / sameness / invariance / congruence and so on—the endless list of terms justifies that little has been proved about the right rendering of the content into another language. Why not observe the problem with the help of the cognitive approach? If we reveal what conceptual units and types of structures are activated in the mind of the reader of a text and in the mind of another who reads the translated version of the same text, we might be able to say something useful about the efficiency of that particular translation. This is my primary aim. The structural analysis of the
Introduction

(translated) texts gains secondary importance, because the formal examination either supports or contradicts the findings described above.

While teaching discourse and text analysis to students of teacher training I became interested in the analysis of literary texts. My interest was aroused by several books, the first being Traugott and Pratt's work (1980), which incorporates linguistics and literature; it provides a phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic viewpoint to literary texts—poems, short stories, novels and the like. The book differs from other works on linguistic and literary analyses, which usually start with a critical discussion on literary texts and then bring linguistics to bear on these texts. The book raises the attention of students studying linguistics to the fact that theoretical and plain linguistic studies can be made more exciting if the scope of analyses is a literary work. On the other hand, it also informs the students of literature that the meaning of a literary piece, the message can be revealed more easily, in a more versatile and novel fashion by using linguistic tools. Cook's work (1994) combines literature, linguistics, psychology and artificial intelligence. Among discourse types literature is widely, if not universally, considered to be one of the most important. Cook emphasises the relevance of discourse understanding to pedagogy. I find it pertinent that the students should be able to apply linguistic knowledge to the understanding of literature. Through literature a particular view of the world is transmitted to the reader. Literature is a body of texts interpreted in ways, which clearly reflect the values and the identity of a particular nation. The book describes literary forms and investigates what goes on in the readers’ minds, that is, examines the relationship between literary language and our mental representations of the world. Fowler (1986) explains why linguistics is required for the interpretation of literary texts. Linguistics aims to be comprehensive and systematic, which is a surplus to the critical commentaries on texts practised solely until I.A. Richards' book (1929) appeared on the palette of literary analyses. The writer’s aims can be discovered by analysing the language (s)he uses. Literary criticism cannot exist without the proper terminology derived from linguistics.

ii Text linguistics and the study of literary texts

When the ancient philosophers studied, analysed and commented upon poetic texts, they did not know that what they inaugurated would be somewhat suspended for hundreds of years and would be reiterated as something called text linguistics. The suspension was not unbroken, but
text methodology as such became an independent field in the 1960s of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century only. One area of research in text linguistics is the study of literary works—no wonder, since the field of text linguistics was part of literature for a long time. The pioneers of literary text linguists were the representatives of the French and Russian structuralist and formalist schools (e.g. Mukarovsky, Wellek, Hjemslev, Bally, Jakobson, Jakubinsky, Tinanov, Vinogradov). Of course, linguistics did not get detached from its roots, philosophy, and was much influenced by the linguistic turn in philosophy (e.g. Wittgenstein, Russell, Husserl, Rorty). In my research Eco provides one of the starting points—the openness of a text allows perpetually evolving and extremely versatile, actually infinite numbers of interpretations (1989). To me, text linguistics became a favoured area for the reason that it incorporates theoretical language analyses and psychology, philosophy and neurobiology, literature and sociology. (Those who have a low opinion of text linguistics do not seem to realise that it is not a wasteland of linguistic observations but a treasury of the greatest values of what has been accumulated ever since the ancient philosophers first contemplated language, man and language, language and society, reality and artistic copies of it.) The scope of text analysis is the linguistic, literary, psychological, computational and philosophical investigations of literary and non-literary texts focusing on either one of them or incorporating all. The branch of text analysis concentrating on literary texts is called stylistics, which, despite the fear of literary critics, some of whom might be wary about its role in the study of literature, have proved to be popular among scholars and students alike.

\textbf{iii Stylistics}

Stylistics helps students to understand why they read and explain explicitly to others their intuitive responses. On the one hand, students are provided with analytical tools to see and appreciate features of literary texts. On the other hand, they become more capable of expressing their intuitive personal emotions and also learn to think consciously about texts, the compositional elements of texts, and the effect these elements exert both within the text and on the reader (Short 1989: 1). Modern stylistics, being more methodical and rigorous, represents a half-way cross-over between linguistic and literary criticism. Its central tenet is \textit{choice}: the idea or central concept can be expressed in a number of different ways and the author exercises a choice between them. The mode of discourse adopted
by the author determines the way in which the text is read. Stylistics assesses and classifies the range of text choice.

