The Narrative Approach to Translation & Interpreting

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Why a Narrative Approach (Historical Context)

- Traditional preoccupation with equivalence
- Assumption of neutrality, ‘facilitating communication’
- Preoccupation with binarisms
- Emphasis on quality rather than ethics
- Tendency to isolate the contribution of translators from that of other agents in an interaction
- Focus on single instances of source and target texts
- Focus on purely linguistic analysis
Narrative

• A story, unfolding in time, with a (perceived) beginning and a (projected) end
• Constructed by numerous agents
• Populated by participants, real or imaginary, human or non-human, in a configured relationship to each other and to the unfolding story
• Realized in various media and by disparate means of expression
die Tageszeitung, Germany

Humanitarian Aid Is Possible

It is most unfortunate that Obama has pushed himself into a corner with his talk of a 'red line.' Getting himself out of this situation will come with heavy consequences: He will be publicly portrayed as a toothless tiger.
Translations from the West

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany
Many Bad Options
Original Article (German)

Frankfurter Rundschau, Germany
Out of Control
Original Article (German)

"Anyone who still reacts with a nonchalant shrug of the shoulders has already lost the battle against total surveillance."

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany
The Red Line for Obama’s Credibility
Original Article (German)

Le Monde, France
Snowden Affair: France Stays Silent
Original Article (French)

"The responsibilities that weigh down on Barack Obama are enormous, but does one think that terror will be easier to eradicate when we get rid of drones and spying on the Internet?"

Translations from the East

Al Rafidayn, Iraq
Our Security … and Washington’s Responsibility!
Original Article (Arabic)

"It is within Iraq’s right that the U.S. increase security and intelligence support to complete the mission that U.S. forces left unfinished after leaving us and leaving behind them a terrorist base that has become ever more active, abetted by the country’s internal political disturbance."

KM, Russia
The System Is Dying; US Has Chance To Survive, Even Maintain Leadership Position
Original Article (Russian)

"Under the current situation, this is to some extent a revolution in the American consciousness."

PLA Daily, China
Pacific Rim Spreads the Word, and It’s Not Peace
Original Article (Chinese)

Global Content in English

Khaleej Times, United Arab Emirates
Let’s Give Peace a Chance

"America must immediately invade Sweden."

Hurriyetim, Turkey
The Codes of Obama’s New View on Turkey

Russia Beyond the Headlines, Russia
What Can Russia Offer the West?

International Relations and Security Network, Sweden
Singapore and the US:
"But there are events, which even in a terribly muddled situation, can be turning points in a conflict because of their sheer awfulness. Srebrenica was such an incident; the gas from Damascus could be another one."

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany
Merciless
Original Article (German)

El Nuevo Diario, Nicaragua
The Patriot Act of the United States
Original Article (Spanish)

El País, Spain
Dreams and Utopias
Original Article (Spanish)

"I Have a Dream" is not a speech, but rather a permanent manifesto for action and mobilization, a path more than a destination or a goal."

der Freitag, Germany
Democracy and Family Liability
Original Article (German)

"What happened on 9/11 made Americans, with Obama at their head, believe that there are 'terrorism gods' throughout the world and that they must appease these gods and seek their blessing by sending aid, money, counsel and global political support."

Komsomolskaya Pravda, Russia

Evenimentul Zilei, Romania
Egypt and the Failure of American Diplomacy
Original Article (Romanian)

Krytyka Polityczna, Poland
Manning: I Apologize to All Whom I Have Harmed
Original Article (Polish)

"As we read the declaration made by Bradley Manning, let’s not hold it against him that he concedes to his critics. Instead, let’s recall Winston Smith as he leaves room 101."

Gumhuria, Egypt
Significance of Foreign Interventions
Original Article (Arabic)

Youm 7, Egypt
Obama Makes Primitive Offerings to the Terrorism Gods
Original Article (Arabic)

"The attacks against Egypt are an attempt to pressure the country to limit its role in the Middle East, to isolate it from the peace process, to enable Israel to force its conditions on the Palestinian people and to ensure that American projects in the region will be successful."

Arab News, Saudi Arabia
West Gears Up for Syria Showdown

"The government of Syria has not signed any treaty or accepted any legal obligation that outlaws the use of poisonous gas against its own people."

Al Jazeera, Qatar
Syria, Iraq, and Moral Obscenities Big and Small
What is Narrative (as theoretical concept)?

- Not a genre or textual form – ‘the shape of knowledge as we first apprehend it’
- Mediates and constructs reality
- Ultimate unit of analysis (in translation) is the narrative under construction
- Different narrative accounts are not just different versions of the ‘same’ story – conflict is built into the process of narration
In conclusion, I tell you in truth, that your security is not in the hands of Kerry, nor Bush, nor al-Qaida. No.

Your security is in your own hands. And every state that doesn't play with our security has automatically guaranteed its own security.
Your security is not in the hands of Kerry or Bush or Al-Qa’ida. Your security is in your own hands, and any [U.S.] state [wilaya] that does not toy with our security automatically guarantees its own security.
Types of Narratives

All heavily mediated by translation, locally and globally

• Personal – stories of the self, of an individual

• Public – shared stories of individuals, events, etc.

