Translation in Qualitative Social Research: The Possible Impossible

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Abstract: In an increasingly globalized world of research, communicating with scholars in the same language and culture and with scholars from other cultures and linguistic background is a sine qua non in/of all sciences, including those using qualitative social research. The nature of language is at least latently recognized especially by those scholars who communicate with their peers in a non-native language, such as English, which has become *de facto* the scientific *lingua franca*. Although many are aware of the difficulties of rendering something a scholar wants to say in another language, the nature of language as a non-self-identical process is hardly if ever articulated. Instead, the metaphysical idea of the same "meanings" that can be rendered in multiple languages by means of translation—literally, "carried across"—is endemic to the scientific culture. In the very definition of science (e.g., in the description of research methods), experiments must operate the same (must be reproducible) wherever and by whomever these are conducted. In this contribution to the debate concerning translation, conducted in the context of the *FQS* debate "Quality of Qualitative Research," I articulate theoretical and pragmatic dimensions on the topic, drawing on empirical investigations, literary works, and philosophical investigations to explicate how translation is both theoretically impossible and pervasively achieved in/as everyday praxis.

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1. The Incompossible or The Law of Translation

> "1. *On ne parle jamais qu'une seule langue.*
> 2. *On ne parle jamais une seule langue"*
> (DERRIDA, 1996, p.21)

This contribution to the question about language and qualitative social research might have started as well, as Chapter 1 of "Marges de la philosophie" (DERRIDA, 1967a) with the statement, "Je parlerai, donc, d'une lettre [I will speak, therefore, of a/one letter]" (p.3), or, rather, *I will talk about* two letters and an apostrophe. Thus, what difference does the "qu'" make in the two incompossible propositions at the heart of DERRIDA's essay on language and multilingualism that open this text?[1] The two propositions have been translated into English as "1. *We only ever speak one language*. 2. *We never speak only one language*" (DERRIDA, 1998a, p.7). We may ask, what difference does the particle "qu'" in the first statement make, when considered to be an addition to the second statement, which it in fact modifies. We might alternatively ask, what difference it makes to drop from a sentence the particle "qu'." Why did DERRIDA present the two statements in this rather than in the reverse order? A second set of questions relates to the translation into English. To what extent do original and translation correspond? There are difference already on a formal level: Whereas the French only adds the particle "qu'" to the fifth word in the second statement, the English changes the structure of the sentence by having "only" modify the verb part of the predicate whereas it modifies the object part of the predicate in the second statement. Moreover, the "ever" changes to "never," which might be seen as the equivalent of going from "une" to "qu'une"; but, as can be seen, the order of the transformation runs in the opposite direction of the French: the dropping of "qu'" corresponds to the addition of "n." Another difference is how the pair of sentences feel in the mouth. Both statements are quite rhythmic in the French, but something jars in the French. (This is why the playwright Samuel BECKETT asked during his earlier work that the translator read the first version aloud, which allowed him to hear the phonic qualities of the new text [WINKLER, 2010].) What difference does the difference between the French (original) and English (translation) make? A big difference, if the medium *is* the message (McLUHAN, 1994 [1964]), because the structures of the two statements in the two languages are not the same so that the messages *cannot be* the same. The medium *is* a translator. [1]

Some readers, especially those who only read in English, might ask, "So what [does this matter]?" or "What is your point?" The responses have to be: it matters a lot and I am in the process of getting to it. The two statements are, from a non-metaphysical post-constructivist position, "la loi même de ce qu'on appelle la traduction [the very law of what is called translation]" (DERRIDA, 1996, p.25). Even more so, "it would be the law itself as translation [*ce serait la loi elle-même*

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1   Already there is a question whether the quotation *opens* the text, the section, or whether it is already within the text, which might be thought of as beginning with the title. In the going ideology, the title as the abstract are to stand for the article as a whole, which, taken to its limit, means including the title and the abstract.

comme traduction]" (p.25). The law of translation, therefore, is captured (translated into) a pair of incompossible statements, which differ (in French) only by the addition of the "qu'." The pair of statements is not only the law *of* translation but also the law *as* translation. [2]

So again, what difference does a particle such as "qu'" make? As DERRIDA (1967a) shows in the example of the simple (single) letter "a," there is a big difference. He, of course, used it to distinguish, in his native French, the words "différance" and "différence." The second is a real word of the French language corresponding to the English "difference," whereas the second is a non-word that exists as word. It does not figure as an entry in *the* referent of the French language, *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (REY, 2013). But it is not completely absent, though, because the dictionary refers to the work of DERRIDA and explains it thus: "The philosopher J. Derrida writes and proposes to write *différance* to designate the dynamics, the separation-creating action that creates the spacing, the 'différence' produced" (REY, 2013, n.p.; my translation). The "a" here stands for difference as such or difference in itself, because, in his spoken presentation, the difference between "différance" and "différence" exists but cannot be heard. DERRIDA's point is precisely the same that we find in a Marxist philosophy of language, according to which any statement[2] *is* change and, therefore, inherently non-self-identical (VOLOŠINOV, 1930). [3]

So again, we may ask: "What difference does it make?" In the following sections, I provide some examples to suggest why it makes a difference to our research if we abandon the quest for the "meaning" of a statement (*высказывание* [*vyskazyvanie*])—which, according to BAKHTIN (1975) includes individual words, sentences, poems, novels—abstracted from situations of the use of statements. Moreover, rather than seeking for the meaning of the *statement* (word, sentence, poem, novel) or its author's intentions, the statement is understood as a moment of a social/societal relation that is irreducible to the individual (author/reader, speaker/recipient) or the text. [4]

2. A Confession: On Hybridity and Diaspora

> "I have only one language and it is not mine;
> my "own" language is, for me, a language
> that cannot be assimilated"
> (DERRIDA, 1996, p.47)

I speak three languages fluently, but I speak no language perfectly. Every language of mine has an accent—but not the same. My German as a strong North-American English accent, my French has one that is not exactly German and decidedly not English, and my English, depending on the context, may be

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2 VOLOSINOV, as BAKHTIN (1975) uses the term *высказывание* (*vyskazyvanie*), which often is translated as utterance. But these authors also use the term to include poems, novels, and any other form of textual genre. To avoid the confusion that utterance creates—i.e., reference only to the spoken word, a locution—*statement* appears to be a more appropriate translation. Our subject matter thereby also enters the form of the argument. Even the writing of the word is translated from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet.

heard as having a Germanic, French, or no accent. My mother's tongue, the one I spoke during the first quarter of a century of my life is not my primary language, the one I express myself in best and most fluently. Although I respond in English when surprised, the language of my (internal) monologues—which really is a dialogue because it responds to people or situation—depends on my counterpart. Yet although this "thinking" occurs in one language, there sometimes is a word available from another language that seems to fit better than those in the other two. To complicate matters, there are all the other languages that I know in fragmentary ways, because I studied them (like the 6 years I spent in Latin courses) or because I needed to know the theoretical terms of original (classical Greek, Russian) thinkers. As a result, wherever I live and whichever language I speak, it is a hybrid. I am born to live in diaspora, where every home is abroad, and every place abroad is home. As DERRIDA says, I only have one language and it is not mine. "My language, the only one I hear myself speaking, is the language of the other" (1996, p.47). This led me to think language, as any other aspect of culture, in terms of hybridity, diaspora, and *métissage* (ROTH, 2008). There are no pure languages, cultures, identities. Everything and everyone is a *mêlee* (NANCY, 1993). [5]

A long time ago, I have come across a poet who wrote about the experience of the multiple tongues in her mouths, the literal and metaphoric ones. My point is not that life between cultures and languages creates such experiences but that the very use of language is one where our tongues are multiple: My mother's tongue is not mine.

