“Interpretation is Merely Another Word for Translation”
A Peircean Approach to Translation, Interpretation and Meaning

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Semiotranslation is an all-encompassing sign-theoretical approach to (interlingual) translation and translating. It constitutes an interdisciplinary attempt to give translational activity a new frame of reference through a unification of pragmatic semiotics and translation studies. Drawing on the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and particularly on his general theory of signs, the fundamental semiotranslational postulate maintains that translation is sign interpretation, and amounts to Peirce’s dynamic sign action – his semiosis. In that view, semiotranslation demystifies interlinguistic translation as text and action and positions it in the framework of everyday human activities with all its implications. This is a starting-point that does not trivialise but foregrounds the role of translation proper as interpretation, and opens up a different perspective on products, processes, and contexts of translation. In the end, semiotranslation grows into an experiment that seeks to stimulate thinking through its operative Peircean concepts, among them Peirce’s pragma(tis)tic view of meaning.

Introduction: Incipient Symbiosis of Translation Studies and Semiotics

Translation studies is described as “the study of translation at large”, including literary and non-literary translation, oral interpretation, and audiovisual translation (Baker 1998b). Characteristic of this particular field of knowledge is that it borrows...
its methodologies and theoretical frames of reference from other disciplines – interdisciplinarity has indeed become a widely applied as well as a proudly cherished concept within contemporary translation research. Translation studies has, no doubt, not only broadened its theoretical framework and methodology, but also profited from its increasingly interdisciplinary insights. That is why we can today draw from the multitude and versatility of linguistic, communicative, cultural, cognitive, or sociological approaches to translation, among others.

Newcomers to the field of translation studies include semiotic approaches to translation. To introduce the semiotic approaches as “a newcomer” is perhaps not the right expression though; a more suitable characterisation might be “a potential paradigm, or dimension”. Within translation studies, there is actually no established semiotic approach; this despite the fact that the very first contribution to this branch, that is, Roman Jakobson’s seminal article “On linguistic aspects of translation”, was published as early as 1959.

In its general, comparative, and applied forms, semiotics is investigation into the conditions, functions, and structures of signs and sign processes, including signs in general and all life systems as well as the diverse types of communication, information exchange, and sign use (Posner 1987, ix). To its advocates, the doctrine of signs is a source of enlightenment and a searchlight, illuminating issues such as those of man’s existence, the universe, or God’s reality. It provides the inquirer with a multipurpose supply of sign-theoretical concepts, views, and methods, with applicability ranging from the analysis of complex systems of cultures and societies or cognition to the analysis of everyday phenomena.

One of the major currents in semiotic studies is Peircean semiotics, also called pragmatic, or interpretive semiotics. It is based on the general sign theory of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), an American polymath and, according to his commentators, arguably the most important mind the United States has ever produced. He was a mathematician, astronomer, chemist, engineer, inventor, psychologist, philologist, lexicographer, historian of science, and much more (see Brent 1998). But above all, Peirce was a philosopher particularly interested in logic and semiotics; nowadays he is remembered as the founder of pragmatism and modern, processual sign theory.

When what Peirce called the most general science of semēio’tic (EP2, 402–403)2 is combined with the specific field of translation research the symbiotic result is a Peircean approach to translation studies. It reached the field of translation-theoretical inquiries as a form of thought-experiment introduced in the mid-1980s.

2 In-text references to various sources for Peirce’s writings appear in the forms commonly used in Peirce scholarship; these start with the abbreviation of the title (CP, EP, MS, W). See References for further details.
by Dinda L. Gorlée (1986). After a somewhat polemic beginning, semiotranslational research, or briefly semiotranslation, received a firmer foothold after the mid-1990s, nowadays finding transdisciplinary adherents, at home in semiotics as well as in translation studies.³

Semiotranslation is the approach to translation to which my recent research owes the greatest debt, but even more importantly, it constitutes a facet of my current research project called “Towards abductive translation studies”. The purpose of the project is to study, in addition to the role of Peircean abduction in translating, the possibility of a semiotic translation theory as well as to examine the essence of what has been proposed for such a theory, namely Peircean semiotranslation as introduced, elaborated, and revised during the last twenty years by Gorlée (1986 and subsequent publications). In the scholarly field, this Peirce-based approach is today the only attempt at creating a comprehensive semiotic theory of translation, and as the pioneer in this branch, semiotranslation is a strong candidate for the leading theory within a semiotic paradigm-to-be of translation studies.

