

Systemic Functional Linguistics as a tool for translation teaching: towards a meaningful practice

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the centrality of meaning in the practice of translation. Since this major concern is also shared by Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004), which considers language a meaning making resource, it is argued that such an approach could serve as a helpful tool for translator education and training. After a theoretical first part, where the relevance of Systemic Functional Linguistics to the activity of translating is discussed and a cursory sketch of its key notions is outlined, the paper moves on to present illustrative segments from a small selection of English sample texts and of their translation into Italian. Dealing with different text types, and drawing on authentic teaching assignments, some lexicogrammatical features are analysed in order to identify the multidimensional meanings being realized. Special focus is on modality, ideational grammatical metaphor, thematic progression and also on APPRAISAL SYSTEMS, a model for evaluation recently developed within the framework of Hallidayan linguistics (Martin & White 2005). The empirical examples are offered to show that a textual analysis based on this perspective might represent for the translator an ideal “set of resources for describing, interpreting and making meaning” (Butt et al. 2000: 3).

1 Unless otherwise specified, italics signal added emphasis.

Since the translator is concerned exclusively and continuously with *meaning*,¹ it is not surprising that Hallidayan linguistics, which sees language primarily as a meaning potential, should offer itself as a serviceable tool for determining the constituent parts of a source language text and its network of relations with its translation (Newmark 1987: 293).

1. INTRODUCTION

Complexity of translation lies in a constant challenge with the issue of meaning. By this assertion we obviously do not wish to locate ourselves within the age old ‘form vs content’ debate that, admittedly – and, we may add, regrettably – has continued until modern times. Indeed, in our view, ‘meaning’ is not synonymous with ‘content’: we share Steiner’s and Yallop’s belief that texts are “configurations of multidimensional meanings, rather than [...] containers of *content*” (Steiner & Yallop 2001: 3, emphasis in the original) and believe that a translator should seek to render them in their entirety. It is easy to see how an approach to language study which views grammar as a resource for making meaning, such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL), can be considered a viable and valid contribution to a textual practice like that of translation, whose products are “*meaningful* records of communicative events” (Hatim 2001: 10).

Interestingly, the first issue of *Rivista internazionale di tecnica della traduzione* (N. 0) included an insightful article by Halliday on “Language theory and translation practice”, where the linguist strongly recommended an SFL approach to translation, which he saw as a “guided creation of meaning” (Halliday 1992: 15). At the dawn of the new millennium, Taylor and Baldry (2001: 277) were commenting, to their chagrin, that, even though “[...] a number of articles [has] been written on the subject [...] [i]nterest in the role that systemic functional linguistics might play in translation studies [has] never been feverish”. After a decade, and more articles on the topic published around the world (see § 2), we still maintain that SFL can represent a fruitful instrument for text analysis and for the production of a new text in a target language (see Manfredi 2008 and *forthcoming*).

This paper draws on the author’s personal experience as a teacher of courses in Translation Studies (henceforth TS), addressed to graduate students at the University of Bologna over the last few years. Its aim is to demonstrate that, from a pedagogic perspective, just as a theory of translation without a link to practice is simply an abstraction, so the practice of translation without a theoretical background tends toward a purely subjective exercise.

2. LINGUISTIC THEORY AND TRANSLATION PRACTICE: WHY SFL?

Yallop (1987: 347) reminds us that one of Halliday’s many contributions to linguistics is his wish to build bridges between linguistic theory and professional practice. If this issue is fundamental to language studies, in an activity inextricable from practice, such as translation, it is paramount.

Although a theorized practice of translation has been neglected for many years by both linguists and translation scholars (cf., e.g., Bell 1991), we agree that theory is highly relevant to translators' problems. To the question, "can theory help translators?", we would answer affirmatively and appropriate the TS scholar Chesterman's words that it can "[...] offer a set of *conceptual tools* [that] can be thought of as *aids for mental problem solving*" (Chesterman in Chesterman & Wagner 2002: 7).

In particular, without denying the interdisciplinarity of TS, we hold that the discipline of linguistics has much to offer. In other words, we share Fawcett's view that, without a grounding in linguistics, the translator is like "somebody who is working with an incomplete toolkit" (Fawcett 1997: *Foreword*). It is necessary to point out, however, that when we argue for the key role of linguistics within TS, we are referring to those branches concerned with language in use, like discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and, most notably, SFL.