> "You ask me what I mean
> by saying I have lost my tongue.
> I ask you, what would you do
> if you had two tongues in your mouth,
> and lost the first one, the mother tongue,
> and could not really know the other,
> the foreign tongue.
> You could not use them both together
> even if you thought that way" (from "Search for my Tongue," BHATT, 1988, p.65). [6]

The French have a verb, *dépayser*. In old French, it was used to describe the action of making someone change the country, place, territory, or milieu: to uproot, exile, deterriotorialize. Literally, the verb is built upon the negation (*de-*) of *pays*, country, territory. But now it is used to describe someone who is disconcerted, disoriented. In her poem, BHATT writes about the experience of speaking another tongue, having her tongue move to produce another language (tongue), and, in the process, about becoming disoriented. Changing language (and culture) can be a deterritorializing and disorienting experience, particularly when the changes are between cultures as distant as Asian and European ones —as I have had the opportunity to describe with several transnationally migrating scholars (e.g., HWANG & ROTH, 2008; ROTH & HARAMA, 2000). This experience does not require, however, a move into a foreign country, but also happens to working-class people, speaking another such English (German,

French), finding themselves among members of the Bourgeois class, African American (Turk, Maghrebian) students finding themselves in a predominantly White/European university (e.g., ECKERT, 1989). Why would this be if language were perfectly translatable, that is, if speaking another language merely meant using another code? Why would we need multiple codes if perfect translation is possible, which means that there exists a master code that coordinates all the different manifestations of language? [7]

While reading "L'homme sans qualités" [Ger., Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften; Eng., The Man Without Qualities] by Robert MUSIL (1956) I experienced for the first time that a literary work—which in the early parts of my life I read only in German—is not the same and that there are irresolvable tensions that do not carry across (translate). Whereas it has always been one of my favorite novels, in the original German (MUSIL, 1960 [1930-1942]), the French version did not read French at all. There was something heavy about the language, something German about the French, which corresponded neither to the French of someone like André GIDE or to the German that MUSIL had used. "L'homme sans qualités" was neither French nor German. Similarly, "Ulysses", another one of my most favorite novels, reads very differently in the original (James JOYCE, 1986) than it reads in the much-celebrated German translation—or, shall we say, transposition—by Hans WOLLSCHLÄGER (JOYCE, 1975). Closer to my work as a social scientist: There are considerable differences between the original "Sein und Zeit" [Being and Time] (HEIDEGGER, 1977 [1927]) and its different translations into English by Johan MACQUARRIE and Edward ROBINSON (HEIDEGGER, 1962 [1927]) and that by Joan STAMBAUGH (HEIDEGGER, 1996 [1927]). The translations of the Russian psychologist Lev VYGOTSKIJ into English often drop entire paragraphs, change adjectives such as societal (*общественный* [*obščestvennyj*]) to social (*социальный* [*sozial'nyj*]), and, thereby, make for a very different theory in the two languages. For example, anything that would allow tying the psychologist's theory to (Marxist) societal critique has been purged. Similarly, the linguist Tzvetan TODOROV (1984) has called the English translation of Valentin VOLOŠINOV (1930)—a text that many linguists attribute to BAKHTIN—referenced in this text "alarming" (p.xii) and, in my own appreciation, the French translation does much more justice to the original than the English. A most ironic, and likely most pertinent example of difficulties that come with translation exists in the case of Walter BENJAMIN's (1972 [1921]) text on translation, which every author writing on the topic does or must cite. The translations of this text on translation actually say the opposite of what the original text says (de MAN, 1986). Thus,

> "Even the translators, who certainly are close to the text, who had to read it closely to some extent, don't seem to have the slightest idea of what Benjamin is saying; so much so that when Benjamin is says certain things rather simply in one way—for example he says that something is *not*—the translators, who at least know German well enough to know the difference between something *is* and something *is not*, don't see it! and put absolutely and literally the opposite of what Benjamin has said" (p.79). [8]

De MAN then provides the example of the English and French translators, whom he qualifies to be "very good translators, and who know German very well," who should have known the difference between translatable and untranslatable. The irony of the matter is that DERRIDA, in a seminar, used the French translation of BENJAMIN's text, making reference to and using a statement about untranslatability, where BENJAMIN says, in fact, that it was a case of translatability. In whatever way we look at it, there is an issue that we need to confront when reading the authors on whose work we build (on whose shoulders we stand) in a translation. It makes little difference to DERRIDA, as long as he says that he attributes the idea about untranslatability to himself, but he cannot attribute it to BENJAMIN, who talked about the opposite. [9]

I write this essay from a lifetime of experience of otherness: as a working-class kid among middle-class peers, as a villager among city folk, as a "German" among "[English] Canadians," as a Canadian in the US or Australia, as a multilingual scholar. This experience has allowed me to experience, in and through my body, the phenomenon of otherness so familiar to phenomenological philosophers but of relatively little concern to qualitative researchers. The latter, however, are the most interested in finding out about human experience and therefore should be interested in the question of translation. I am writing as a subject who speaks multiple languages; I am writing as someone subject to and subjected to multiple languages. I am writing as someone at home in these languages, where each constitutes a diaspora in itself. [10]

3. Translation within Language

Although we do not think about it as such, translation occurs everyday and continuously *within* a language. There is not likely a day when we are not asked, following something we have said, "What do you mean by ...?" We then tend to say "the same" in another way, and, if necessary, say it again and again differently until the person, who has asked us about what we meant, is satisfied (e.g., ROTH & RADFORD, 2010). Each time we give it a new attempt at saying what we wanted to say from the beginning in a different way, we actually translate a statement into another one of the same language. Even the substitution of a command—such as "Slab!" said by a mason to his helper, who goes to get a slab —by another, lengthened one, "Bring me the slab!" constitutes a translation (WITTGENSTEIN, 1997 [1953]). That there is translation occurring is quite evident from the fact that our interlocutor does not understand the first, second, and so on version but the second, third, ... one. That is, there is a difference between the statements that we are asked about and the one that leads the recipient to the (expressed) sense of having understood. This continuous and pervasive form of translation is so mundane that we do not normally attend to it as such. Take the following episode from a second-grade mathematics classroom. The children are in the process of learning about three-dimensional objects, their names and properties. In the lesson fragment, we observe Ethan's second-turn reply to his teacher's question (Turn 16).[3] There is a first translation

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3   More technically, the reply makes the preceding utterance it pairs with a question, and the question makes the subsequent utterance it pairs with a reply. Question and reply form an

when the teacher produces what we can hear as a restatement of what Ethan had said (Translation 1, Turn 18).