In this paper, I aim to provide a Peirce-inspired presentation and theoretical discussion of certain semiotranslationally central ideas and views on translation, interpretation, and meaning as well as their interrelationship. These aspects of interest become welded in semiotranslation which encourages, firstly, the consideration of the diverse implications and consequences of the choice of Peirce’s semiosis as the paradigm for (sign) translation and, secondly, the study of the suggestion and claim that translation in its different forms exemplifies semiosis (Gorlée 1994, 226–227; 2004, 13; inter alia).

The keyword crucial in this context is semiosis, the virtually unlimited process of signification, the process of interpretation of a sign through another sign or, in brief, dynamic sign action and sign interpretation. For a semiotranslation scholar, semiosis constitutes translational semiosis: signs becoming signs through translating. Some of the consequences of the acceptance of this seminal standpoint, that semiosis is translation, and translation is semiosis, will be discussed in the second section of this article.

The Peircean idea of consequences becomes even more emphasised in the third section. A semiotranslation scholar is not only interested in the meaning of translation as semiosis, or (sign) interpretation, as mentioned above, but also in meaning as such. Since we are dealing with the Peircean tradition and orientation,

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3 In translational research, the term semiotranslation (coined by Gorlée in 1993) has been used in a general sense as well, referring to research based on Jakobson, Bakhtin, Lotman, Greimas, Eco, and other semioticians. In Gorlée’s own research, this extension to the concept was introduced in the 2000s. Gorlée has also suggested an alternative spelling, semio-translation, in order to show the etymology of her neologism (2004b, 11).
one has to bear in mind that Peirce gave several explications to “meaning”. It can refer, for instance, to the complete immediate object of the sign (CP 2.293), to the dream-exciting power of a symbol (CP 4.56), or to the (logical) interpretant (CP 4.132, CP 5.179). More relevant here, however, is the idea of meaning as the possible practical consequences and effects (or the conceivable bearing upon one’s conduct), crystallised in Peirce’s pragmatic maxim:

In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception. (CP 5.9)

Hence, the third section of this paper examines Peirce’s concept of meaning from the point of view of consequences and effects, reaching from the level of a word to the level of texts. Finally, the fourth section summarises the study in some general implications.

Semiotranslational Claims about Translational Reality

Referring to Gideon Toury’s classical definition of translation as “any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds” ([1982, 27] 1985, 20), Maria Tymoczko points out that this kind of a broad definition is needed “to cover research in translation studies as a whole” (2002, 15 fn4). To consider Toury’s descriptivist definition an open one is misleading, however, since it in fact offers not only the target culture, but translation scholars and researchers as well, the right to set the limits of the concept of translation: as broad as they like but, on the other hand, as narrow as they please. Furthermore, Toury’s definition does not presuppose or predict that any utterance actually passes as a translation, nor that it is accepted or studied as such; it simply states the fact that translation is a spatio-temporally determined and re-definable concept, a fluid and ever-changeable entity, for communities to agree upon.

What researchers do with this freedom to choose one’s definitions is intriguing. Although there are many who admit that a broad definition of translation is possible, desirable, or even unavoidable (see, for instance, Baker 1998a, xvii), in the end, they still seem to prefer a narrower and stricter definition, such that any promising broad-view-presentation transforms very quickly into a discussion of a narrower, verbal and interlingual mode of translation. Characteristic of any initially broad definition is the inevitable involvement of a semiotic dimension. When semiotics, also referred to as a sophisticated theory of mind, or, for that matter, any other approach, becomes involved, there must be interdisciplinarity.
As a field of knowledge, translation studies appears to embody varying elements from the triplet of multi- or pluridisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and trans- or crossdisciplinarity. Despite the apparent openness and even espoused interdisciplinary-mindedness of translation research, it still seems to be the case that certain new approaches and their perspectives, concepts, and definitions are relatively easily acknowledged by translation scholars, while others, such as the sign-based approaches, appear to fall on stony ground and find it harder to gain recognition and become established. This can hardly be due to the awe of Otherness when we remember that the representatives of translation studies are explicitly interested in promoting intercultural communication and broadening understanding in general. On the other hand, this state of affairs is not limited to this particular combination of semiotics and translation studies but can be perceived to some extent whenever modern semiotics is being introduced to new research areas (see, for instance, Broms 2004).