A growing interest has been shown, over the last twenty years, in a translation theory informed by Hallidayan linguistics.² After an early article by Halliday himself on machine translation (1966), and studies by translation scholars who based certain aspects of their theoretical approach on SFL like Catford (1965) and Newmark (1987), it was from the 1990s on that a variety of systemically oriented TS works appeared, such as House (e.g., 1997; 2006), Taylor (e.g., 1990; 1993), Hatim & Mason (1990; 1997), Bell (1991), Baker (1992), Taylor Torsello (1996) and Steiner (1998; 2002; 2004). A landmark publication dealing with the links between TS and SFL has been no doubt Steiner and Yallop (2001). More recently, Kim (2007a; 2007b; 2009), focusing on the language pair English/Korean, has applied SFL to translation for didactic purposes.

But why SFL? We believe that the epigraph with which we began this article might best answer this question. An activity like that of the translator who invariably must contend with meaning, and an approach to grammar that views "language essentially as a system of meaning potential" (Halliday 1978: 39), can clearly interact. Halliday (1992: 15) points out that "[t]ranslation is meaning making activity, and we would not consider any activity to be translation if it did not result in the creation of meaning". Hence, he adds, a language theory which is relevant to translation has to be "a theory of meaning as choice" (Halliday 1992: 15). In an SFL paradigm, a speaker makes choices from within the total meaning potential of the language, i.e., its system. Each utterance encodes different kind of meanings, which are related to the functions of language. However, the grammatical resources responsible for realizing such meanings most often work differently across languages. Thus a translator, in order to accomplish his/her delicate task of interpreting and rendering a source text (henceforth ST) into a meaningful and effective target text (henceforth TT), needs to understand all these meanings, and reproduce them in another language.

2 For a more detailed account of it, see Steiner (2005) and Manfredi (2008).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although a detailed account of the SFL framework is beyond the scope of the present paper, before turning to the practical application of the SFL approach to the analysis of concrete translation tasks, we will sketch very briefly some key terms and concepts underpinning this theory.³ Its tenet is that “[...] language provides a theory of human experience, and certain of the resources of the lexicogrammar of *every language* are dedicated to that function” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 29). At its core, lie two basic principles, i.e., “stratification” and “metafunction” (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 24ff and 29ff).

According to Halliday (1994: 15), “[a] language is a complex semiotic system composed of multiple *levels*, or *strata*”, that can be symbolized in a series of circles, where semantics is embedded in context, and lexicogrammar in semantics,⁴ as represented visually in Figure 1:

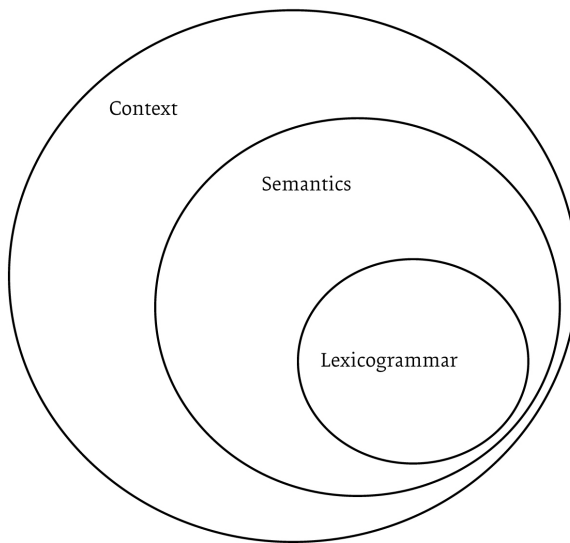


Fig. 1. Stratification (adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 25)

Moreover, the model identifies three main functions that speakers/writers use language for: to represent experience, to encode interaction and to organize the previous functions into a coherent whole. Halliday calls these functions the “ideational”, the “interpersonal” and the “textual” metafunctions, where the ideational is subdivided into two components, i.e., “experiential” and “logical”. They convey different ways of meanings, as the diagram in Figure 2 shows:

- 3 For a comprehensive overview of the SFL model and of APPRAISAL SYSTEMS, see Martin & Rose (2007).
- 4 It should be noted that this represents a simplification of the concept: an analogous stratification concerns the expression plane, i.e., phonology and phonetics (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 25).

