Chapter 2: Equivalence at Word Level

1. Comment on any differences in meaning between the items in each of the following sets. The differences may relate to expressive or evoked meaning. For instance, some items may be register-specific or dialect-specific, others may be derogatory or neutral. If you are not familiar with a particular word or expression, consult a good dictionary of English before you comment on its meaning.

   car, auto, automobile, motor, limousine, limo, banger, jalopy
   comfortable, comfy, homely, cosy, snug (of a place)
   dad, daddy, pa, papa, pop, father, pater, sire, old man

   Now list all the words and expressions you can think of which are available in your target language for car, comfortable and father. Comment on any differences in meaning between (a) the individual items in each set, and (b) the English items above and the items in the corresponding sets in your target language.

       Macchina, automobile, motore, bolide, macchinina, auto, macchinino, trabiccolo
       comodo, accogliente, confortevole, intimo
       papà, padre, babbo, papi, pa', vecchio, genitore

2. Make a list of all the English verbs you can think of which have to do with speech, such as say, suggest, complain, mumble, mutter, murmur, whisper, speak, tell and so on. Try to group them into sets, starting with the more general ones.

   Now list all the verbs of speech you can think of in your target language, starting with the more general ones. Comment on the presence or absence of any semantic gaps in your target language vis-à-vis English.

       Parlare, dire, suggerire, asserire, sussurrare, ripetere, consigliare, mormorare,
       bisbigliare, promettere, annunciare, rispondere, riferire,

   Repeat this exercise using nouns which may come under the general heading of PUBLICATIONS. In English, this would include book, newspaper, magazine, newsletter, bulletin, journal, report, pamphlet, periodical, etc.

       giornale, rivista, libro, quotidiano, settimanale, mensile, annuario, bollettino,
       relazione, periodico, fumetto, graphic novel, giornalietto, giornalino, calendario,

3. Make a list of ten English words which you feel are particularly difficult to translate into your target language. Comment on the source of difficulty in each case.

   Pattern,

4. Make a list of some loan words that are used in your language, and comment on the types of text in which such loan words tend to be used freely (for instance in advertisements).
5. Now consider how you might translate the main text in Figure 3, an advertisement by Trados which appeared in various magazines in 2001, and what loss of propositional, expressive and/or evoked meaning might be involved if you cannot render Dinero using a similar loan word in your target text.

Figure 3: Trados advertisement

dopo che hai tradotto la parola Denaro in Money, non dovrai spendere altro Money per tradurre Denaro di nuovo.

6. Make a list of three English affixes which systematically produce forms that have no direct equivalents in your target language. Suggest suitable paraphrases for each affix.

Out-  
Over-  
Down-

7. Make a list of all the English words you can think of that end in –ism or –ist (such as racism/racist, sexism/sexist, ageism/ageist, extremism/extremist,
fantacism/fanaticist). Comment on what these words have in common and on the propositional and expressive meanings of the suffix. Now attempt to translate the screen shot in Figure 4, from a video released by the Sizism Awareness Campaign (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOxbi53J5SU).

![Figure 4. Screen shot from Sizism Awareness Campaign Video](image)

8. Produce two translations in your target language of the following extract from Stephen Hawking’s *A Brief History of Time* (1988:1-2). One translation should aim at giving the target reader a straightforward account of the contents of the text. In producing the second translation, assume that Professor Hawking, or his publisher, has authorized you to use whatever strategies are necessary to ensure that the reader’s attention is captured in these opening passages.

A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: ‘What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.’ The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, ‘What is the tortoise standing on?’ ‘You’re very clever, young man, very clever,’ said the old lady. ‘But it’s turtles all the way down!’

Most people would find the picture of our universe as an infinite tower of tortoises rather ridiculous, but why do we think we know better? What do we know about the universe, and how do we know it? Where did the universe come from, and where is it going? Did the universe have a beginning, and if so, what happened before then? What is the nature of time? Will it ever come to an end? Recent breakthroughs in physics, made possible in part by fantastic new technologies, suggest answers to some of these longstanding questions. Someday these answers may seem as obvious to us as the earth orbiting the sun – or perhaps as ridiculous as a tower of tortoises. Only time (whatever that may be) will tell.

Comment on the different strategies used in each translation.

Un noto scienziato (alcuni dicono si trattasse di Bertrand Russell) una volta tenne una conferenza sull’astronomia. Russell descrisse come la terra orbiti intorno al sole e come il sole, a sua volta, orbiti al centro del vasto
insieme di stelle che è la nostra galassia. Alla fine della conferenza, una vecchietta si alzò da in fondo alla stanza e disse: “Non ci ha raccontato altro che baggianate. In realtà il mondo è piatto ed è sostenuto dalla schiena di una tartaruga gigante.” Lo scienziato con un sorriso di superiorità replicò “e la tartaruga su cosa è appoggiata?”. Lei è molto acuto, giovanotto, molto acuto” disse la vecchietta. “Ma ci sono tartarughe fino in fondo!”