In its view on translation (translations and translating), semiotranslation probes the boundaries of traditional definitions and challenges the prevailing ideas of what translation is, what is translated or is translatable (what the signs are that are translated), as well as where translating can be encountered. These questions will be addressed in the following sub-sections.

Interpretation Is Translation Is Semiosis

“What does it mean to speak of the ‘interpretation’ of a sign? Interpretation is merely another word for translation” is a statement that can be found in late Peirce, from 1906 (EP2, 388). This quotation, which suggested the title for my article, could very well be considered as the proposal that has paved the way for semiotranslation, since it introduces the fundamental idea of all interpretation as translation.4 The idea of translation is in turn inherent in Peirce’s conception of semiosis that constitutes a flexible yet determined semiotic methodology and framework for semiotranslation.

Becoming and being translated is vital for the existence and survival of a sign. The notion of translation is actually embedded twofold in Peirce’s view because the concept of signhood already includes it. A sign can complete its future-oriented double mission of representation and interpretability/translatability only when it is explained (CP 2.230), translated (CP 5.594, for instance), interpreted (CP 5.569), or

4 There are researchers who do not share the idea of translation and interpretation being co-extensive, either as a Peircean notion or otherwise. According to Eco (2001, 69ff.), the combination of meaning, translation, and interpretation was for Peirce simply a way of illustrating his thought, and translation a synecdoche for interpretation. Moreover, Eco criticises Jakobson’s article from 1959, which draws on Peirce, for being ambiguous and Jakobson’s interpreters for causing confusion: Jakobson did not, Eco argues, consider interpreting and translating as equals, but saw translation simply as a form of interpretation.
has determined an interpretant (CP 5.569). To express this more precisely, a sign
is a semiotic sign provided that it is possible for the sign to receive an explanation,
translation, interpretation, or interpretant and thus create a triadic relationship of
sign–object–interpretant – a genuine triad – at least in futuro, as Peirce later added
(CP 2.92; see further, Short 2004, 225). There are some further formulations that
emphasise Peirce’s idea of translation: the meaning of the sign is “the translation
of the sign into another system of signs” (CP 4.127); or with a stronger wording “the
meaning of a sign is the sign it has to be translated into” (CP 4.132; my emphasis);
or “[b]ut a sign is not a sign unless it translates itself into another sign in which it
is more fully developed” (CP 5.594). To fulfil its semiotic signhood, the primary
sign has not only to represent its object but, in addition, it has to be able to create
for itself an interpretation, a secondary sign that is an interpretant or a chain of
interpreants. Without interpretation and thus interpretant, the sign remains a dead
sign, or as David Savan (1987–88, 3) put it, “only a potential or virtual sign”.

Peirce’s semiosis is a triadic sign process, a sign consisting of a sign-vehicle, an
object, and an interpretant. In semiosis, the sign empowered by its object creates
an interpretant of itself, and this interpretant – a sign as well – can, in turn, determine
a further interpretant, thus creating a chain of interpretant after interpretant, and
translation after translation, potentially ad infinitum. In the same manner, when
interlingual translation is approached as translational semiosis, a semiotranslation
scholar observes that the source-sign, that is determined and specialised by its
object, generates a target-sign that signifies the same object. This is an event that
a translation scholar would describe as the source text receiving a counterpart in
its target text. As a semiotic process, translating is neither a one-level and once-
and-for-all phenomenon nor a closed cycle of creating a translation B out of an
original text A. Translating is a continuum, a web, and an open-ended procedure,
in which A is already an interpretation and translation of a previous sign and B does
not necessarily end the semiosis but constitutes a potential source-sign for a new
cycle and act of interpretation and translation.

