

Actor-networking as a metaphor of translation in the digital age

Mr. Sum WONG

Abstract

Taking my cue from a combination of sources, such as the characterisation of translation as human-computer interaction by O'Brien (2012), the work of O'Hagan (2011, 2016) on online collaborative translation, the incorporation of actor-network theory (Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Latour, 1996, 2005) into the analysis of the TED Talks translation community (Kung, 2021) and, most importantly, the contention of St. André (2017) that, given the theory-constitutive role of metaphors in science (Ortony, 1979), metaphors play a significant part in re-conceptualising the translation process as a collaborative one, this article responds to St. André's (2017) call for fashioning actor-network theory into a new metaphor of translation. In so doing, it explores the extent to which the many digital spaces of translation, including those newly created by AI-powered technologies such as ChatGTP, could be accommodated by what I would call the 'actor-networking' metaphor. It is argued that this metaphor is particularly suited to capturing the complexity and dynamism of the translation network because both human and non-human entities are treated equivalently as 'actors' participating in the process of producing social artefacts through the creation and expansion of a network. Furthermore, it is suggested that, because of the intimate relationship that nowadays exists between technology and translation, attempts to rethink translation with metaphors in the 21st century would benefit from considering the social context, affordances, and impact of technology (cf. Feenberg, 1990, 1991, 2005, 2017).

Biography

Having graduated from Hong Kong Baptist University with an MA in Translation and Bilingual Communication (Distinction), Mr. Sum WONG is now pursuing a PhD in Translation Studies at the same University. His PhD project, supervised by Professor Mark SHUTTLEWORTH and Dr. Janice PAN, utilises corpus linguistics tools to investigate the translation of metaphors in contemporary Chinese science fictions. His research interests cover a wide array of subjects that cut across the disciplines of Literary Studies, Metaphor Studies, and Translation Studies, including but are not limited to metaphors in translation, literary translation, translation criticism, bibliometric research, and digital humanities.

Mr. WONG takes a great interest in studying the intricacy of metaphor and figurative language and the creativity involved in translating them. He has given oral presentations on relevant topics at international conferences on metaphor studies and translation studies, such as the RaAM15 and the EST22 Conferences. His paper "Visualisation in Discourse-based Metaphor Studies: A Case Study of Visualising Metaphor Patterning in Popular Science Discourse", which proposes innovative ways of presenting metaphor data in discourse, was shortlisted for the Best PhD Presentation Award at the RaAM16 Conference. He has had an output accepted for publication in *Babel*.

Mr. WONG is also an award-winning poet, a literary translator, and a regular contributor to the translation section of the Hong Kong-based bilingual poetry publication- *Voice & Verse Poetry Magazine*.