     Lesson Fragment

	12	T:	so ethan do you want to start? (0.35)
			whATs ONE thing that makes a cube a cube.
	13		(0.58)
	14	E:	all the sides that it has,
	15	T:	sorrY?
O>	16a	E:	all the sides that it has they are all the same they are
	16b		A:Ll the same on each side.
	17		(0.28)
T1>	18a	T:	okay so you=are sAYing ALL: the sI:des <<rall>are the same>
T2>	18b		<<len>and what do you mean by the same.>
T3>	19a	E:	well each one is the same size, (.) and
T4>	19b		each ones the same (0.84) the same red square and like.
	20		(0.76)
T5>	21	T:	okay. so; (0.17) ETHhan says they=re A:Ll the same size
			(0.48) and they=re <<len>a:ll squa[:re]> [11]

Although Turn 16 and Turn 18 are not the same—embody different sentence structure and different words—we can hear the teacher employ indirect speech to render what Ethan has said. Evidence for the indirect speech is the sentence structure in "so you are saying [that] all the sides are the same," where the normally required "that" has been omitted (VOLOŠINOV, 1930). Moreover, there would have been a pause between the surrounding speech and the reported speech typical for direct quotation (ROTH, in press). It is a translation because in the uptake, the two voices of the original speech and the reporting speech come to be intermingled. A second translation occurs when the teacher asks Ethan what he *means* by "the same." (Even transcription is translation, for I use quotation marks where the teacher had pronounced none.) Then, in Ethan's first articulation of a reply, he utters what we can hear as a third translation (Turn 19a) of the original statement (turn 16), followed by another translation (Turn 19b). Then the teacher again "rephrases in her own words" what Ethan has said, thereby explicitly producing another translation. This is not a singular occurrence. Pretty well every transcript I produced over the past 25 years as a scholar contains multiple instances where participants ask each other what they mean and, thereby, engage in translation and requests thereof. [12]

Why, we might ask, all of these translations? From a pragmatic perspective, speakers have no need to produce repetitions of the same. If they translate based on the assumption that they are saying the same, then there is an underlying reason. For example, we can hear a speaker's own translation (e.g., Turns 19a and 19b) as realizing an implicit supposition that he has not said what he wanted to say, or has expressed it in way so that what he "really means" to say is not so clear. This is made explicit when current speaker formulates what is

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    irreducible pair, each constituting the other (e.g., BAKHTIN, 1975).

happening by using the phrase "in other words," and then uses a different set of words that we are to hear the same as what has been said before. To return to the present situation, why would a teacher rephrase a student's contribution to classroom talk? Perhaps because there is a supposition that in this rephrased form, the "real meaning" of the statement is clearer? How should we think about language if multiple, different statements are to be understood as manifestations of the same "meaning"? Does this not lead us necessarily to understand "meaning" as a singular plural, as a totality of ways of concrete ways of saying something that manifests itself in each concrete manner of saying it? This would be applying the documentary method (MANNHEIM, 2004 [1921–1922]) to the problem of "meaning" (ROTH, 2013). [13]

From a pragmatic perspective, we do not need to wonder about what is in the head of Ethan or in that of the teacher. All we are concerned with is the fact that translation has occurred and that it has had an effect. In the present situation, an answer comes to be rendered in a way that is sufficient for going on. This is what happened in this situation where, after Turn 21, the teacher calls on another student to provide an answer to the query of what makes a cube a cube. That is, the five translations together have led to a state in the classroom talk that warranted the move to call on the next student. This move was not warranted *de facto* after the first reply or any of its translations—e.g., the teacher could have called on the next student after completing Turn 18 or another student might have stepped in and built on or questioned what was said, provided an evaluation, or might have made some other move that affected the nature and form of the classroom talk. [14]

This analysis points to and exemplifies the heterogeneity of language. Language, in fact, is not self-identical. It can be used to say the same differently: We never speak only one language, as one of the two incompossible statements in the law of translation suggests. The language we speak is a multiplicity, both allowing and requiring translations into itself. For teaching, this is an advantage, because it allows us to sustain the hope that there is always yet another way of saying something so that a student, new to a particular domain and its form of language (discourse, Discourse), will learn and come to understand. Language, here, is but another name for the ultimately possible. [15]

4. *Traduttore, Traditore*: Translation between Languages

The Italian language has an expression pertinent to the present article in more than one way: *traduttore, traditore*. First, literally the expression translates as "translator, traitor," but perhaps is better rendered as "to translate is to commit treason." This very expression allows us to think (about) the problem, for a direct rendering of what the Italian does is impossible. As the sound transcription shows —tra·dut·'to:·re, tra·di·'to:·re—when spoken the difference between the two words is but a change from $u \rightarrow i$ (the second *t* cannot be heard). This leads us to the second important point: In English, this *pun* is lost. The making of puns is integral to making societal relations, and it their presence/absence changes the kind of relation people entertain. We all know that explaining a pun makes it

disappear: An explained joke is not funny at all. (When I first visited the US in the 1970s, I learned that a "German joke" is a bad joke. While it may be funny told in German among Germans, it is not funny at all, even distasteful or puerile, when told in English.) A pun is an important form of societal action that language is used to produce, which is why most jokes do not survive translation because they are built on the inherent non-self-identity of all language. Sometimes such puns do carry across without being scathed too much, such as when DERRIDA's *différence/différance* is carried into the English, where the pronunciation of difference and *differance* will lead to the same effect. But this is not the case with many other homonymies. Not only literature but also philosophy thrives on the possibilities of language, including that of homonymy, as in DERRIDA's example, metaphor and metonymy (see below), and other features of language that allow making connections impossible in another language. Not surprisingly, DERRIDA frequently points out the untranslatability of a phrase in his writings or queries, within an investigation, how the translator of the work might handle that passage. For example, commenting on the translation of "The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud" (DERRIDA, 1998b), the translator notes:

> "Since this volume was to appear first in Germany, and originally only there (Munich: Schirmer/ Mosel Verlag, 1986) and not in France, Derrida's French text, prepared for German readers, addresses, in footnotes and asides, the difference between the Latinity of French and the anti-Latin nature of German: 'How will they translate this?' 'German has no way of saying ...' 'You are reading in German here ... ' " (CAWS, in DERRIDA, 1998b, p.xii). [16]

How will a translation of this text, a French text prepared to be translated into German and for German readers, be rendered in English? The dialogue between the languages and cultures in the original can only lead to further tensions when another language is added. DERRIDA (1985) points this out in his (deconstructive?) slow reading of a seminal reference work on translation, BENJAMIN's (1972 [1921]) "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" [The Task of the Translator].[4] The quintessential text that stands for untranslatability, because it contains references to, words from, and the sounds of so many different languages, may well be "Finnegans Wake" (JOYCE, 2000 [1939]). Thus, how do you translate into another language this:

> "And around the lawn the rann it rann and this is the rann that Hosty made. Spoken. Boyles and Cahills, Skerretts and Pritchards, viersified and piersified may the treeth we tale of live in stoney. Here line the refrains of. Some vote him Vike, some mote him Mike, some dub him Llyn and Phin while others hail him Lug Bug Dan Lop, Lex, Lax, Gunne or Guinn. Some apt him Arth, some bapt him Barth, Coll, Noll, Soll, Will,

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4 Among other things, DERRIDA (1985) works with the rich semantics of the German word *Aufgabe* [task], which is built on the verb *geben* [to give, render]. Thus, *Aufgabe*, the task, mission, duty, problem (in schools, *Aufgabe* is something a student has to do, *Hausaufgabe* is homework), is related to (*Sinn-*) *Wiedergabe* [restitution of sense, rendering]. *Gabe* is also a gift, as something given, including a special skill—a present, or a donation. All of these are part of the *Aufgabe* [task] of the translator. The corresponding verb *aufgeben* translates, depending on context, as to give up, relinquish, resign, abandon, forsake, post, surrender, quit, renounce, submit, give in, and discontinue, some or all of which may be part of the task of translation.

Weel, Wall but I parse him Persse O'Reilly else he's called no name at all together"
(p.44). [17]

How does one translate a piece that depends on its sonority, alliterations, and figure-ground (language-language) contrasts? Moreover, how do you translate a word such as "klikkaklakkaklaskaklopatzklatschabattacreppycrottygraddaghsemmihsammihnouithappluddyappladdypkonpkot"? (p.44) that mixes sonorities from different languages, including *Klatsch* (Ger., gossip), *crotte* (Fr., shit, turd), apple, *Kompott* (Ger., compote), and many others? Attempts at translation such literary texts cannot but constitute treason to the original; or, to frame the issue in a more positive way, translation possibly leads to an important work in its own right—which is why the above-mentioned German translation of "Ulysses" came to be celebrated. It therefore does not surprise that it took some translators decades to come up with a credible version in their own mother tongue, even more so in the case of "Finnegans Wake." These examples merely exemplify the more general contention that *language and translation are but other names* of *and* for *the impossible*. Translation is not the rendering of equivalence but another name for creative activity. Thus, for BECKETT, self-translation from English to French or French to English constituted an opportunity to delay the finalization of his texts, for in the process, he reworked the original (WINKLER, 2010). [18]

5. Meaning, Metaphysics, Metalanguage

To delve into the issue of translation, it seems useful to get oneself more deeply into the nature of language, such as studied in semiotics or semiology, where language is treated as but another sign form. [19]

5.1 The sign and the unsatisfied desire

The French-Suisse linguist Ferdinand de SAUSSURE (1995 [1916]) proposes thinking about the linguistic sign as a psychological entity with two faces that cannot be considered separately but mutually constitute (call upon) each other. That is, the sign has two different sides, the signifier and signified, which always go together and refer to each other (Figure 1).
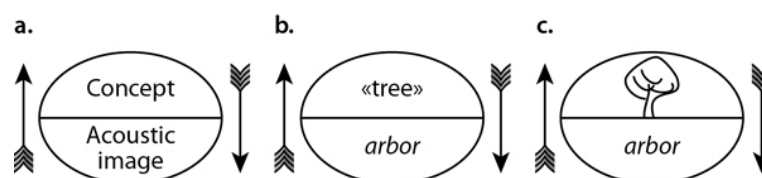

Figure 1: SAUSSURE's conception of the sign: a) the general formulation; b) embodying the translation from Latin to English; c) pairing sound-word and a (an image of) a tree [20]

SAUSSURE's concept of the sign makes translation possible. In fact, in this conception, language is another word for translation. This is quite evident in Figure 1b, where the equivalence of the Latin word "arbor" (*arbre*, in French) is set into relation with the English "tree." We can easily achieve such equivalence if

we were to show the same image of a tree in Figure 1c to Latin-only and English-only speakers. The ancient Roman—or a modern-day inhabitant of the Vatican producing the texts of the Holy See—would (have) produce(d) the sound /'ɑːbə(r)/[5] ("arbor") whereas the English speaker would produce the sound /triː/, which English speakers hear as an instance of the word "tree." In this one instance, therefore, there is a perfect equivalence according to the transformation rendered in Figure 2.
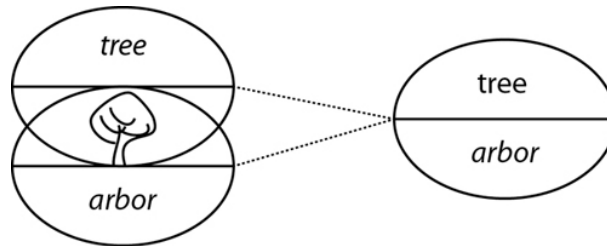

Figure 2: "Derivation" of the legitimacy of perfect translation from SAUSSURE's definition of the sign [21]

An upshot of this approach is that speaking a language is doing translation. Speaking is another word for translating. Babel, the name of the place where in the biblical narrative utter confusion first occurred, also is a noun that refers to confusion as a phenomenon (DERRIDA, 1985); and, in English, babble can be used synonymously with confusion and incomprehensibility. Babble is also the word used to refer to the first sign of language in children, and among the first sounds they produce ranges the Proto-Indo-European *baba-* (or *bal-bal-)—which continues its life in different present-day languages as *babbo* (Ital., father), *baba* (Alb., father), *bébé, bebe, baby*, *babbeln, babble* ([DNGHU](#)). [22]

In his extended critique of SAUSSURE, LACAN (1966) attributes this way of thinking to a general algorithm in the form of

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

which is read as "signifier over signified, where the over corresponds to the bar that separates the two levels" (p.497, my translation). (As I am writing, I ask myself whether it matters and how that LACAN used the word *étage* [floor] rather than *niveau* [level] and under what condition the translator's choice of level rather than floor is appropriate. I am also asking why the official English translation, LACAN (2006), puts quotation marks around "over," whereas there are no quotation marks in the original.) We immediately note, however, the impossibility of attaining the signified in this algorithm. This is so because "to interpret a sign means to define *the portion of continuum* which serves as its vehicle in its relationship with *the other portions of the continuum* derived from its global segmentation of the content" (ECO, 1984, p.44, emphasis added). HEIDEGGER (1977 [1927]) makes thematic a similar relation in stating that logos, as speech,

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5   Transcription rules of the International Phonetics Association are used (e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Phonetic_Alphabet).