This might sound like an elaborate, lexical trick, simply based on the substitution
of expressions, in which case semiotranslation would merely be a case of reinventing
the wheel, a circumstance for which novel approaches to translation are so often
criticised. It would be a mistake, however, and would render the semiotranslational
idea, work, and thought incomplete and even inaccurate, to think that the term
“semiotranslation” entails, with respect to translation theory, merely a terminological
reform, such that a word, source text, and translation (a unit of the text or the text
as a whole) are now simply replaced with the semiotic concepts of a sign and an
interpretant, and the notion of process in turn with Peirce’s semiosis. If we adopt
Peirce’s sign-theoretical insights as the framework of our approach to translation
with semiosis as its cornerstone – and this is what semiotranslational approach
has done – we at the same time have to adopt the whole of Peirce’s semiotic
architecture. Though, admittedly Peirce’s lifework and his semiotic project were never truly completed.

At this point, we are most likely to perceive both how semiotranslation differs from other, non-semiotic approaches and the first of the various consequences of the semiotranslational claim that interpretation is translation and translation, in turn, is semiosis.

**Translation of Any Sign**

Translation epitomises semiosis, with interlingual translation being but one type of translation (Gorlée 1994, 226). Regarding the other types, semiotranslational research refers to Jakobson’s frequently-cited classification of the three modes of translation. According to Jakobson, there are three ways of interpreting, or translating, a verbal sign:

1. intralingual translation that occurs within the same language; it is *rewording*, exemplified by the use of a synonym or a paraphrase;

2. interlingual translation that occurs between two languages; this mode is what is usually acknowledged as translation, or better, *translation proper*;

3. intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* that occurs between a verbal and a nonverbal code, such as when a manifestation of verbal art, such as a novel, becomes a film or a painting ([1959] 1966, 233 and 238).

Semiotranslation is thus not only interlinguistic in nature, but reaches even further to intra- and intersystemic activities of both verbal and nonverbal nature. Hence, the possible involvement of diverse sign systems is taken into account.

Even though semiotranslation is mainly concerned with interlingual translation, it does nonetheless acknowledge the coexistence of Jakobson’s other two modes of translation – in certain aspects, as my own research has shown, they are even crucial for the germinal theory of semiotranslation, including abductive translation. Jakobson’s typology has become a classic, and echoes of it can be seen in the translation scholarship of today as references to the traditional interlingual as well to the intralingual and intersemiotic forms of translation, but very often also as elaborations and modifications suggested by Jakobson’s interpreters and criticisers. The typology has its clear shortcomings, such as its language-orientedness. Its value from the semiotranslational viewpoint lies in the suggestion of intersemiotic translation between different codes, modes, and sign systems, be they verbal or non-verbal, and, therefore, in the introduction to translation studies of what is
nowadays commonly referred to as multimodality (multimodal discourse, multimodal texts and genres, multimodal or intermedia translation and particularly multimedia or audiovisual translation, for instance). Multimodality simply strengthens the coexistence of versatile signs in communication.

The basic idea of translation within a sign system or between sign systems becomes of secondary importance, however, when recalling Peirce's fundamental and all-encompassing conception of sign. A sign was for Peirce *anything* "which determines something else (its interpretant) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its object) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*" (CP 2.303; emphasis in original). Peirce provided a long list exemplifying signs: "… every picture, diagram, natural cry, pointing finger, wink, knot in one's handkerchief, memory, dream, fancy, concept, indication, token, symptom, letter, numeral, word, sentence, chapter, book, library" (EP2, 326), or "... signals, orders of command, microscopes, legislative representatives, musical concertos, performances of these" (MS 634, 18–19). In short: a sign can be anything producing a triadic relation and mediating between its object and the interpretant created in an interpreting mind. I, the writer of this article, am also a sign, since to my readers I represent semiotranslational scholarship, I influence my readers, and determine, I hope, an interpretant and a translation which is an effect created in the minds of the interpreters (W2, 53–54). And, what's more, this paper is a thought-sign, an interpretant of my acquaintance with translation studies and Peircean semiotics as well as their incipient symbiosis, the semiotranslational approach.

