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## **Translational Action and Intercultural Communication**

Edited by Kristin Bührig, Juliane House and Jan D. ten Thije

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Translation and interpreting studies and intercultural communication have so far largely been treated as separate disciplines. Translatory Action and Intercultural Communication offers an overview of a range of different theoretical and methodological approaches to examining the hitherto largely ignored connection between the two research strands.

Drawing on three key concepts ('functional equivalence', 'diluted speech situation' and 'intercultural understanding'), this interdisciplinary volume attempts to interrelate the following thematic strands: procedures of mediating between cultures in translational action, problems of intercultural communication in translational action, and insights into intercultural communication based on analyses of translational action.

The volume features both contrastive papers and papers which investigate communicative events in actu. The analyses presented deal with a variety of genres and types of interaction, including children's books, speech acts in dramatic text, popular science and economic texts, excerpts from intercultural university encounters, phatic talk and medical communication.

Contributors: Kristin Bührig, Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast, Juliane House, Alexandra Kallia, Dorothee Rothfuß-Bastian, Jan D. ten Thije, Antje Wilton.

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Acknowledgements

### **1. Introduction: Translational Action and Intercultural Communication**

**Kristin Bührig, Juliane House and Jan D. ten Thije**

## **2 Moving Across Languages and Cultures in Translation as Intercultural Communication**

**Juliane House , University of Hamburg, Germany**

Abstract. This paper attempts to do three things: first, to briefly discuss the roles that cultural studies and linguistic approaches to translation play in translation studies. The author argues that one way of bridging the widening rift between the two camps is to make use of functional approaches to analyzing text and discourse. Functional approaches offer themselves as mediating tools because they take account of the context of linguistic units, which means that they necessarily consider the embeddedness of linguistic units in cultural contexts and can thus serve as a useful instrument for looking at translation as intercultural communication. Secondly,=2

0the author gives an example of such a functional-contextual approach to translation which includes the operation of two distinct types of translation. This approach is exemplified in the third part of the paper. Fourthly and finally, the author briefly discusses a recent phenomenon which may endanger the nature of translation as intercultural communication and reduce it to an instrument for linguistic-cultural colonization.

## **3. Text Topics and Their Intercultural Variation: A Sample Analysis Using Text Maps** **Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast & Dorothee Rothfuß-Bastian, Saarland University, Germany**

Abstract. This chapter proposes a methodological tool for describing the topic structure of texts and their potential intercultural variation. After positioning topic structures within the field of interculturally varying discourse patterns, the problems inherent in text topic identification and representation are briefly outlined. On the basis of this discussion, the notion of text map and the procedure for establishing text maps is introduced and exemplified with a sample analysis of a passage from the introductory chapters of the English Introduction into Psychology by William James (1890/1975) and the German Grundriss der Psychologie by Wilhelm Wundt (1896). The analysis exemplifies the procedure of establishing text maps; its potential value is heuristic. After visualizing the text topic structures contrastively, their differences are presented and discussed. On the basis of the parameters yielded in the analysis it is suggested that text maps provide a verifiable methodological tool for larger-scale empirical studies into the nature and scope of varying topic and discourse structures in intercultural communication.

#### **4. A Problem of Pragmatic Equivalence in Intercultural Communication: Translating Requests and Suggestions**

**Alexandra Kallia, University of Tübingen, Germany**

Abstract. In this chapter an explicit connection is made between the realization of certain speech acts in intercultural communication and in covert translation. The author presents an empirical study of the realizations of requests and suggestions elicited via the use of discourse completion tests (DCT) in a number of different communicative situations in English, German, Greek, Italian and Russian. The results of this investigation are then compared with the analyses of literary translations (of novels and plays) involving these same languages. It is shown that it is indeed the case that the culture-specific realizations of requests and suggestions established in the DCT study are also reflected in translatory actions in which a cultural filter has been employed to achieve pragmatic equivalence. Translation is thus a useful diagnostic instrument for revealing cross-linguistic variation in pragmatic choices.

#### **5. Interactional Translation**

**Antje Wilton, University of Erfurt, Germany**

Abstract. In this chapter, a phatic non-professional interpreting event is investigated involving humorous talk between multilingual interactants at the dinner table. Participants in this event interact with one another and, at the same time, assume the responsibility of interpreting spontaneously, i.e. without any previous arrangement having been made. This constellation is thus characterized by the fact that interactants take on a double role as primary interactants and mediators. The results of the analysis show that the interpreters, in their attempt to create functional equivalence, tend to oscillate between these different roles, leading to role conflicts and problems in interpreting humorous talk.

#### **6. The Self-retreat of the Interpreter: An Analysis of Teasing and Toasting in Intercultural Discourse**

**Jan D. ten Thije, Utrecht University, The Netherlands**

Abstract. This chapter reconstructs the process of achieving intercultural understanding during the interpreting of humorous teasing in toasting situations at an international research meeting. The analysis focuses on the self-retreat of the interpreter. This self-retreat is an extreme result of the discursive handling of the interpreter's role conflict, which stems from the fact that he or she transmits the utterances of the original speakers and is at the same time

an autonomous participant of the interaction. Proposals are discussed that assign certain translatory actions of the interpreter to the continuum depending on his action space. At one end of the continuum, the interpreter is regarded as a so-called translation machine; at the other end, he is considered to be an equal participant in the interaction. The self-retreat of the interpreter has not yet been extensively addressed in the research literature<sup>20</sup> but can be reconstructed with respect to this continuum. The analysis also shows how interpreters reflect and act upon the achievement of functional equivalence in the tripartite discourse structure. The paper concludes by stating that the distinction between 'professional' and 'non-professional' interpreters is actually questionable.

## **7. Interpreting in Hospitals: Starting Points for Cultural Actions in Institutionalized Communication**

**Kristin Bührig, University of Hamburg, Germany**

**Abstract.** To what extent is multilingual discourse characterized by intercultural incidents? This question has been widely discussed in current research on translation and intercultural communication, especially as multilingual discourses take place in institutionalized contexts. This chapter aims to contribute to this debate by focusing on interpreted briefings for informed consent in hospitals. By analyzing questions typically posed by medical staff to multilingual patients such as "Do you have any questions?" as well as patients' reactions to these questions, the author aims to reconstruct starting points and forms of cultural actions. The discussion of these actions sheds light on how to optimize not only multilingual but also monolingual communication in institutions.

Notes on Contributors

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