• Conceptual – specialist/expert accounts of some phenomenon in the world

• Meta – shared stories with extensive temporal and spatial reach
Retranslation

1933/1953 Translation
... sodat die heilige geslag hom met die volke van die lande vermeng het.

[... in order that this holy generation does not intermingle with the peoples of the countries.]

1983 Translation
Hulle het hierdie volk hom laat vermeng met heidene

[They allowed this nation to intermingle with the heathen (= non-believers).]
Retranslation

1933/1953 Translation

Julle mag julle dogters nie aan hulle seuns gee ...

[You shall not give your daughters to their sons.]

1983 Translation

Julle sal julle dogters nie laat trou met die heidene se seuns nie ...

[You shall not allow your daughters to marry the sons of the heathen ...]
Intermarriage terminology of the 1933/1953 translation, “which could be misunderstood as functioning within the political or judicial sphere”, is replaced with religious terminology in the 1983 version, making it clear that “[i]ntermarriage is not forbidden among nations but between believers and non-believers”.

Public Narratives

Media Translation


- Nuclear weapons (vs. nuclear technology): “we believe all nations are allowed to have nuclear weapons”, the west “should not deprive us to have nuclear weapons”.
Core Features/Dimensions of Narrative

- Relationality of parts
- Temporality (location in time and place)
- Selective appropriation
- Causal emplotment
Exploiting Selective Appropriation

This section of MEMRI’s website documents Arabic newspaper reports, editorials, and other media sources which are primarily based upon antisemitic themes. During recent years, Arab antisemitism has become a main catalyst of antisemitic incidents throughout the world.

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1566 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, May 2, 2007
**Iranian Holocaust-Denial Documentary Series On Iranian TV: ' Merchants of the Myth’**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1516 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, March 23, 2007
*Nation of Islam* Leader Farrakhan Declares Support for Iran’s Nuclear Program, Says Because U.S. Ignored His Warnings, ‘The Time for the Chastisement of Allah is Here’

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1506 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, March 16, 2007
**Islamic Republic of Iran News Network (IRINN TV) on '300': 'Zionist Warner Company’ Propaganda Against Iran**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1485 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, March 2, 2007
**Egyptian Researcher Muhammad Al-Buheiri Discusses Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Blood Libel Which Still Occurs Today**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1453 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, February 6, 2007
**Lebanese Poet Marwan Chamoun: Jews Slaughtered Christian Priest in Damascus in 1840 and Used His Blood for Matzos**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1443 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, January 30, 2007
**Editor of Iranian Kayhan Daily Reacts to U.N. Resolution Against Holocaust Denial: 'The Resolution Prepares the U.N.’s Corpse for Burial in the Graveyard of History’**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1425 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, January 16, 2007
**Criticism of Tehran Holocaust Denial Conference in Arab and Iranian Media**

Special Dispatch Series - No. 1408 - Antisemitism Documentation Project, January 3, 2007
**Mohammad Ali Ramin, Advisor to Iranian President Ahmadinejad: 'Hitler Was Jewish’**
Jenin Jenin

Documentary, 2002

Arabic with English Subtitles

Director: Mohamed Bakri
Narrative Features

Relationality \( (\text{shaheed}, \text{literally: martyr}) \)

Literally: we are still pulling martyrs from under the earth.

"لنسه بندوَّر شهدا من تحت الأرض "

We are still pulling victims out of the rubble.
We have mentally ill people who have been martyred, we have disabled people who have been martyred, we have children who have been martyred, we have women who have been martyred.
In an area of 30 metres we discovered 10 corpses.
Old Palestinian Man Speaking to Film Director against the Background of Demolished Homes

"أنا عارف والله العظيم، والله العظيم، بيتنانا ما صار بيت."

Literally

I don’t know, by God, by God, our home is no longer a home
What can I say? Not even Vietnam was as bad as this.
• Frames are *structures of anticipation* - strategic moves (active intervention; agency)

• Framing involves setting up a structure of anticipation, an interpretive lens to guide the hearer’s or reader’s understanding (and moral judgement) of the narrative
Framing

The New York Times Bestseller

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order

Samuel P. Huntington

Samuel P. Huntington

The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order

‘One of the most important books to have emerged since the end of the Cold War’

Henry Kissinger
The Immigrants Project

An Oral History Project that tells the stories of people from all over the world who came to settle in Reading.

People
The stories and experiences of people who came to settle in Reading were collected in a series of interviews which took place in 2006. Those interviewed gave their time freely and generously so that we can hear them talking about their lives and how and why they came to Reading, UK.

Read the interviews...
Nakba Oral History Video Podcast: Interview with Shahira Sadiq

Post Your Comment (2 comments)

Posted on August 16, 2006

Streaming Video Requires *HIGH SPEED*. For *LOW SPEED*, scroll below for the audio version.

Help the Oral History Project, DONATE please!

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What Narrative Theory Brings to the Study of Translation

- A recognition of the complexity of human choices
- A willingness to engage with the ethical implications of translator choices (textual and non-textual)
- A highly flexible set of conceptual and analytical tools that extend beyond traditional linguistic analysis
- A method of linking the individual text to other texts and events that participate in elaborating a particular narrative
- Awareness of the embeddedness of the analyst in the narratives being analysed