In accordance with Peirce's view, semiotranslation entails translations of whatever is conceived as a sign. In that view, general sign interpretation constitutes the overall frame of reference of semiotranslation. This notion has a far-reaching dimension: translation as interlingual activity and as the result of that activity amounts to our everyday interpretations of natural or conventional signs that our lives and our reality are filled with. In this manner, semiotranslation demystifies interlinguistic translation as text and action, positioning it in the framework of everyday human activities. This, in turn, might sound as if semiotranslation somehow deprives the professional activity of translating of its specific character and the professional translators of their expertise. That is not the case, however. The unity in the foundations is a starting-point that does not trivialise but foregrounds the role of translation proper as interpretation, and opens up a different perspective on the products, processes, and contexts of translation.

The Peirce-inspired conception of translation ought to be approached primarily as a theoretical proposal and mind-broadening conceptual exercise. Even though the semiotranslational view advocates that translation can be encountered everywhere and that everybody can translate, it does not, for instance, claim that people who know no foreign languages could succeed as interlingual translators; that is beside
the point. The point is, firstly, that, in a Peircean world, there are different forms of translations, including translations that by definition can be performed by anyone, and secondly, that the different forms must share the interpretation mechanisms, at least to some extent. The common denominator and mechanism is called semiosis, and through it, semiotranslation is being linked to all kinds of translative, interpretive, and semiotic activities that take place all the time.

At this point, one additional remark needs to be made. We know what it means to translate between different and mostly incompatible sign systems, since we are used to interpreting and translating signs ranging from the clouds in the sky to weathercocks on the roofs; from cave paintings to modern art in museums; and from dogs’ barking to people’s feelings, actions, and thoughts. We also are aware of how fallible we are in our interpretations, yet are we constantly faced with situations in which one needs to interpret; knowing that what is achieved is, for the most part, mere guesswork concerning the real nature of the world. In this light, interlingual translation dealing with two compatible languages within the same sign or code system appears to be more suited to, and perhaps even more ideal for translative operations, and this particularly with respect to the result: preserving the meaning, approaching the truth, achieving equivalence, creating similarity, or whatever description we might prefer to use in order to express what Peirce (CP 1.339) wrote about the interpretant, that it is “nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along”. In that view, translation proper might, after all, be in some respect slightly unlike the other forms of interpretation-translations, still relentlessly performing its end-oriented general duty of truth-providing.

**Signs in the Anthroposemiosphere and Beyond**

This article has thus far, I hope, given semiotranslational answers to the following questions: what constitutes translation; which sign systems and which signs can be involved in the process; and, consequently, what can be translated. The semiotic definition of translation, however, extends far beyond the semiotranslational what-and-which-systems-definition. The third question is perhaps unexpected, yet completely natural in a semiotic context. Who are the translators, or better yet, *where* can we find translational activities and translations?

The following, all-embracing where-proposal is Augusto Ponzio’s and dates from the late 1990s. I find this extensive definition an excellent crystallization of the semiotic conception of translation. It draws from, without direct reference to, Jakobson’s views and takes them further (Ponzio 1999–2000, 5; emphasis in original):
In its most obvious sense translation concerns verbal texts in their relation between different languages. But even if we remain within the sphere of verbal signs, translation does not only concern the relation between one language and another, but also that between the different languages forming the same language since all languages are endowed to a lesser or greater degree with internal plurilingualism.

Furthermore, translation also takes place between verbal languages and nonverbal languages, and vice versa, and among nonverbal languages themselves.

Understood in such terms, translation cannot be restricted to the field of linguistics: it involves semiotics, the general science of signs.

But even before being an object of semiotics, translation is a sign operation. This is so not only in the banal sense that translation occurs among signs, but also in the sense that it cannot be reduced to the linguistic-verbal, but rather spreads throughout the whole sign sphere. Where there are signs, where there are semiosic processes, there is translation.

Taken to the extreme, translation moves, in Ponzio's view (ibid., 6), away from solely human signs and languages, be they verbal or nonverbal, towards the entire organic world and any given situation in which one can encounter signs and semioses. So in the end, Ponzio argues, the scope of translation could be considered to extend far beyond the anthroposemiosic sphere towards the whole semiobiosphere.

Here we are probing also the boundaries of the ordinary semiotranslational view which focuses mainly on human translation-interpretation processes. On the other hand, semiotranslation accepts Peirce's claim that the interpreter can be a non-human mind as well (CP 4.551, cf. CP 2.228); this being a natural elaboration of the proposal that anything can be a sign.