"'lets us see' from itself, ἀπὸ [apo] ..., what is being talked about" (p.32). There is a relation between the sound-word and something else. A sign therefore refers to the relation between segmentations of the (material) continuum. In other words, a signifier only refers to another signifier, which refers to yet another, and so on, *ad infinitum*. That is, we always ever remain *above* the bar so that the algorithm expands to

$$\frac{S \ldots S}{s}$$

and the signified, *s*, remains the elusive, a desire. This in effect limits translation, because the signifiers, S_i, are inherently different—i.e., because they constitute different portions of the continuum—and their (perfect) equivalence requires the sameness of the *s*. But we never get to *s,* because we only have the infinite series of Ss. The equivalence postulated in translation depicted in Figure 2, therefore, constitutes the real desire for the elusive. This elusive is the world of ideas that we never truly attain and of which we only see the shadows—as the people in PLATO's cave allegory knew only too well. [23]

In the English language, the term "meaning" tends to be used to refer to the target of a signifier. Meaning, therefore, is part of a metaphysical project (ROTH, 2013). The hunt for meaning, as I suggest elsewhere (ROTH, 2012a), is a hunt for the elusive, a hunt forever fraught with irreconcilable epistemological difficulties. It is this pursuit that has logical positivists search for the "meaning of meaning"; and the precariousness of this project can be seen in the very use of the term "meaning," for which already in the 1920s Charles K. OGDEN and Ivor A. RICHARDS have found "now fewer 23" distinct kinds (NÖTH, 1990, p.92). We see, here, that the problems related to meaning are not due to a "radical relativism," but are endemic to the very way language functions. [24]

In this context, it is worthwhile to note the irony and even distain—how am I able to identify irony and distain if words have meanings?—LACAN (1966) has for those in search of the "meaning of meaning." A relevant passage reads in French and English in this way:

"Car même à se réduire à cette dernière formule, l'hérésie est la même. C'est elle qui conduit le logico-positivisme à la quête du sens du sens, du *meaning of meaning* comme on en dénomme, dans la langue où ses fervents s'ébrouent, l'objectif" (LACAN, 1966, p.498).	"For even if it is reduced to this latter formulation, the heresy is the same—the heresy that leads logical positivism in search of the 'meaning of meaning,'* as its objective is called in the language [*langue*] in which its devotees snort" (LACAN, 2006, p.416). [25]

We note that the sentence structure changes, there is one sentence where the French, normally using longer sentences than the English, uses two. There are quotation marks in English where the French uses italics, and there is an untranslated part that arises from the very non-equivalence of the two languages (the asterisk in the translation marks that the English appears in the French

original). This is so because in French, as in German and Russian, there are pairs of terms for sense and signification—i.e., *sens* / *Sinn* / *smysl* [смысл] and signification / *Bedeutung* / *značenie* [значение]—where in English there is a triplet of terms (sense, meaning, signification). A problem arises because English texts use the term "meaning" to translate where other languages use the equivalents of signification and sense. If we see the term "meaning" in an English translation, we cannot ever be sure about what the original language had used. This would happen, for example, when we read the English translation of VOLOŠINOV (1930) in his critique of SAUSSURE; but it does not happen in the French version, which retranslates the Russian into SAUSSURE's French, that is, *smysl → sens* and *značenie → signification*. It is here that we find the reason why machine translations do not work. Machine translations are in fact an expression of a desire that cannot be fulfilled—ever. If we subject the second sentence of the preceding LACAN quotation to a double translation using an automatic translation (here Google Translate), we obtain the following:

Original →	English →	French
C'est elle qui conduit le logico-positivisme à la quête du sens du sens, du *meaning of meaning* comme on en dénomme, dans la langue où ses fervents s'ébrouent, l'objectif.	It was she who led the logico-positivism in search of the meaning of meaning, the meaning of meaning as in styling, in the language of his fervent snort, the objective.	C'est elle qui a dirigé l'logico-positivisme à la recherche du sens du sens, le sens de sens que dans le style, dans la langue de son snort fervente, l'objectif. [26]

Already in the first translation, the sentence turns into a stammer; and this stammer is worse when the algorithm retranslates the English into the French. [27]

I note that there is also irony when LACAN makes reference to the objective of the logical-positivist quest for the "sens du sens [sense of sense]," which he then renders in the English of OGDEN and RICHARDS, "the meaning of meaning." Rather than referring to English he refers to it as "the language in which the enthusiasts/devotees *snort.*" It is not the "meaning" of the clause that matters but the effect it has, the recipient's evaluation (VOLOŠINOV, 1930): the fact that we can hear and feel the fact that the phrase "the meaning of meaning" comes from English. We are *doing* things with language rather than merely presenting again—i.e., *re*presenting—a state of affairs. This brings me to another way of thinking about, and using, language and translation. [28]

If "meaning" actually existed, then perfect translation would be possible. In fact, we would then have a metalanguage that would serve as the touchstone for establishing the perfect equivalence of all languages. In the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, Latin almost achieves of having this role. All its official and legal pronouncements are written in this (dead) language. It is a proxy for an absolute referent because, as a dead language, it no longer changes—with apparent repercussions to the maintenance of the dogma and the conservatism of the community. Here, the use of Latin as a metalanguage has ideological

function in that it supports the sustaining of tradition—as handing down, trading between cultures and languages, and as conservatism. [29]

5.2 Language: A pragmatic approach

From a pragmatic perspective, translating is but another one of the language games we play and that contributes to constituting our everyday world as what it is (WITTGENSTEIN, 1997 [1953]). Thus, rather than resorting to metaphysics, we can take a pragmatic approach to language. We do not have to be concerned with elusive meanings but with real effects that language has in use. Take the following examples (Figure 3), which translate the ones that LACAN himself employed. The figure structurally is the same as the one SAUSSURE (1995 [1916]) had used (Figure 1). Because the two images below the bar are identical, contradictory implications about "the meaning" of the terms "men" and "women"—or, equivalently, about the symbols in Figure 3b—would have to be drawn.
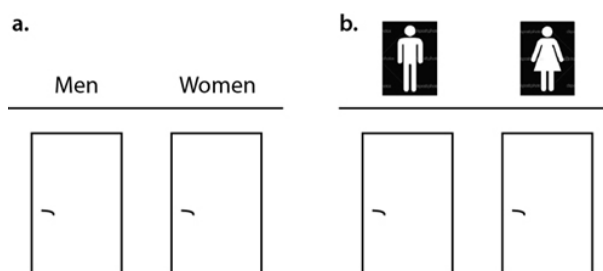
Figure 3: Instances that show how the signifier enters the signified [30]