### iv Ontology of the “text”

A written stretch of language becomes a text only when it is received. The standards of textuality are by no means formal requirements for a text to be what it is but organically they involve readers with their knowledge of other texts, the world and social conventions. A text is the product of multi-layered conscious activities—writing and reading, which are such complex processes that little have been revealed about them. The text is parsed from the string of words and sentences and reconstructed into a novel unit in the reader’s mind. The expressions activate concepts in the reader’s mental storage or furniture, which is called “concept recovery” (Beaugrande - Dressler 1981:43). Whether the words do or do not evoke concepts has also been the scope of investigations and debates.

### v Interpretation

Following Gadamer, interpretation is best explicated through and within the hermeneutic process—intelligence (understanding), interpretation (exhibiting the intended meaning) and application (Gadamer 1995). It is to be noted that there are claims that understanding and interpretation are not two distinct processes—one cannot precede or follow the other, and that there is no intended meaning, no author’s meaning, there is only the reader’s meaning.

### vi Interpretation of poems

There is a vast range of writing that can be interpreted. In my research, as described in detail below, I could have made my students decipher and unravel any of the existing genres, styles and registers. The fact is that I chose poems presenting hardships as well as joys for the students, not only because poems give the greatest challenge, but it put me in a pleasant position because poems have multi-layered readings. However, the final analyses of the interpretations did give me a challenge. Nevertheless, a thesis should not be about something trivial. Only when I immersed
myself in the procedure did I realise that my approach, being somewhat novel, contains as many delights as perplexities.

**vii Interpreting interpretations—a double labyrinth**

I did not intend to analyse poems myself for the following reasons. On the one hand, literature abounds in phonological, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic analyses of literary works, narrative and lyric alike. These analyses represent the viewpoints of the professional writers—literary critics and linguists, experts in stylistics and cognitive studies. In my view, literary texts have to be examined and explained from versatile ends including not only the viewpoints of academic researchers, but the reader, too. On the other hand, I am interested in the confluence of reader response and cognitive linguistics, that is, the intersection of literary interpretation and the mental representation of literature. Shapiro, for example, is firmly against the linguistic, semantic or psychological study of poems (1948). Whether he was right or not is not within my compass to decide, but I agree with what he wrote later in his essay:

> “Poetry is not language, but a language *sui generis* which can be understood, paraphrased, or translated only as poetry…” *(ibid. p. 199.)*

I find his opinion supportive, though in retrospect, because the essence of literature cannot be revealed by formal linguistic analyses, they are useful as auxiliary background devices only. The formal devices reveal the surface of the texts; the underlying message and content must be approached from a deeper mental basis. On the surface, there is no difference between literary and non-literary texts; it is the purpose of the text and its reception, and the schematic blending of the two, that makes literature. This schematic blending can only be observed through concepts and conceptual units, which are evoked in the readers.

**viii The importance of the reader**

There is consensus among scholars investigating literature with or without the help of linguistics that the meaning of a text is revealed by the reader, whose mental representations of the world are culturally grounded and founded. The interpretation of literature is a similar process to ordinary interpretation, in which present experience is interpreted in the
light of organised past experience. Eco (1995) states that readers are able to generate texts by their interpretive cooperation. From Bartlett (1932) we learn that texts are interpreted with the help of a knowledge structure activated from memory, capable of filling in details, which are not explicitly stated. Schema theory, whose founding-father is Bartlett, is based on these findings. I share the view of Miall and Kuiken in that

“almost no professional attention is being paid to the ordinary reader, who continues to read for the pleasure of understanding the world of the text” (Miall-Kuiken 1998:1)

The linguist applies an exophoric perspective, which means that (s)he observes the text from outside. The reader's involvement with the text is endophoric, which, in turn, means involvement through the aesthetic pleasure (s)he is capable of in the process, which the scholar might be deprived of. There is a double entry: the reader enters the text and we (try to) enter the reader's mind. In the case of translation two (groups of) readers enter two texts. Do they find the texts, which are supposed to convey the same thoughts, similar or different, if different, to what extent? In other words, are the schemas, the mental conceptual units activated by the two texts, divergent or convergent? We hope, and the findings do prove, that convergence exists.

ix The author and the reader—two worlds?