**Pragmatic Approach to Meaning as Translation**

The last few paragraphs above seem to take us from the broad lines of semiotranslation and its broad definition of translation and interpretation towards questions even broader that, in the end, appear to embrace more or less the whole universe. But Peirce also provided a more concrete, pragmatistic, and profound view of how signs become meaningful signs; how what we so often approach as semantic content evolves into pragmatic efficacy; and how meaning becomes accessible through translations “disguised” as interpretative results: interpretants, effects, and consequences.
Meaning and Logical Interpretants

Following Peirce (CP 5.475ff.), if we want to find out the “meaning” of an intellectual concept we need to examine “the interpretants, or proper significate effects, of signs”. To Peirce’s mind, there are three kinds of effects: emotional interpretants (for instance, feeling of recognition produced), energetic interpretants (involving muscular or mental effort), and logical interpretants (habit-change). Of these three forms, logical interpretants have been an object of Gorlée’s semiotranslational investigation.

First logical interpretants (CP 5.480ff.), habits of interpretation, are suggestive, mere conjectures. They give rise to second logical interpretants, which are created with the help of the imagination, choice between the conjectures, and examination of their possible, different impact on the interpreter’s future conduct. The third (or final, also called ultimate by Peirce) logical interpretants are the interpreter’s unconscious habits to act “in a given way whenever he may desire a given kind of result” (CP 5.491). In Gorlée’s Wittgenstein-inspired language-game of translation (1994, 104ff.), these three logical interpretants of Peirce amount to a three-step translation process, in which the aim is to generate concrete products, interpretant-signs, and in which the interpretants do not have a symbiotic but a successive relationship, with the stages possibly partly overlapping. This viewpoint is actually a modification, not an outgrowth, of Peirce, and it also applies to the role that is given to the translator. Translators as sign interpreters are, in Peirce’s view (CP 4.550ff.), not particular minds or persons, but abstract quasi-minds, or quasi-interpreters and quasi-utterers. Contrary to this view of Peirce, translators are though flesh-and-blood persons for Gorlée (1994: 106–107); this is, Gorlée argues, “in this connection a practical necessity” – a (language-)game (of translation) requires players; in other words, individual sign-users at work.

The first logical interpretants are intuitive impromptu translations and working hypotheses, the results of a train of thoughts and intellectual reverie (see CP 6.458ff.) that flow through a fleeting belief into a potential habit (Gorlée 1994, 107–109). The vacancy, dreaminess, and creative guesswork, which characterise the production of the provisional firsts, are in the second step of Gorlée’s model then replaced by a cold-blooded testing and analysis, leading to actual second interpretants that offer a workable solution to the translation assignment. But the solution and the perfect translation – final logical interpretant; general rule of conduct and ultimate interpretation; or unfailing habit to behave in a given way in corresponding future situations – remains, according to Gorlée (ibid.), utopian in the translational context (which is to say that the three-step process has three steps only in theory). Gorlée’s angle is here indisputably more process-oriented than product-oriented, and it more fully does justice to the conception of interpretant, not as a mere meaning labelling a product, but as a hardening effect produced in a process.
Meaning of a Word

Meaning in Peirce and its relevance for translation studies is not reducible to translations as diverse types of logical interpretants, which is an issue that definitely requires further inquiry, not only because of its complexity but because of its potential to weld the product and the process of translation as well.

Peirce himself deliberated extensively over the problem of meaning and put forward an at least initially more translation-proper-relevant view of the meaning of a word. In 1903, he (CP 8.176) touched upon the problem of the meaning of words in general and described the meaning as instrument of communicative experiment, with a special reference to the communicative usability of a sign, the sign-user's purposeful intentions, as well as the consequences, the effects of interpretation, or interpretants. This is a view that, once again, integrates interpretants qua translations but simultaneously opens up an intriguing, pragmat(tis)tic, and far-reaching perspective on the world of an interlingual translator, a world and universe which is unquestionably perfused with words and other signs, as Peirce (CP 5.448 n1) claimed.