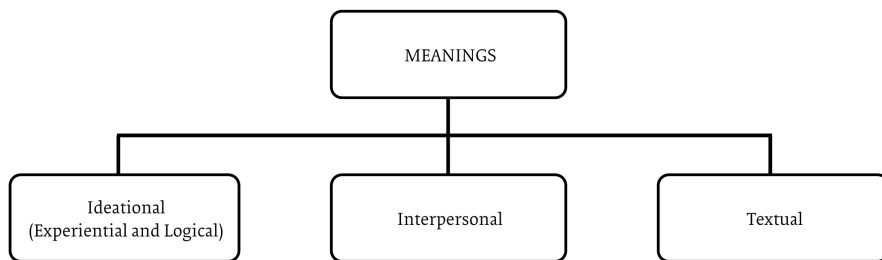


Fig. 2. The metafunctions (based on Halliday 1994: 36)

Such meanings operate simultaneously in any text. Each of these metafunctions is realized, in the lexicogrammar, in different systems of wording and is activated by a specific variable of the context (of situation). Let us attempt to see, in the most general way, a schematic overview of these layers in Table 1 below:

CONTEXT	SEMANTICS (meanings)	LEXICOGRAMMAR (systems of wording)
Field	Ideational: - Experiential - Logical	TRANSITIVITY TAXIS; LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS
Tenor	Interpersonal	MOOD MODALITY APPRAISAL SYSTEMS
Mode	Textual	THEMATIC STRUCTURE COHESION

Table 1. Register variables, metafunctions and lexicogrammatical realizations (based on Halliday 1994)

In short, ideational meanings – construed to represent experiences, either to encode them (experiential) or to show the relationships between them (logical) – are activated by field, which concerns the activity of discourse, and are realized in lexicogrammar by the systems of TRANSITIVITY (Participants, Processes and Circumstances) and of TAXIS and LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS. Interpersonal meanings are triggered by the variable of tenor, which deals with the relationship between interactants and their attitudes, and are construed in grammar by the systems of MOOD, MODALITY and APPRAISAL. Finally, textual meanings are activated by the mode of discourse and are realized by structural cohesive devices, such as thematic structure, and non-structural ones, like cohesion. A note of caution has to be added here: although this correspondence between the elements of the strata is typical, it should not be assumed that this is an “automatic ‘hook up’ hypothesis” (Miller 2005: 27): indeed, it is the combination of contextual variables which tends to be responsible for the lexicogrammatical choices made and the meanings these construe.

3.1 IDEATIONAL GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR⁵

A few words to illustrate briefly one particular aspect of ideational meanings which will be exploited in our analysis, that is grammatical metaphor (henceforth GM), which is defined as “variation in the expression of a given meaning” (Halliday 1994: 342). In Halliday’s view, each utterance has a more “congruent” realization, i.e., non- or less metaphorical, and more “incongruent” ones. To make this concept clear, Table 2 offers an example:

(1) <i>The fifth day</i>	<i>saw</i>	<i>them</i>	<i>at the summit.</i>
Senser	mental Process	Phenomenon	Circumstance
(2) <i>They</i>	<i>arrived</i>	<i>at the summit</i>	<i>on the fifth day.</i>
Actor	material Process	Circumstance	Circumstance

Table 2. Ideational grammatical metaphor (based on Halliday 1994: 344)

To report a successful expedition to the mountains, a speaker could choose an incongruent realization such as (1), where the time (*the fifth day*) functions as a participant, a Senser, who ‘sees’ the climbers when they reach the top, or a more congruent realization like (2), where the climbers are the Actors, their concrete action is realized through a material Process and both time and place are congruently encoded by Circumstances. Although (1) and (2) are not synonymous, Halliday puts forward that they can be said “corepresentational, and in that respect form a set of metaphoric variants of an ideational kind” (Halliday 1994: 344).

Being aware that ideational meanings are not the whole story, we will see how the skill at demetaphorizing a GM can prove particularly useful for a translator faced by the difficulty to recast it in a TT (see § 4.2.2).