However, schema theory must be applied to literary interpretation. A literary text words the world. But whose world is it anyway? With the transparent medium of language the writer’s organised thoughts are rendered into an organised written discourse. This written discourse represents two worlds—the world of the author’s cognition and the already independent world of the text. And there is a need for a third world, that of the mental store of the reader, without whom no text is borne. Eco (1989) allows considerable autonomy to the reader in actively interpreting a text. He focuses upon the role of the code. Messages are interpreted in a criss-cross interplay of circumstances, which involve the addressee making inductive presuppositions and this, along with the interplay of codes and sub-codes, makes the message appear as an empty form which can be read in a number of ways, from different points of view and according to different systems of conventions. The basic denotation of the sign-vehicle can be understood just as the sender intended it to be, but different connotations can be attributed to it simply because the addressee follows
another path on the compositional tree. In fact, Eco suggests that sometimes the addressee's entire system of cultural units (as well as the concrete circumstances in which he lives) may legitimate an interpretation that the sender would never have foreseen; he calls this a boomerang effect (Eco 1976: 141). This autonomy is acknowledged by Relevance Theory. Readers are free to have several interpretations of a text, but the autonomy is also limited—it is not the readers' conscious decision about which interpretation to choose, though

“they are able to choose for themselves the most relevant information with the smallest processing effort and the greatest possible cognitive effect; let it be literary or non-literary language, literal or non-literal meaning” (Kenesei 2003b:5)

Thus the choice is unconscious. Any reader is in the focus of attention of feminism, psychoanalysis, reader response theory, reception theory and post-structuralism. Barth calls the reader a “dogged bastard” (1989:2155), who must be ignored by the Author. This is not a view I share. The reader's task is to contextualise the literary discourse, that is, to infer information from the world of the text. The processes of deduction and inference are the same as in oral discourse. The extent of the shared knowledge between writer - (text) - reader varies from reader to reader but in this triangle a group of readers represents an albeit heterogeneous unit.

The aim of the research

The aim of the thesis is to investigate the personal responses of readers to poems and their translations. These include Hungarian poems and their English versions, and English poems and their Hungarian translations. I wish to observe what changes the poetic text undergoes when translated. These changes could be observed by using merely linguistic tools, but considering the fact that poems are not written for the linguist but the “reader”, I find it appropriate to interfere in the process with linguistic analyses only following the readers' interpretations of the poems. A structuralist text analysis can be grounded hermeneutically only within the analysis of the interpretative process (Jauss 1996:321). To analyse the responses to poems might be very useful, but to observe the differences in the interpretations of the original poems and their translations help to reveal even more exciting aspects. Figure 1. describes these relations. ST and TT refer to the source and target language, respectively. The question marks that precede and follow “adequacy” reiterate the issue that the quest
for an adequate technical terms covering sameness or quasi sameness in translation is still open (ix).

Figure 1 The interrelationship of cognition, hermeneutics and translation

xi Why poems?