According to Peirce, the meaning of a word has three grades. Concerning the first and lowest grade of meaning, Peirce argued that “a word has meaning for us in so far as we are able to make use of it”, firstly, “in communicating our knowledge to others” and secondly, “in getting at the knowledge that those others seek to communicate to us” (CP 8.176). Peirce continued his treatise on the meaning of a word by stating that it is “more fully the sum total of all the conditional predictions which the person who uses it intends to make himself responsible for or intends to deny” (ibid.; emphasis in original). It is this (quasi-)conscious intention embedded in the use of the word that Peirce called the second grade of meaning. As for the last grade, Peirce maintained:

But besides the consequences to which the person who accepts a word knowingly commits himself, there is a vast ocean of unforeseen consequences which the acceptance of the word is destined to bring about, not merely consequences of knowing but perhaps revolutions of society. One cannot tell what power there may be in a word or a phrase to change the face of the world; and the sum of those consequences makes up the third grade of meaning. (Ibid.; emphasis in original)

Meaning is thus related to the primary and immediate usability of a word in communication, to all of the user’s actional intentions, conscious or not, and to all the consequences, including the unanticipated ones. In addition, as we may notice, meaning grows here from a first grade linguistic notion into an unexpectedly extensive, third grade notion of extralinguistic reality, echoing Peirce’s pragmatic maxim, referred to earlier in this article. This pragmatic aspect – Peirce’s pragmatism regarded here as a theory of meaning – becomes further emphasised when we
examine how these three formulations find an extension in the three grades of clarity concerning how we apprehend the meanings of words (CP 3.457). There is clearness of apprehension in the sense of subjective familiarity with the word or idea (CP 5.389), as an abstract definition originating from an analysis of the very applicability of the word (CP 5.392), and clarity in its third grade (CP 3.457), that could be called pragmatic clearness (see CP 8.214 fn1) and that introduces the result of our inquiry into the conceivable practical effects of a conceptual experiment.

Returning to the meaning of words, the formulations above reveal other, also translationally relevant features of a conception, namely Peirce's three successive ontological modes: being a possibility, being an actuality, or being a necessity (CP 6.342). The translator and, for that matter, any sign-user, encounters the meaning of a word first in the present, in the communicative potentiality of a word and the may-be (and the may-be-not) of the expression, conveying Peirce's universal category of Firstness. This is followed by the meaning from the past, flowing into the actually-is factuality of the word, revealing the intentional nature of using the word in an action of Secondness. And finally, there is the meaning of the must-be tendenciality and Destiny as well as the future-oriented consequences of Thirdness.

From a translation-theoretical standpoint, this Peircean trichotomy leads to some thought-provoking ideas. The first and the second grades are certainly the grades that professional translators are mostly interested in. Communicativity and intentionality are of interest to both the sender and the receiver, but particularly to a translator whose task it is to double as the receiver-sender, that is, as the interpreter of the first sign, the source sign, and thereafter as the utterer of the interpretant, the target sign. The third grade and the potential habit-taking and habit-changing involved is a feature that is not in the foreground in professional translation activities, but it echoes to some extent Eugene A. Nida's well-known proposal of dynamic, and later, functional equivalence. Taken to the limit, the third grade in its pragmatic all-extensiveness serves as a good reminder of the power and the ethical obligation that the translator and the community of translators (and language users in general) are invested with. The third grade makes the sign-using interpreter-translator mediately, still ultimately, responsible for the consequences – for an ongoing evolution but, possibly, for a revolution.

**Meaning and Text-derivative Effects**

A characteristic feature of Peirce's life and writings was his inclination to category-bound trichotomisation, with trichotomics signifying “the art of making three-fold divisions” (W6, 211). Taking an elaborative step further but now in another direction, from vocabulary to textology (cf. Gorlée 2004, 197–198), Peirce's triadic view can be applied to the Karl-Bühler-based text typology for translators introduced in the
early 1970s by Katharina Reiss – the triplet of content-focused or informative, form-focused or expressive, and appeal-focused or operative texts (Reiss [1971] 2000, 24–26). These text types can be studied in the light of one of Peirce’s fundamental three-way distinctions, namely, that of feeling – action – thought, corresponding to the universal categories of Firstness – Secondness – Thirdness (see, for instance, “The Categories in Detail” in CP 1.300–1.353). This approach results in a new textual triad: texts of feeling (expressive), action (operative), and thought (informative).