We can see here that language enters the world. There are real effects, real consequences of inscribing otherwise identical doors with the words "men" or "women." We can ascertain the effects by taking position somewhere near a place where doors are labeled in this way. There will be a separation in the stream of people approaching these doors: What we know to be men and women will enter the right one, whereas what we know to be men enter the left door. Inside, the two locations will be equipped differently as a function of the different biological makeup of those entering the locations. (There are exceptions, differences, and transgressions in the case of transvestites and transsexuals.) This example, maybe better than any other one I have seen, can be used in support of arguments that advance a pragmatic approach to the philosophy of language (e.g., RORTY, 1989; WITTGENSTEIN, 1997 [1953]). Thus, following an incisive analysis of language and the impossibility to ascertain whether the passing theories in the minds of two interlocutors are the same (i.e., if there is a single, common "meaning"), DAVIDSON (1986) comes to the conclusion that a pragmatic position "erase[s] the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally" (pp.445-446). The two, language and knowing our way around the world, interpenetrate. This is a good explanation of the experience we have when entering a country or culture with a very different language even if, for the French, it is another such French, or for English speakers, another such English. Figure 3 precisely exemplifies how the signifier enters the signified. [31]

6. Metaphoric and Metonymic Nature of Language

In the preceding sections, I am mainly concerned with the question of rendering the literal content or message of a text articulated in one language into another language. I do point out above, though, that there are pragmatic differences in the face of the impossibility of a precise, correct, or adequate correspondence even when the translation occurs within the same language. The issue of language becomes more difficult in the case of the pun, wit, or humor. It is also more difficult (impossible) in the case of metaphor and metonymy, which are central features not only of culture but also of our very manner and content of knowing (e.g., LAKOFF, 1987; McLUHAN, 1994 [1964]). Not surprisingly, perhaps, repositions, which are central to the metaphors we use and are integral to our embodied experiences of the world, also are some of the most difficult features to acquire for second language speakers. If theoretical or philosophical works include metaphor—which is one of the main points of DERRIDA's writings —then translation leads to new works in which what happens in the original disappears. The very point of the writing, the pun, is literally lost in translation. This matters especially when we attribute some theoretical ideas to an author from another language. If translation is transforming (committing treason), to what degree are the ideas presented in a text attributable to the other who is credited to it by means of an in-text reference? If there is a question, then why do we, in our scholarly community, often use excessive citations? Are references to be taken to mark a lineage of thought rather than attributing a thought to other authors? [32]

These and similar issues became an aspect of a public debate I had with a colleague from mathematics education, who grounds much of his research in LACAN (or others who have read/interpreted LACAN). I provided my colleague with the following excerpt from "Écrits" (LACAN, 1966) and its English translation (ROTH, 2012b). The quotation/s follow a paragraph in which LACAN writes about using a language to signify something completely different than what it (literally) says. In the paragraph that immediately follows the quotation, LACAN points out that the signifying function the paragraph depicts has a name, which he articulates in the subsequent paragraph as *metonymy*. (There is in fact another reference incomprehensible in English, which is the relationship between *tropes,* figures of style, and *trouver* [to find].)

Original
"Il me suffit en effet de planter mon arbre dans la locution: grimper à l'arbre, voire de projeter sur lui l'éclairage narquois qu'un contexte de description donne au mot: arborer, pour ne pas me laisser emprisonner dans un quelconque *communiqué* des faits, si officiel soit-il, et, si je sais la vérité, la faire entendre malgré toutes les censures *entre les lignes* par le

Translation
"I need but plant my tree in a locution, *grimper à l'arbre*, or even project onto it the derisive light that a descriptive context gives the word, *arborer*, to not let myself be imprisoned in some sort of *communiqué* of the facts, however official it maybe, and if I know the truth, convey it, despite all the censors, *between-the-lines* using nothing but the signifier that can be constituted by

seul signifiant que peuvent constituer mes acrobaties à travers les branches de l'arbre, provocantes jusqu'au burlesque ou seulement sensibles à un œil exercé, selon que je veux être entendu de la foule et de quelques-uns" (LACAN, 1966, p.505).

my acrobatics through the branches of the tree. These acrobatics may be provocative to the point of burlesque or perceptible only to the trained eye, depending on whether I wish to be understood by the many or the few" (LACAN, 2006, p.421). [33]

In this paragraph, LACAN writes about planting "his tree," which is, in the context of the discussion of SAUSSURE's work, a reference to the tree in the example of a sign (Figure 1). He plants this tree in a phrase, a phrase that the translator left intact, *grimper à l'arbre* (similar to the social science practice in non-English-speaking countries to leave "Grounded Theory" in the original rather than providing a word from the language). Literally, the expression describes the action of climbing a tree, but figuratively it is equivalent to being fooled. Similarly, the word *arborer* is left intact. It is a French verb for raising a flag or post as an emblem, to wear something ostensively, and, figuratively (often pejoratively), to smile ostensively, e.g., with an inkling of superiority. The verb derives from the Latin *arborare*, from *arbor,* tree; and this is precisely the word that appears in SAUSSURE's original example (similar to Figure 1). LACAN continues by writing about his acrobatics in the branches of the tree, about making things heard/read between the lines despite all censorship; and he finishes by making reference to the what is happening only to the trained eye, depending on whether he wants to be heard/understood [*entendu*] by the masses [*foule*] or only a few. That metonymy, and the metaphor, is lost in the English translation. If it matters, and there are all indication that it does to LACAN, then we have the problem that what the author does in the French version does not carry across into the English version. [34]

LACAN here makes explicit this multiplicity of language, a multiplicity that does not carry across in translation (Lat. *translāt-us*, past participle of *transferre*, transfer, carry across) or metaphor (Gr. *μεταφορά* [metaphora] > *μετα-* [meta-], with, after, between, + *φέρειν* [ferein] carry). The very point made in the transplantation of the tree from one context (SAUSSURE's) into another one, changes everything—in French, but is incomprehensible in English. The situation described is also part and constitutive of metonymy (Gr. *μετα-ωνυμία*), which is lost to English readers, who do not have in their language the expressions *grimper à l'arbre* and *arborer*, and all the associations that go with them and the surrounding semantic field. As soon as we explain this point, we have actually defeated it, because, as LACAN points out, their uses allow different recipients to hear and respond to different situations. Importantly, metonymy is used to make statements about the metonymic nature of language—in French; but the equivalent use is impossible in English. As LACAN says in a metaphoric way, using language is engaging in acrobatics in the branches of (SAUSSURE's) tree. [35]

