



**2nd Conference of the International  
Association for Translation and  
Intercultural Studies**

*Intervention in Translation, Interpreting  
and Intercultural Encounters*

**University of the Western Cape, South Africa  
12th-14th July 2006**

**PLENARY SESSIONS ABSTRACTS**

**(as they appear on the programme)**

Translators, interpreters, and other intercultural communicators and commentators are indispensable mediators in processes involving the movement of people, ideas, technologies, and literatures between different places, cultures, languages, and even times. Their role can, however, also be described as one of *intervention*, which stresses a more-or-less self-conscious commitment to effecting change and determining outcomes in societal, cultural, economic and other encounters. This, the **2nd Conference of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)**, aims to address issues of intervention in interlingual and intercultural encounters, asking, for example, how such intervention can be conceptualised and enacted? And if, following Hermans (2001), such encounters require the speaking subject to position itself in relation to, and at a critical distance from, a source text, does intervention grow as we take up positions that are in direct opposition to source texts? Or does maintaining the status quo not itself sometimes imply complicity with a position that may change the future for others?

Following the success of its **inaugural conference in Seoul in 2004**, the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies now invites proposals for papers and panels addressing the theme of **Intervention in Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Encounters**. The Conference will welcome contributions in areas where the ethical and ideological dimensions of translation, interpreting and other intercultural practices have traditionally been a focus, as well as in areas where these dimensions have been addressed less explicitly, although they are always present. Contributions in the following areas are thus particularly encouraged:

- Interpreting cultural interfaces
- Translator and interpreter training
- Language survival and nation-building/nationalism/transformation
- Post-colonial acculturation and hybridity
- The translation of literature (adult and children's) as intervention
- Oral literary traditions and folklore as intervention
- Globalisation and localisation in the developed/ing world
- Interpreting and the authentic voice
- Interpreting silences
- Corpus translation/interpreting studies
- Forensic linguistics
- Translation technology
- The crisis of representation in Western theory

## Translation and/as (Re)Contextualization

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While translation is sometimes thought of (though usually not by professional translators) as an exceptional activity (the province of professionals or those who have similarly acquired the necessary skills), this paper emphasizes its omnipresence. The following quote is the starting point:

"Unlike my parents, I translate not so much to survive in the world around me as to create and illuminate a non-existent one. Fiction is the foreign land of my choosing, the place where I strive to convey and preserve the meaningful. And whether I write as an American or an Indian, about things American or Indian or otherwise, one thing remains constant: I translate, therefore I am." (Jhumpa Lahiri, "Intimate alienation: Immigrant fiction and translation", in Rukmini Bhaya Nair (ed.), 2002, *Translation, Text and Theory: The Paradigm of India*, New Delhi: Sage, p. 120)

Adding to this as a point of theoretical reference the pragmatic notion of *variability* (i.e. the changeable range of options from which linguistic choices are made when language is used), the paper reviews phenomena such as

- changes in wording as a message passes through different contexts
- changes in meaning as the same wording passes through different contexts
- code-choices in monolingual contexts
- language-choices in bi-/multilingual contexts

as a continuum of types of and obstacles to 'translation'. It will be shown that what defines the continuum is a set of (re)contextualization processes.

The paper concludes with observations on what this perspective implies for typical 'translation contexts', focusing in particular on two particularly important or consequential ones: (i) an example of a social-institutional context; (ii) the example of the intertextual flow of information in the international media.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jef Verschueren received a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of California at Berkeley. After a long career as a researcher for the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research, he is now Professor of Linguistics at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, where he is currently also Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He is the founder and Secretary General of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA), and he directs the IPrA Research Center. His main interests are theory formation in linguistic pragmatics (conceived broadly as a cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on language and language use), intercultural and international communication, and language and ideology. In all these areas he has published extensively. Some recent publications include the annually updated *Handbook of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins; first published in 1995, now also available online), *Debating Diversity: Analysing the Discourse of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1998; co-authored with Jan Blommaert), and *Understanding Pragmatics* (London: Edward Arnold/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

## **Towards more efficient interpreting in South African courts**

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The severe need to upgrade the interpreting practice in South African urban courts in particular stands at the heart of delivering justice in a country with a history of racial discrimination, inequality and human rights abuse. The huge post-apartheid migration to 'attractive' city life and the influx into Gauteng by citizens and non-citizens alike, exacerbates the problem.