The reason for choosing poems is that in poems the lexical items are used in the most “condensed” way and form, in which the selection of words and phrases is the most conscious, and the impact of the items is the most intricate. Therefore, the interpretation of poems is the most versatile activity. The interpretative process does not start with the readers’ encounter of the poem when the poem is translated into another language. It is the translator’s interpretation through which the poem is filtered. The schemata in the translator’s mind are activated and information processing takes place in organised chunks. Not only schemata retrieval takes place, but an overall semantic interpretation determined by a cultural background as well as personal feelings. On the surface there are objectively traceable organised chunks to be translated and, on a deeper level, there is a subjective, more comprehensive phase of interpretation. These two contribute to the translated version of a poem. The poem provides new information for the translator. The information chunks (propositions, concepts) are tied together in frames (knowledge subsets), scripts (stereotyped situations) or schemata (global patterns of events or states) (See 3.4). The information chunks fill the appropriate slots of a schema. The question is the rate of the existing schemata and the novel ones that must be built up by the translator. A further question is how appropriately the translator is able to create the new schemata—this is dependent upon how “well” s/he has understood the poem. The new schemata, together with the given ones, are then rendered into the target language. Poems are
renowned for their overwhelmingly novel schemata. The better the translator copes with the creating of new schemata, the more successful the translation is. Poems make use of the alternative organisations of the world. If the translator interferes with those organisations, equivalence of experience is rendered impossible. Therefore, the translator must be very careful not to do so. However, it is next to hopeless for the translator not to incorporate into the poem his own processing activities. This processing should be avoided or at least reduced, otherwise the readers of the translated version find their mental tasks pre-empted. There is, of course, a certain pre-empting, and the question is, to what extent the original schemata are altered. The process is complicated, because the poet’s thoughts are organised into worded information in which the words are processed by the translator, who more or less reorganises the information; the reader receives the text and then interprets it. The six phases must result in an altered text.

xii Whose poems?

The Hungarian poets whose works will be analysed include Ágnes Nemes Nagy, Endre Ady, János Pilinszky, Ottó Fenyvesi and Éva Petrőczi. The translators are Peter Zollmann, Ádám Makkai, Ila Egon, Hugh Maxton and Gábor Gyukics. The only English-speaking poet is Emily Dickinson whose translators are Ágnes Gergely, Ernő Hárs, Amy Károlyi, Judit Pór, Eszter Tábor, István Tótfalusi and Sándor Weöres. The reasons for my choice are personal and pragmatic in nature. I have personal contacts with Petrőczi and Fenyvesi. Petrőczi was a colleague for a year and Fenyvesi lives in my hometown. I asked them to offer me a couple of their poems, which had been translated into English, so the ones I use in my research are their choice. I wanted to get information about the translation process from their translators, but following G. B. Shaw, “He who can does. He who cannot teaches.” I suggest that translation is in the veins rather than in the heads of translators; they could not give an account of what goes on in their minds while rendering poems into the target language. But can linguists, who analyse their products, translate as well as they do? For pragmatic reasons I chose short(er) poems—long(er) ones would have deterred my student-readers from producing reliable interpretations. They read even these relatively short poems several times in order to be able to answer all my questions. Also, I wanted to work on parallel translations, as in the case of Nemes Nagy and Ady, whose poems I found in the impressive volume of In Quest of the Miracle Stag: The Poetry of
Hungary, which is the pride of Hungarian literature and the editor, Ádám Makkai, who collected the gems of Hungarian poetry from the 13th century to the present in English translation. Pilinszky is called “the greatest” Hungarian poet by Sándor Weöres, who is one of the translators in this work, so his opinion must be appreciated. Dickinson has been analysed by so many and from numerous angles that she deserves to be examined from a novel point of view too.

xiii Modus operandi

The methods of analyses comprise the arrangement of the continuous lines into poems (after the creative-productive method of Petőfi (Petőfi – Benkes 1992); the identification of “focus” (Széles 1996), the determining of the keyword; the determining of the themes of the stanzas; the grouping of the content words and labelling them; deciding whether the Hungarian or the English version was the original. The readers’ investigation goes from top to bottom and backwards. They begin with the whole of the poem, then they identify the composing elements and finally return to the aesthetic entirety. The interpretation of a text largely depends on whether the reader is familiar with the author and the background of the text. I deliberately exclude the influencing factors because they would make the readers biased and this would entail a rather homogenous warehouse of readings. (The research of Halász (1980) and Sherif (1958) also prove this.) I wish to see how the readers connect their existing schemata to the imagery schemata the poems provide. I am convinced that the results are far more exciting when the readers are ignorant of the diverting details, despite the fact that whenever we get down to reading literature, we start with the author and the title. However, we often read texts whose author is completely unknown to us and then we make the inferences from the resources of our cognitive background only. Where it was possible the poet’s own evaluation of the translation was compared with the findings of the readers’ interpretations. The results have shown that the two are relatively congruent, which is not startling, since the poet becomes the reader of the translated version and the personal link ceases to exist. Another aspect of the comparison of the binary interpretations is the cultural background. The source culture that hosts the original poem and the culture that accepts the translated version, which becomes part of the target culture, always leave their traces on the two texts. And inversely, the texts cause changes in the two cultures. No translation can “share the systemic space with its original” (Toury 1995:26). There is, besides the
linguistic aspects, a cultural shift from the source poem into the target poem. Needless to say, the more common features the two cultures share, the easier the adaptation of the poem to the target culture. Not only the common cultural roots are to be considered but the topic or the message of the poem, too. The deeper the poem’s connections are in a historical or traditional background, the bigger the challenge for the translator to transfer the message to those readers in the target language. In sum, the three steps involved are as follows:

1. Readers' interpretation of poems in terms of mental conceptual units which are evoked during the reading of the poems;
2. Comparative analysis of the conceptual units evoked on global and local levels in ST and TT poems;
3. Analysis of translation-transfer operations to find evidence on readers' reception.

Chapter 1 provides a brief outline of the history of textual analysis, translation theory. Chapter 2 deals with the background of research—participants and tasks. Objectives, research questions and hypotheses are also drawn up. Chapter 3 focuses on cognitive approaches to text interpretation and the interpretation of poetry. Chapter 4 is about translation of poetry and cognitive approaches to translation. Chapter 5 provides analyses of global interpretations followed by observations of translation transfer operations with the aim of explaining the divergences in interpretation of ST and TT. Chapter 6 deals with local interpretations—stanzas and diction—correlation of global and local receptions, harmony between form and content (degree of fidelity to rhyme schemes and preservation of content). In Chapter 7 conclusions are drawn concerning translatability of poetry, conceptualisation of texts and abstraction in interpretation. Further research topics in cognitive measurements of quality of poetry translation are also suggested.
CHAPTER ONE
The forerunners of textual analysis, translation theory and cognitive linguistics

People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.
Edmund Burke, Observations on a Publication, “The present state of the nation” (1769)

1.1 The Greek heritage

The quest for meaning has been a perpetual struggle ever since man became conscious and literate. The earliest known study about meaning and text is the work of Homer in the 6th century BC, which aimed at the criticism of poetic texts. The Greeks analysed the Iliad and the Odyssey, despite the fact that the language of Homer's epic poems was not identifiable with any of the dialects spoken the time. The dichotomy of the linguistic form and meaning was first stated by the Stoics, who, in this respect, were the forerunners of the Saussurean distinction of signifier and signified. The Greeks were also interested in studying the style of literature—rhetoric. One reason was that the readers of classical literature and Homer’s works required commentaries concerning language and content alike. Dionysius in Téchnē (cca 150 BC; Kemp 1986) calls grammar the practical knowledge of the language use of the poets and prose writers. One part of the Tékhnē deals with the explanation of the poetic expressions in texts. Another part is about the assessment of the poetic work, which is regarded as the noblest part of grammar. The contemplation of the nature and function of poetic texts culminates in Aristotle's Poetics (350 BC). Poems are borne out of our inclination to imitate things in the world. The expression of thought is achieved in a harmonious way and is done to achieve harmony through a clear style, however, allowing for riddles, metaphors, or jargon, as Aristotle calls the
use of “strange” words. The modification of language is permitted but it is the poet's error to write about the impossible. Is not Aristotle the forerunner of cognitive poetics? He speaks of schema refreshment and schema-building. Reader response started with the Greeks, who judged texts in terms of their effects on the receivers. Also, the *exegesis* (explanation) of Homer's texts provides the foundation of text analysis. The Greeks were aware of the existence of other tongues around them and there is evidence that they employed professional interpreters, but their opinion about these people is well expressed in βάρβαροι (bárbaroi). Thus, translation did not constitute part of φιλοσοφία (philosophía), the complex system of human knowledge. What we call cognitive studies were also begun by the Greeks, so that the invention, disposition, elocution, and delivery of ideas were highlighted in the training of public orators. That a text is interactive has been known since the beginnings.

