

Translation process

- The human translation process may be described as:
 - 1)Decoding the meaning of the source text; and
 - 2)Re-encoding this meaning in the target language.
- Behind this ostensibly simple procedure lies a complex cognitive operation. To decode the meaning of the source text in its entirety, the translator must interpret and analyse all the features of the text, a process that requires in-depth knowledge of the grammar, semantics, syntax, idioms, etc., of the source language, as well as the culture of its speakers. The translator needs the same in-depth knowledge to re-encode the meaning in the target language.
- Therein lies the challenge in machine translation: how to program a computer that will "understand" a text as a person does, and that will "create" a new text in the target language that "sounds" as if it has been written by a person.
- In its most general application, this is beyond current technology. Though it works much faster, no automated translation program or procedure, with no human participation, can produce output even close to the quality a human translator can produce. What it can do, however, is provide a general, though imperfect, approximation of the original text, getting the "gist" of it (a process called "gisting"). This is sufficient for many purposes, including making best use of the finite and expensive time of a human translator, reserved for those cases in which total accuracy is indispensable.
- This problem may be approached in a number of ways, through the evolution of which accuracy has improved.