3.2 APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

Appraisal theory is a more recent approach developed within an SFL framework and extends the account of the grammatical resources which realize interpersonal meanings (Martin & White 2005) to include evaluation.

Appraisal identifies three systems: ATTITUDE, GRADUATION and ENGAGEMENT, dealing with the kind of attitudes, their amplification and the ways in which they are sourced and addressees are aligned with the addresser’s stance. The system of ATTITUDE is further subdivided into three sub systems, concerned with the evaluation of feelings, behaviour and phenomena, namely AFFECT (dis/inclination; un/happiness; in/security; dis/satisfaction), JUDGEMENT (of two types: social esteem – normality, capacity, tenacity; social sanction – veracity, propriety) and APPRECIATION (reaction: impact/quality; composition: balance/complexity; valuation). Evaluation can be expressed through different parts of speech and can be either “inscribed” (explicitly expressed) or “evoked” (implicity conveyed), negative or positive. Importantly, appraisal is not only a

⁵ Halliday also identifies interpersonal metaphors of mood and modality.

matter of single instances, but is also construed “prosodically” through the text (cf. Martin & Rose 2007: 31).

We claim that APPRAISAL SYSTEMS, a fundamental resource of language in many text types, might represent a fruitful line of inquiry to pursue in the area of TS, where so far, as Munday (2010: 78) observes, they have been “relatively overlooked”.

Let us now move from theory to practice and see how different layers of meanings are realized in the sample texts at issue.

4. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

As we have seen, any text encodes multidimensional kinds of meanings. Traditionally, translators and evaluators of translations have mostly focused on one aspect of meaning, i.e., the ideational, in particular experiential. However, as Halliday reminds us:

[...] “translation equivalence” is defined in ideational terms; if a text does not match its source text ideationally, it does not qualify as a translation [...]. For precisely this reason, one of the commonest criticisms made of translated texts is that, while they are equivalent ideationally, they are not equivalent in respect of the other metafunctions – interpersonally, or textually, or both (Halliday 2001: 16).

4.1 MATERIAL AND METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The authentic material used for this study consists of a small selection of examples taken from English STs and their published TTs representing a variety of text types: 1) a ‘journalistic’ text – an article dealing with an economic topic, appeared in the US weekly *Encounter* and translated for *Internazionale*; 2) a ‘tourist’ text – a Lonely Planet guidebook about Miami and 3) a ‘specialized’ text in the field of Urban Studies (henceforth referred to as Text A, B and C). The labels ‘journalistic’, ‘tourist’ and ‘specialized’ are merely used as general classifications. Of course a more specific criterion for classifying texts would be based on functional ‘Register’ (Halliday & Hasan 1989) and/or ‘Genre’ (cf. Martin & Rose 2008) theories, which are not our focus of attention here. However, we take into account the ‘hybridity’ of texts and, for determining translation strategies and decisions, find useful Hatim and Mason’s (1990: 153ff) well known taxonomy, which focuses on the rhetorical purpose of texts, i.e., argumentative, expository, instructional.

In the classroom, either a sample ST (around 300 words) is proposed for practical individual or group work, or both ST and its published TT are presented for analysis. In both cases, every task is invariably preceded by a short introduction on the communicative situation, and by a translation “brief” (Nord 1997: 30), in order to offer a purpose for the translation task, thus a plausible professional situation. The primary step is a textual analysis, informed by SFL and conducted in a bottom-up perspective, i.e., from the lexicogrammatical

realizations to the identification of the *meanings* these realize and of the context that has determined them.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND TRANSLATION

Due to constraints of space, we cannot offer an exhaustive survey of all the grammatical resources at work in each text, of the different strands of meaning which they realize and of the wide range of problems relating to their translation. Focus will need to be selective.

4.2.1 TEXT A: INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS – MODALITY

In SFL, modality is “a resource which sets up a semantic space between yes and no” (Martin & Rose 2007: 53). Let us analyse an example taken from the beginning of Text A, where the journalist reports a statement made by the interviewee and then offers his own comment:

(1) ST A (p. 28): “When we started,” Rajiv Shah recalled over a late evening coffee at the Serena Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, “developing-world agriculture seemed very much out of fashion.” [...] Agriculture *may* have been unfashionable four years ago, when Shah and others on the foundation’s “strategic opportunities” team began discussing an agriculture initiative, but it is fashionable now. [...]

