In a narrow sense, translation theory is concerned with the translation method appropriately used for a certain type of text, and it is therefore dependent on a functional theory of language. However, in a wider sense, translation theory is the body of knowledge that we have about translating, extending from general principles to guidelines, suggestions and hints. (The only rule I know is the equal frequency rule, viz, that corresponding words, where they exist - metaphors, collocations, groups, clauses, sentences, word order, proverbs, etc. - should have approximately equal frequency, for the topic and register in question, in both the source and target languages.) Translation theory is concerned with minutiae (the meanings of semi-colons, italics, misprints) as well as generalities (presentation, the thread of thought underlying a piece), and both may be equally important in the context.

Translation theory in action, translation theory used operationally for the purpose of reviewing all the options (in particular, sensitising the translator to those he had not been aware of) and then making the decisions - in fact the teeth of the theory - is a frame of reference for translation and translation criticism, relating first to complete texts, where it has most to say, then, in descending level, to paragraphs, sentences, clauses, word groups (in particular, collocations), words -familiar alternative words, cultural and institutional terms, proper names, 1 non-equivalent words', neologisms and key conceptual terms - morphemes and punctuation marks. Note that metaphor, perhaps the most significant translation problem, may occur at all levels - from word to text, at which level it becomes an allegory or a fantasy.

What translation theory does is, first, to identify and define a translation problem (no problem - no translation theory!); second, to indicate all the factors that have to be taken into account in solving the problem; third, to list all the possible translation procedures; finally, to recommend the most suitable translation procedure, plus the appropriate translation.

Translation theory is pointless and sterile if it does not arise from the problems of translation practice, from the need to stand back and reflect, to consider all the factors, within the text and outside it, before coming to a decision,