1.2 The Roman (linguistic) Empire

The Romans appreciated, among others, the poetic achievements of the Greeks so much so that they rewrote their poems by copying Greek forms. Varro (116-27 BC), echoing Dionysius, determines grammar as the systematic knowledge of the language use of poets, historians and orators. The Romans showed a more flexible and enlightened attitude towards foreign languages and their speakers regarded a knowledge of several languages to be a merit, the best-known personality being king Mithridates (120-63 BC), who spoke over twenty tongues. The Romans could appropriate the knowledge of the Greeks through translation, with contributions coming from Terentius, Cicero, Horatius, Vergilius, and Quintilianus, poet-translators. Translation in the Empire served an aim similar to military expansion, which aimed at appropriating, adapting, and surpassing the knowledge of the Greeks. Translation theory arose with the development of reflections concerning the art of translation. The debates over word-for-word or free translation were to continue over many centuries, with such figures as Cicero and Horatius advocated free translations.
1.3 Medieval times

The investigation of meaning was carried on in the Middle Ages with the scholastics who distinguished *significātiō* and *suppositiō*, that is, the relationship between the word and its reference and the substitute of a sign. This binary opposition was the forerunner of the meaning-reference, connotation-denotation and intention-extension pairs. During the Renaissance, Locke devoted much of his work examining the depths of the word. He is regarded as the father of semantics. Man is not born with ideas about the world, knowledge comes with cognition only. Bacon suggested that besides the analogy between words the analogy between the words and things should also be considered.

1.4 India

In India, linguistics started with the analyses of the sacred texts, the *Vedas*, which were the written versions of oral hymns. Six main disciplines called *Shadangas*, the six auxiliary sciences were recognised as aids to the *Vedas*, namely *Nirukta* (etymology), *Vyakarana* (grammar), *Chandas* (meter), *Kalpa* (ritual usages), *Jyotisha* (astronomy), and *Siksha* (pronunciation). However, the difficulties of the analysis of the Vedic texts lie in the fact that there had always been an opposition to the penning of the texts. The reason was that the sounds of the hymns were thought to be of greater importance than the written form of the hymns. The sounds were regarded as conveyors of spiritual benefits, which were certainly lost in the written version. Nevertheless, Indian linguists, e.g., Panini (cca 300-600 BC), made a great contribution to the field of semantics and text analysis. The question for the meaning of sentences and the semantic relationships of the words within the sentence is still far from being resolved. A sentence is obviously more than the sequence of the words that make it up. The western tradition concentrated on the meaning of words, where the sentence was seen as the logical propositions that are made up by words. But the linguists in India argued about the primacy of the sentence. Some claimed that each word in the sentence contributes to the overall meaning of the sentence. *Bhartrhari* was convinced that the sentence is one homogenous, undividable unit, which conveys the meaning at once, like a picture. In Ānandavardhana's theory, the particular words of a poem and their literal meanings reveal the beauty of the poem through their metaphorical meanings.
1.5 The dawn of modern times—structuralism

In retrospect, we might be critical of “modern” linguistic studies for they narrowed down to the level of the sentence. There was a firm detachment made between linguistics and stylistics, leaving it to the latter to investigate the stretches of language that go beyond the sentence. Hjelmslev, in his formal description of language, pointed out that the differences of expression can be well defined but the differences of the semantic content, which are infinite, can only be revealed through the differences in expression. The structural view of meaning is that the lexical entries together constitute semantic fields and thus determine meaning. However, Hjelmslev, as part of his views about stylistic analysis, introduced the notion of connotative semiotics or glossematics as a higher level of expression comprising the level of content and expression. Of the seven types of iconicity the 7th bears importance for our purposes, which is the relation between the rhetorics and imagery of the poem, viewed as a whole. Each semiotic layer is part of another sign on another level, in a cumulative fashion. The 7th sign relation hence embeds all of the former. The linguistic meaning of a poem consists of two planes, that of sound and that of imagery, one standing as a sign for the other. As an organic continuation of this idea, contemporary literary criticism regards a literary text as one macrometaphor, conveying a message in its homogenous unity.