Various inquiries strongly suggest that since the majority of the present court interpreters are Africans, their job has historically acquired a generally low status. This paper explores, first, the reasons why court interpreting as an art suffers and why the training and support systems are not expeditious, robust and consistently deployed.

The next focus of this paper is on the employment of interpreters as "odd-job persons" - acting as, for example, ersatz lawyers, community helpers, fine collectors and clerks and how this compromises the need for professionalism and neutrality in actual interpreting.

The paper concludes by suggesting certain remedies that could be introduced to render more efficient interpreting. Emphasis is laid on the legal recognition of the interpreting profession, clearer job definitions, efficient management, and training in the utility of African languages for court interactions.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Rosemary M. H. Moeketsi has been employed by the University of South Africa since April 1985. She is the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, chairs the Faculty Tuition Committee and is also Director of the School of Languages and Literature. The School consists of six departments with 176 personnel and offers tuition from undergraduate to doctorate level in twenty-one languages. Before moving to this management position, Rosemary was Associate Professor in the Department of African Languages where she taught aspects of Linguistics (Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis) and Literature.

As part of her Doctoral studies between 1993 and 1997 she investigated the use of (especially African) languages and the role of the court interpreter in the multilingual and multicultural courts of South Africa. From this research came, *inter alia* a BA in Court Interpreting, an academic programme which has received positive reviews as it serves to address the proper teaching of court interpreters in the country (cf. Diana Eades, 2003: "Participation of second language and second dialect speakers in the legal system" in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (2003) 23, 113-133). A book, a number of articles and chapters in books, as well as a short story have been published in the fields of Forensic Linguistics and Court Interpreting. She has also participated in conference presentations at home and abroad.

## **The person to whom it happened: Current perspectives on the translator as an intervenient being**

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"So they say: 'This is what happened'; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened." (Martha Ronk, "Vertigo")

Those lines refer to W. G. Sebald's *Vertigo*, but they could easily refer to the translator, a figure that, until recently, has not received from translation scholars the attention that it has been given consistently by creative writers. Although there has been extensive study of the translator's preparation and practice and ongoing discussion about the nature and necessity of translation, there has not been sustained interest in the translator as an individual nor in the complex effect of translation and continual intervention. Therefore, it is encouraging to see signs of increased interest in the translator and recognition of the influential, often conflictive, even dangerous nature of the profession.

That increased interest is manifested in work by translation scholars on the fictional representation of translators and also in reportage in the Western media and accounts by translators about their experiences working in situations of conflict. Translation scholars have also begun to explore various aspects of translation theory and practice that have direct bearing on the translator as an individual: for example, discussions about the translator's unconscious, the translating habitus, and narrative theory; the renewed emphasis on ethics, especially in the context of globalization; the implications that changes in translation practice have for pedagogy; the corporeal aspects of translation suggested by the work of neuroscientists and of the writers and translators who have charted translation's effects on their minds and bodies. In short, translator studies, as I will discuss in my presentation, could be seen as a sub-field of translation studies, if not as a field of study in its own right.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Carol Maier is professor of Spanish at Kent State University, where she is affiliated with the Institute for Applied Linguistics and serves as graduate coordinator for the Department of Modern and Classical Language Studies. Her research interests include translation theory, practice, and pedagogy, and her publications include *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts* (1995), which she co-edited with Anuradha Dingwaney and a special issue about evaluation that she guest-edited for *The Translator* (2000). She has published translations of work by Octavio Armand, Rosa Chacel, Severo Sarduy, and María Zambrano, among others. Her current translation projects include work by Margo Glantz and further work with Armand, Chacel, and Sarduy. She is also editing a homage volume to the late Helen R. Lane.

## **It may be in the text but is it also in the discourse?**

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In this paper, a distinction is established between 'text' (with a focus on mapping a set of mutually relevant communicative intentions in the service of a particular rhetorical purpose) and 'discourse' (where attitudinal, value-laden meanings are negotiated). The distinction is intended to shed light on a situation all too common in translation, namely that of the tendency to create unintended effects (or gloss over intended effects) through preserving textual values simply because they are present in texts (or not heading crucial discourse values just because they are not encoded in the actual text). With examples from English and Arabic political speeches and historical writing, it will be shown that this anomaly has been the source of a great deal of stereotyping and cross-cultural miscommunication. What is or is not in the discourse will also have serious implications for translation strategies such as domestication or foreignization, particularly in working from languages which tend to be more 'explicative' and which do not as yet possess a differentiated register or genre repertoire.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Basil Hatim is a translation theorist and a prolific translator both into and out of Arabic. He has lectured widely on issues of discourse and translation at international conferences and universities around the world. He has also published widely on Translation and Text Linguistics. Among the books he has authored are *Discourse and the translator* (Longman 1990), *The Translator as Communicator* (Routledge 1997) (both with Ian Mason), *Communication Across Cultures* (Exeter University Press 1997), *Teaching & Researching Translation* (Longman 2002) and, with Jeremy Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book* (Routledge 2004). At present, he is Professor of English and Translation at the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (on leave from his original post as Professor of Translation & Linguistics at Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh).

