

## Plenary Talk

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*Translation as a mode of multilingual communication*

The theme of the second conference hosted by the Halliday Centre at the City University of Hong Kong, “Translation, Language Contact, and Multilingual Communication”, brings together a number of key facets of the phenomenon of multilinguality (whether this is interpreted in terms of individual speakers or speech communities) and of the emergent field of multilingual studies (cf. Matthiessen, Teruya & Wu, in press). In either case, a key task is to represent two or more languages as multilingual resources for making meaning.

Working on this task in the context of developing computational systems for multilingual text generation, John Bateman, Zeng Licheng and I developed a multilingual version of system networks, which make it possible to represent the systems of two or more languages together as a unified resource while at the same time retaining the integrity of the representation of each individual language (Bateman et al., 1991; Bateman, Matthiessen & Zeng, 1999). This systemic form of multilingual representation is now part of the KPML system developed by John Bateman (e.g. Bateman, 1997); it is freely available for research<sup>1</sup>. Such multilingual system networks can help us explore all aspects of multilinguality, including code switching, code mixing, learning how to mean in a new language, translation and interpreting. For example, it is possible to describe the “personalized” meaning potential of a professional translator as a multilingual system network and to try to model the processes of translation in terms of this resource.

In this talk I will focus on translation (taking this as a general term, including the translation of written text, the interpreting of spoken text, and the interpreting of signed text) in relation to other modes of multilingual communication, exploring it in systemic functional terms (cf. Steiner & Yallop, 2001; Steiner, 2005; Halliday, 2006; Matthiessen, 2001). In order to relate translation to the more general process of multilingual communication, we need a comprehensive model of multilingual communication embodying multilingual system networks of the kind mentioned above. This model will clearly have to be a multi-dimensional one, encompassing a considerable range of factors. However, one key dimension is the cline between source-language driven translation and target-language oriented translation (cf. Anwyl et al., 1991). As we move towards the target-language oriented pole of this cline, translation shades into creation of original text in the target language. Source-language driven translation can be illustrated by reference to traditional machine translation systems (such as one of web-based systems providing free translation services), whereas target-language oriented translation can be illustrated by reference to human translations of advertisements designed to be effective in promoting a product in the target-language culture (cf. Steiner, 2004).

Translation is a creative act; it is the re-creation of the meanings of the source language text in the target language. This re-creation of meaning is based on choices in meaning covering all

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/anglistik/langpro/kpml/README.html>

the different modes of meaning in language — logical, experiential, interpersonal, and textual. Since translation is based on choice in two languages — choice in the interpretation of the source language text and choice in the recreation of the meanings arrived at through this interpretation in the target language, there is always the potential for translation shift. One central aspect of translation shift is the mode of meaning: translators may stay within the same mode of meaning, or switch from one mode of meaning to another. For example, the clause *Down the road from the gate they fled* from the English original text of “The Lord of the Rings” was translated into Spanish as the clause complex *Huyeron camino abajo y se alejaron de la puerta* in the published Spanish translation “El señor de los anillos”.

This translation involves a shift from a purely experiential representation of motion (fleeing along the road away from the gate) to one that also involves a logical sequence (fleeing along the road + moving away from the gate). This translation shift between English and Spanish is not purely instantial; it reflects a systemic difference between the two languages in the construal of motion (cf. Talmy, 1985; Slobin, 1996). With respect to the resources for construing motion through space, a multilingual representation of the resources of English and Spanish would thus show that the two languages are incongruent with one another in this domain; and this difference extends beyond language to include gesture, as shown in work by James Lantolf: language and gesture complement one another in different ways in the construal of motion through space in English and Spanish. More generally, different languages favour different models for construing motion through space. Thus motion is an interesting domain to examine in translation and other forms of multilingual communication, and I will discuss the translation of clauses of motion from English into a number of other languages. This study helps shed light on choice and recreation in translation.

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