1.6 The Prague School

Jakobson and The Prague School introduced the notion of distinctive features in the field of semantics (and phonology). However, the liquidity and uncertainty of the meanings of words make it next to impossible to provide complete semantic analyses by applying exclusively the distinctive features. Semantics is the field that is the least applicable for scientific cognition in view of empirical principles only. To analyse exactly what a word or a sentence means requires great amounts of vaguely defined knowledge outside language. Perceptions, thoughts and emotions must be taken into consideration, which are only accessible personally and individually. As for poetics, the one invariable component for Jakobson is the poetic function, poeticity, which is only part of a complex system, though a very important one, which determines the nature of the whole system.
“Poeticity is present when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named or an outburst of emotion, when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality.” (Jakobson 1981:750)

Not only in phonology, but in poetry too, he mainly relies on opposition, which applies to poetry in the form of parallelism (recurrence, repetition). (The origin of the word poem is “return”.) Parallelism lies in the alternation of variables and invariables, which provides the poem with homogeneity and divergence at the same time. In his analyses of poems he highlights the convergent nature of phonology and poetry. His views on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes are inherent in his claim that the symmetric repetition and contrasts of grammatical meanings become a poetic means. Jakobson regards poetic language as being analogous with natural languages, the lines and stanzas being linguistic units. I find this very important in my research for I rely on the conceptual units, which are activated by the whole of the poem, the stanzas and lines. Jakobson compares the poet to the reader, who will by no means attempt a conscious analysis of the poem. Jakobson's approach to poetry receives severe criticism from many scholars. Petőfi (2004) offers a conceptional change—compositional construction might be used rather than composition, which is the vertical or hierarchical construction of the text. The other concept offered is the textural construction and refers to the horizontal or linear composition, which is understood as the repetition of the elements related to the different hierarchical levels which thus provides a horizontal form. Petőfi concludes that Jakobson deals with the textural composition and applies his phonological methods to the non-phonological aspects. The main fault he finds is the lack of the hierarchical investigations. I discuss Petőfi's alternative solution below (1.9).

1.7 Another structuralist

Jonathan Culler suggests that semantics seems to be the most useful among the branches of linguistics in literary criticism (1975:75). Semantics could be a remedy in the attempts to define the meaning of a text. Of the various opinions and theories the one dealing with the interpretation of poems is crucial. In interpreting a poem the reader extracts and relates to one another all the sequences relating to classesmes, that is, repeated semantic features in order to determine what meanings
cluster around a certain semantic core. The next step is the reduction of the sentences to a series of subjects and predicates, which will be cast in a constant form so that they can be related to one another and added up. I apply a similar approach, in which the readers of the poems “collapse” the propositions of the poems into something like classemes. They simplified the meanings, which allows their interpretations to be comparable. This is a kind of normalisation process, which, eliminating the redundancies, might lead to articulated readings. It is obvious, however, that the meaning of a text, a poem, is not automatically derivable from the meanings of the composing lexical items. I try to offset this problem by asking for a total collapsing, that is, simplifying of the meaning, identifying the message and giving a title to the poem interpreted. Also, the classemes the readers identify are labelled as neutral, positive and negative, so that we can reveal the general differences between the original poem and its translated version.

1.8 Generative grammar and what it “generated” in translation theory

Chomsky’s generative transformational grammar aims at revealing the meaning of a sentence from the deep structure through the semantic interpretation. For long semantics was connected to the deep structure supposing that the transformational rules do not play any role in the formation of the meaning of the surface structures. According to generative semantics, the components of deep structure are the semantic concepts themselves; the dictionary forms and the syntactic structures are formed from them. Indivisible semantic concepts should serve as starting points, which could be composed into dictionary entries with the help of certain rules, e.g. cause—become—non—animate → kill (in Fodor 1970). This approach was later rejected because of its complexity and ineffectiveness. (N.B.: Artificial intelligence makes use of this kind of semantic systematisation; these are the semantic primitives that the computer must be taught for the comprehension and production of human language.) Besides, one might question certain propositions in this theory, as, for example, the supposition that “the grammar contains a system of rules of semantic interpretation and a context-free categorial component” (Chomsky, 1972:65)
Also, he argues that the interpretation of a sentence is dependent upon the intrinsic semantic content of lexical items. This refers to the endophoric interpretation of a sentence and excludes the exophoric element, the context outside the sentence.