The issue is of crucial importance, because the metaphoric and metonymic nature of language is at the root of its productivity: continuously evolving, continuously changing. The very language that makes translation impossible also

makes it possible and productive. *Language*, as *translation*, therefore, simultaneously names possibility and impossibility: the possible impossible, impossible possible. Or might we not better say of/about language: possibly impossible, impossibly possible? [36]

7. Implications for Qualitative Social Research

> "Rien n'est intraduisible en un sens, mais *en un autre sens* tout es intraduisible, la traduction est un autre nom de l'impossible" [Nothing is untranslatable in one sense, but *in another sense*, everything is untranslatable, translation is another name for the impossible]
> (DERRIDA, 1996, p.103)

In this article I show how translation reconfigures sense ("meaning"), even if the translation occurs at the heart of a language. Precisely because qualitative social research is concerned with sense and signification ("meaning") that research participants make in and of life, qualitative social researchers have to be concerned with the topic of translation. [37]

7.1 Qualitative social research: Translation, sense, and signification ("meaning")

Qualitative social research involves translation in many different guises. The italicized part of the phrase in the quotation marks, at the very core of the phrase about translation, the translation that is happening. *In other words*—yet another translation at the heart of my writing about translation!—thinking about qualitative social research as translation may give us a different angle at understanding our own enterprise. Despite any protest that I may raise among qualitative researchers, let me say this: grounded theory, in many ways, is as much translation as any other theory established and used by quantitative researchers. Coding, which subordinates two different instances of speech or other data under the same category, constitutes translation and presupposes a referent—namely an ideal one, e.g., in the form of "meaning"—from the perspective of which two different things *become* or *can be taken as* the same. [38]

The very act of qualitative social research, where the researcher seeks to establish patterns in the data—whatever the particular means (method)—constitutes an abstraction and, therefore, a translation into the language of the researcher. Even when the researcher writes a report using direct speech (i.e., quotations), this latter no longer is the participant's authentic voice because it already has been penetrated by the voice of the researcher and writer. As DERRIDA (1996) makes quite clear, even when the author also is the participant—such as in auto/ethnography and auto/biography (ROTH, 2005)—language use itself means translating: the language of the other, for the other, returning to the other. What is most singularly mine also is most utterly the other: I have only one

language (voice) and it is not mine. This is also why biography, as a genre, makes it irrelevant who is writing it, that is, whether it is the author's own (auto-) or another's life that is construed in and by the text (BAKHTIN, 1975). [39]

In one sense, therefore, qualitative social research is translating as much as quantitative social research. The very project of attempting to get at "participants' meanings" is a metaphysical one, no closer and no more distant than other metaphysical games we play. We translate and make present something that is absent: we *re*present the lives of others. This situation should not lead us to despair, however, because, in another sense, translation is an opportunity. It is an opportunity not only to contribute narratives *about* our condition—i.e., our lives and society—but also an opportunity to creatively transform our condition (lives, society). I suggest that we embrace the idea of qualitative social research as a creative endeavor that changes the human condition rather than as an endeavor that (merely) presents the condition again, in whatever narrative form (genre), in what some may take to be an ethico-morally better way than other forms of research. This appears to me in the sense of the pragmatic approach RICŒUR (2004) proposes. [40]

7.2 Transcription is translation

The translations that occur when we transcribe have been made thematic and discussed in the pages of this journal (ASHMORE & REED, 2000). But "transcription" occurs in mundane, everyday conversation when we hear words when really there are only sounds. Thus, in the above transcription from the classroom, a first-level transcription may first render sounds before transcribing them into the English. Using the transcription rules of the International Phonetics Association, the first line might read in this way:

12   T: səʊ ˈiːθən duː ju wɒnt tuː stɑrt (0.35)
12   T: so ethan do you want to start? (0.35) [41]

If the teacher were an immigrant, the sounds might be different, which might put additional burden not only on the transcriber but also, and more importantly, on the people in the setting. It is pragmatically important, for example, when French or German speakers say /tɔːt/ (taught) and /sɔːt/ (sought), respectively, when they really wanted to say /θɔːt/ (thought). Pragmatically, something will happen, depending on the recipient, who may not understand, look bewildered, "correct" the speaker, ask whether she meant "/θɔːt/," or simply treat the situation as if the sound "/θɔːt/" had been produced. If qualitative researchers were to transcribe what the French or German speaker has said as "thought," they would have obliterated all the relational work that is or needs to be achieved to deal with the problematic sound-word. Their work of hearing would be completely abstracted if we rendered immediately the second level of transcription. [42]

In my experiences as a qualitative social scientist, I have done a lot of transcribing (translating), including the rendering of prosody—e.g., speech

intensity, volume, pitch, pitch contours, pauses, speech rate—gestures, body movements, body positions, and the likes. I, alone or together with colleagues, have argued for the production of transcriptions that resemble musical scores, which would allow readers to re-enact communicative performances (e.g., ROTH & BAUTISTA, 2011). But this very endeavor still does not allow us to come anywhere near to a perfect translation, for, as I have learned, even in this case of a complex score, there still remains a distance between the actual performance and the score. Moreover, there is one aspect that has resisted all representation and, therefore, translation: timbre. Whereas all the other features of speech performance can be represented more or less well, depending on the technology and techniques used, and, therefore, reproduced (i.e., translated), timbre cannot be represented. The interesting aspect is that this aspect of speech that most definitely is our own is unavailable to ourselves when we speak. We access it through a tape recording, temporally delayed, and, therefore, through a representation that has required a translation. What is most singularly our own is accessible only through technology and, therefore, the other and the artifice of technology. [43]