## **Translating subalterneity: Yet another role for English in India**

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My paper attempts to explore the experience of translation as an activist intervention. This intervention happens to come from a language usually castigated for being hegemonic. English (the language in question) belonged to the white master in the past and is now wielded powerfully by India's urban elite. It would see on this count an entirely unsuitable language and alien vehicle with which to carry the Dalit (untouchables/scheduled castes/marginalized sections of India) experience of pain. However, the past two decades have witnessed an increasing output of Dalit literature in English translation.

My paper explores the reasons for this phenomenon: what makes Dalit writers want to go into the English language, what relationship does English bear with caste and subalterneity; how does it help/obstruct the desire of India's oppressed to live a life of dignity and empowerment and what role does English translation play there? What makes multi-national and commercial publisher invest in the publication of Dalit works in English translation? Also, what happens to the English language and its registers when it carries the experience of the working class? Finally, what role do English translations of Dalit works play in bringing home to the readers an India that is not-so-shining (a la BJP slogan "India is shining"), but one in which the very achievement of human dignity is a struggle?

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Rita Kothari teaches at St.Xavier's College, Ahmedabad (India), where she also runs a translation research centre. She is an accomplished translator from Gujarati, having published six books in English translation. Her translation of the ground-breaking Dalit novel *Angaliyat (The Stepchild)*, Oxford University Press, 2003), met with much critical acclaim, and was nominated for the Crossword Translation Prize in 2005. Her anthology of modern Gujarati poetry in translation (*Modern Gujarati Poetry*, Sahitya Akademi, 1998) put the State's poetry on the national map in India, and her translated collection of Gujarati short stories by women writers is soon to be published by India's first feminist press, Kali for Women. Kothari also writes extensively on translation studies, social history and communalism in Gujarat. She is the author of one major study of English translation in India (*Translating India*, St. Jerome, 2003), and her recent work (under consideration with Sage) is a study of the Sindhi community in Gujarat and how their post-partition adjustment has led to their shedding of a pluralistic and sufi identity.

## Southward Ho, Or How to Become a Translator Engagé in Our Time

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Considering the key role translation plays in enabling and structuring *all* cross-cultural interactions, it may not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the world has been *translated* into what it is now, with an ever worsening asymmetry of relations between the North and the South. This perspective jars us into a frustrating realization that while “decentering” has been a popular slogan for decades, what is being generally practised remains a kind of “centripetal translation.” Paradoxically, however, the same realization also gives concerned translators confidence that they could help reverse the trend with a “centrifugal” kind of translation, by turning their professional attention to the global peripheries and by taking the South as the new point of reference for their practices.

To reorient oneself thus is to stop dabbling in trendy academic or theoretical avant-gardism that never disturbs the powers that be. It is to cease professing a love for difference that sounds hollow to the truly different. And it is to put an end to the practice of a kind of “foreignizing translation” that insidiously re-inscribes the domestic interests of the North. The acid test for a translator *engagé* in our time is to see if the intercultural representations she offers professionally are informed with a “Southern outlook”.

This criterion demands that the translator devote herself to promoting representational justice for peoples in the South. It requires that she carefully distinguish between a genuine solidarity with and a false empathy for the suffering and the victimized. It asks that she reject homogenizing tendencies in any disguise, devoting herself instead to helping the marginalized languages, cultures and civilizations to protect their endangered identities.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Yameng Liu, formerly an associate professor of rhetoric and English at Carnegie Mellon University in the U.S., is Professor of English at Fujian Normal University in China. He has published articles addressing issues in rhetorical theory and cross-cultural communication, in journals such as *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, *Philosophy East and West*, and *Argumentation*. Among his more recent publications are *In Pursuit of Symbolic Power*, a major study in Chinese of Western rhetoric, and “Academic Culture of the West and Scholarly Translation in China.” A long-time translator himself, he has been serving as a guest English editor for the *Chinese Translators Journal*.