Within semiotranslation, there is one triad of texts, Gorlée’s proposal of a literature-specific trichotomy (1992, 47–49). This textological suggestion is grounded in what is most accented in each type of literature: in Gorlée’s view, the substance of poetry leans mostly towards Firstness, that is, towards sensory qualities, effects, and description; the substance of drama towards Secondness – (re)actions, events, and narration; and the substance of novels towards Thirdness – thought, intellect, and dissertation. The accentuation varies though, which is an observation that applies to the Reissian text types as well: the language functions of representation, expression, and persuasion get combined in varying grades in the diverse text types, one of the functions still being dominant in a text (Reiss 2000, 25–26). The same variation is also reflected in Peirce’s categories. The categories do not constitute pure classes or rigid groups, but hierarchies and vague, flexible, interactive, and interrelated distinctions of togetherness.

This certainly concerns the novel Peircean trichotomy of texts of feeling, action, and thought as well. In addition, these texts address the heart, agency, and mind in diverse ways and degrees, and this gradually changing and fluid appeal to heart and head is identifiable throughout the triad that aims at different text-derivative effects. Awareness of these effects plays a central role in the choice of translation strategies.

A text of feeling – expressive text type, exemplified by “artistic literary works” (see Reiss 2000, 34) – evokes impressions and feelings; it breathes qualities of life and freedom by manifesting polysemous variety and multiplicity; it is chanceful and fictive but may be true as well, and lives on the beauty of a possible truth. A text of action – operative text type, that is, texts of appeal, influence, and purpose (see ibid., 38–39) – lives in the world of action and reaction as well as change; it is not so much interested in future events as in actual action and occurrence: eliciting a response here and now. A text of thought – informative text type, comprising a wide range of pragmatic texts (see ibid., 26–27) – provides the mind with nutrition: information it transmits prompts rational knowledge-creation and offers background knowledge for future conduct; it represents temporary, nevertheless state-of-the-

5 The fourth, non-Bühlerian multichannel text type, which Reiss called audio-medial and later multimedial (2000, 43ff.), is not brought into this discussion.
art truth and certainty; and in its role of a bridging mediator, it contributes for its part to our conception of reality and continuity.

**Evolutionary Aspect of Semiotranslation**

“Semiotranslation” is a word, a verbal sign and, in Peirce’s classification, a symbol. A symbol is composed independently of its object and refers to its object by virtue of a law. In order to be able to interpret a sign the interpreter has to know the way the sign is encoded. In the case of symbols, this means knowing the respective law which can be either a rule, convention, or habit. One of the things Peirce wrote about symbols is that they grow (CP 2.302): “A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows”.

To adopt the idea of translation as semiosis and consequently the idea of translation and semiosis as growth of knowledge has given rise to several semiotranslation-theoretical implications, some of which have been presented and discussed in the previous sections. To formulate the procedure and its theoretical implications differently: through semiotranslational view and research and through the chain of interpretants thus created, new aspects are integrated into the concept of semiotranslation, making it grow and become increasingly richer (cf. Esposito 1980, 144).

Towards the end of this article we have reached the very fundamentals of Peirce’s translational, pragmatic, and teleological thought. In a Peircean light, semiotic signs – the objects, and admittedly the results as well, of translating – are of more than instrumental value to us. They address the interpreting minds and create translation-interpretants classifiable as effects and consequences. Signs thereby emerge as independent and living translatorial agencies, able to modify their surroundings (cf. Esposito 1980, 202).

Signs, and translations among them, seem to function as forces of change. When embodied as ideas, signs have the power to work out results. It was this (r)evolutionary aspect – ideas having a generative capacity – that Peirce emphasised when he stated that “ideas are not all mere creations of this or that mind, but on the contrary have a power of finding or creating their vehicles, and having found them, of conferring upon them the ability to transform the face of the earth” (CP 1.217, 1.219). Through translations and translating, the possibilities of the present become the tendencies of the future. All in all, this is what in a Peircean context can very well be referred to as the evolutionary aspect of semiotranslation.
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