This context may be the text in which the sentence appears or the speech event (not going into detail about SEA: speech situation, speech event and speech act, being social, social-linguistic and linguistic concepts, respectively). Chomsky, in his observations of surface and deep structures, concentrates on the sentence only, which is an unnatural and unilateral approach, alien to communication. He makes mention, however, of speaker intention, but, eventually, he insists on a strict representation as part of grammar, and neglects the mental operations of the interlocutors of communication. Chomsky's views on translation are not related to his generative grammar, and consequently his theory of syntax was not intended to be a theory of translation.

However, his approach “generated” many of Nida's thoughts on translation. When we read Nida, we realise that he might be regarded as the forerunner of localisation (Chapter 3). While working on the (unsuccessful) adaptations of religious texts, he came to what today is considered an obvious conclusion that interpretation is foregrounded culturally and individually, which means that the differences in social and personal knowledge create divergent contexts for the texts. In this respect, Nida's revelation is fundamentally different from Chomsky's, because context is omnipotent. Due to the clerical nature of his investigations, the audience's response to the text becomes more relevant than the text itself. While Chomsky discounts Sapir and Whorf's approach to language, Nida incorporates it in his model and emphasises the role of culture in interpretation.

Nida's disagreement concerning meaning does not accompany his agreement as regards to deep structure and his pragmatics is rooted in it. He understands the pragmatic aspect of meaning as something incorporating syntactic structures and universal human experience. The deep structure (the core) is revealed as the function of the message, which determines a universal response to the message. He believes that the transferring of function to another language provides successful translation. The emphasis is on how rather than what the text communicates, thus he speaks of functional rather than formal, and dynamic rather than literal equivalence. His views are seminal in translation theory and get reiterated later due to the realisation that message - context and message - reception are united in one homogenous unit and are thus to be treated accordingly.
1.9 Hungarian text research

The forerunners of Hungarian text linguists (Deme 1966, Békési 1976) used “speech work” rather than “text” to reproduce “Sprachwerk” and “discourse” in Hungarian terminology in the 60s and 70s. Text was considered the top at the hierarchy of linguistic units the time. Parallel with the adequate technical term of textual research (textology, not to be mistaken with Petőfi’s term) the focus of textual research included functional dimensions besides linguistic-formal aspects in the 80s. Kiefer (1979) introduced the term text linguistics and called for a comprehensive description of the grammar of the text, i.e., the special relationship between the sentences constituting a text. The inclusion of pragmatics into text linguistics entailed the recognition of the relevance of interdisciplinarity. The projection of text linguistics onto literature, stylistics, is represented by Szabó (1988), among others. Békési (1982) began to investigate the logico-semantic relations between sentences, claiming that these relations constitute blocks within the textual unit. His research commenced with news articles (narrative texts) and continued with argumentative texts (1986). Double syllogism (Békési 1995) is a meaning construction that operates with contrastive conjunctions as marking the relation of arguments rather than statements. Antal (1979) searches cohesion and distinguishes textually dependent (additive, deictic and elliptic) and independent sentences. He concludes that the exclusion of independent sentences disintegrates the text, therefore, they represent non-linguistic relations. The notion of textual grammar has a double interpretation—a wider (system of rules from which the organisation of the text is deducible) and a narrower (which ensure the grammatical-semantic relations). The quest for a particular text grammar necessitates the separation of sentential and textual grammar, which is possible through the study of semantic relations of coordinate sentences (Kiefer 1976). Unlike an isolated sentence, a text does not contain constraints on the several functions of conjunctions.

Poems are investigated from the point of view of theme-rheme linear progression by Boda and Porkoláb (1996) and they also draw up the model of poetry interpretation. They observe poetic world with the help of computer analysis—corpus analysis, interactive concordances, and poetic diction—a novel approach to texts in stylistic research. Textual organisation and the communicative aspects of the lyric message are observed by Kovács (2003). The textual organisation of poetry lies in the mutual dependence of the poem’s grammatical projection and the ideas expressed in it. Poetry is renown for multiple structures and functions of