7.3 Speaking is translating ... thinking and the word

Speaking frequently is taken as a process that resembles, to use an analogy from the computing sciences, a memory dump. Much if not most qualitative research treats speaking as an expression of what is in the mind of participants, their feelings, emotions, interests, knowledge, identities, motives, or motivations. There is precedence, however, to think speaking as a generative process of translation. Thus, VOLOŠINOV (1930) writes about the continuous and continued translations that occur when we take up the statement [*vyskazyvanie*] of the other, which, in fact, occurs in every speech act. Our words spoken *in response to* the other carry this other within them. But they carry them no longer as a self-identical copy. Rather, depending on the context, we might observe direct speech, indirect speech, quasi-direct speech, or quasi-indirect speech. These are transformations of what has been said into the voice of the next speaker. But even if no word had been taken up—because, e.g., the subject of the statement is practically left the same (VYGOTSKIJ, 2005)—the simple act of responding is a form of take up of the word of the other. Responding—and every (speech) act is responding to another (speech) act or the situation—is translating. This, then, takes us to a dynamic aspect of language, which never is the same but continuously changes (e.g., BAKHTIN, 1990 [1965]). No word ever is the same, because it changes in speaking—which is the mechanism that explains why living languages change and dead languages remain the same. But changing is translating. Speaking, from this perspective, translates language into another such language, transforms it—even if ever so slightly—into another such version of itself. Because of his critique of phonocentrism of the Western culture, DERRIDA (1967b) uses *writing* [*écriture*] instead of speaking as the paradigm of linguistic change: writing is a poetic endeavor, continuously producing the future while erasing the past. Thus, "l'écriture est l'issue comme descente hors de soi en soi du sens" [Writing is the outlet as the descent of sense outside of itself within itself] (p.49). Moreover, and pertinent to a preceding point about metaphor,

writing is a "métaphore-pour-autrui-en-vue-d'autrui-ici-bas, métaphore comme possibilité d'autrui ici-bas, si l'on veut que l'autre apparaisse" [metaphor-for-others-in-view-of-others-here-and-now, metaphor as metaphysics where Being has to hide if the other is to appear] (p.49). Because of the metaphoric nature of language and cognition (LAKOFF, 1987), the use of language itself is a metaphysical project where being comes to be translated rather than directly made present to itself. [44]

Using language in speaking is translating *in another sense* (notice the translation in my phrase!), because there is no perfect equivalence of thinking and speaking (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1945; VYGOTSKIJ, 2005; WITTGENSTEIN, 1997 [1953]). These are two related, even constitutive, but very different processes. In speaking, thinking *reveals* itself to itself but in a form other than itself. Thinking and speaking are two, inherently different manifestations of another process that VYGOTSKIJ names *слово значение* [*slovo značenie*], word-signification, *Wortbedeutung, signification du mot*.[6] There is a delay, for what thinking finds in speaking is not itself but something it has been and what is a product thereof. There is a dehiscent relation between speaking and thinking that we find between presence (Being, *Sein, l'Être*) and the presence of the present (beings, *Seiendes, étant*) (see next section). It is a dehiscent relation that also exists between pain and the saying—to myself or other—"I am in pain." When our research participants speak of pain, for example, they already constitute translations rather than talking about the very source of their experience. Even recognizing something *as* pain constitutes a translation where a form of Being is made present again in a different way, by means of beings [*Seiendes, étant*]. As ASHMORE and REED clearly show, we therefore do not ever get to the original experience, only to those forms that make it present again and, in so doing, constitute a translation of original and originary experience. [45]

For the same reasons, reading constitutes translation. This has further implications for qualitative social research. In the past, I have lived (in) the fear that many researchers read scholars such as DERRIDA in ways that are inconsistent with the ideas of the philosopher. It then becomes easy to disregard or celebrate the other for all the wrong reasons. At the same time, reception also has a positive side in that it constitutes translation and creation. This, then, suggests that we need to reconsider the ways in which we use within-text referencing. Is the appearance of a "(AUTHOR, year)" in the text to be treated as an index to others' ideas or does it simply trace an author's reading history? [46]

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6 In English, the term tends to be translated—very unfortunately, as should be clear from this text generally and from the discussion of the metaphysics of the word "meaning"—as "word-meaning."

8. Translation and the Human Condition

Here at the end of this essay, I therefore have come to state the limit idea: *translation, the possible impossible, is the human condition*. As the preceding example shows, what is most singularly me can be accessed and made available to consciousness only through a translation. This is an expression of the dehiscence between Being (presence) and the making present of *Being* (*Sein, Être*) using representations (*beings, Seiendes, étant*). Metaphysics makes no difference between the two dimensions of our lives. It is only in the phenomenological literature—reaching from philosophers such as HEIDEGGER to DERRIDA and C. ROMANO—that the problematic of the relation between Being and beings is raised. The idea of the possibility of a more-or-less perfect translation—by means of the idea that the "meaning" remains the same—is part of the metaphysical ideology. Machine translation is part of a technical/technological approach to, and thinking about, life that HEIDEGGER has critiqued in the latter parts of his life. But it is not technology (Ger. *Technik*) as such that is at issue; rather, HEIDEGGER critiqued technology because it is a perfect expression of metaphysics. This is so because machine translation presupposes that ideal translation is possible without decision and choice so that it can be algorithmically produced. It (tacitly) presupposes a metalanguage ("meaning") that guarantees the perfect equivalence of two languages, allowing an unambiguous mapping of one onto another as this occurs in mathematics (e.g., $y = f(x)$ unequivocally maps one domain, x, onto another domain, y). My examples of machine translations show the limits of this way of thinking. Translating, as writing, is a creative process in its own right, producing something new and novel rather than rendering, more or less perfectly, the original source. It is translation without an original as "a pole of reference, without an originary language, and without a source of language" (DERRIDA, 1996, p.117). [47]

Those authors who write in multilingual contexts translate and *have* to translate all of the time—without the possibility of coming anywhere near perfect equivalence in either language. Thus, original and translation differ even in the case where a bilingual playwright such as BECKETT translates his own work, from a French original to English or from an English original to French (WINKLER, 2010). In the process of translating, the original itself is changed. This, too, happened to me in the very writing of this article: While translating the German abstract, I found that it made me rethink/rewrite the original one, which required me to rewrite the translation, and so on. [48]

RICŒUR first states, and then restates in different form (i.e., he translates), the paralyzing alternative: *Either* language diversity expresses radical heterogeneity, which makes translation impossible (because languages are untranslatable); *or* translation expresses the existence of a common ground that establishes the equivalence of two languages, which presupposes the existence of a universal, originary language that we have to find. To me, the problem does not lie in each of the statements but in the either ... or formulation. It may be much better to accept that in translating—e.g., by doing qualitative social research—we do both. Extra-linguistic and intra-linguistic translation, though "theoretically

incomprehensible," is "actually practicable" (RICŒUR, 2004, p.27). The equivalence between two texts, two situations, then is recognized as something produced rather than as presupposing the translation. Two texts are the same and different simultaneously. They are different in their sameness while being the same in their difference. McLUHAN (1994 [1964]), in his what possibly is an overly positive way, shall have the last word on translation, which I have chosen, reflexively, from the chapter "Media as Translation" and which we may metaphorically extend to the technology/ technique of qualitative social research method:

> "If the work of the city is the remaking or translating of man into a more suitable form than his nomadic ancestors achieved, then might not our current translation of our entire lives into the spiritual form of information seem to make of the entire globe, and of the human family, a single consciousness?" (p.61) [49]

Acknowledgment

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