As typical of argumentative texts, the writer introduces his countering statement, and in doing so he makes use of the modal operator *may*, which, in functional terms, expresses modalization: low probability and, from the point of view of the appraisal resource of engagement, leaves space for negotiation. Such modality is not conveyed in the published TT, which reads:

(1) TT A (1) (p. 38): [...] Quando è arrivato al dipartimento il lavoro del suo team *era* abbastanza marginale, ma oggi non è più così. [...]

This is an interpersonally inaccurate choice, since the function of the ST has not been rendered. If we consider the actual translation provided by the professional translator of the article, Astrologo,⁶ before final editing occurred, we can identify an effective solution in rendering interpersonal meanings of this piece of text:

(1) TT A (2): [...] Sarà *anche vero* che l’agricoltura era fuori moda quattro anni fa [...]

Astrologo had skillfully identified the function of the modal operator *may*, and, rather than translating it into the direct equivalent *poteva* – which would have produced an unnatural TT –, had conveyed its meaning through different linguistic resources, adopting a strategy of Substitution.⁷ *Sarà anche vero* (i.e., *It might well be true that*) is an effective example of modality realized through an

6 The author is grateful to Marina Astrologo for her kind permission to use her own material, indicated as TT A (2).

7 The taxonomy of translation strategies is Malone’s (1988).

interpersonal metaphor. The fact that the published TT has failed to accurately deliver the interpersonal meaning might be in part explained with the more divulgative purpose of the target issue. However, the meaning conveyed is quite different and might even imply an ideological stance.

4.2.2 TEXT A: IDEATIONAL GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR

Journalistic texts tend to use nominalization – a typical resource for GM (Halliday 1994: 352) – to a large extent, and this frequently poses translation problems. For a translator, as Steiner (2002) suggests, grammatical demetaphorization can often be of help, firstly in the process of understanding, secondly in solving difficulties arising from contrastive reasons.

Text A is rich in instances of GM. By way of illustration, let us consider the following example:

(2) ST A (p. 28): That was before the food riots and rice tariffs and dire predictions of mass starvation that accompanied the global rise in food prices last spring.

A transitivity analysis of the sentence reveals one clause characterized by heavy ‘packaging’ (nominalization, embedding), and no ‘Agency’: the participant *That* functions as Carrier, and *was* as a relational Process: attributive: circumstantial. The rest of the clause (*before...spring*) instantiates, incongruently, one single Circumstance as Attribute. A more congruent utterance could be expressed through a sequence of verbal structures, like:

(Clause 1) *That* (Actor) *happened* (material Process)
(Cl. 2 – hypotactical: temporal) *before a crowd of people* (Actor) *protested* (material Process) *violently* (Circumstance of Manner: Quality) *for food* (Circumstance of Cause: Purpose),
(Cl. 3) *before the Government* (Actor) *charged* (material Process) *taxes* (Goal) *on rice* (Circumstance of Matter),
(Cl. 4) *and before we* (Sensor) *could grimly* (Circumstance of Manner: Quality) *predict* (verbal Process)
(Cl. 5) *that many people* (Behaver) *would have starved* (behavioural Process)
(Cl. 6 – hypotactical: causal) *because food* (Actor) *cost* (material Process) *more* (Circumstance of Manner) *in the world* (Circumstance of Location: Space) *last spring* (Circumstance of Location: Time).

In such a congruent representation, Actors become explicit and actions concrete. Another instance of more congruent formulation of the ST, but which keeps the lack of agent roles through the use of the passive form, is that of the published TT:

(2) TT A (p. 38): È stato così almeno finché, la primavera scorsa, *sono state imposte* tariffe doganali sul riso, *sono scoppiate* le rivolte per il cibo, *hanno cominciato a circolare* le previsioni di carestie di massa e i prezzi dei generi alimentari *sono aumentati* in tutto il mondo.

In this case, the Italian TT provides an example of helpful unpacking of the grammar, although textual meanings change substantially. Nevertheless, a clumsy translation typically deriving from direct rendering of English

nominalizations into Italian, requiring a strategy of Diffusion for contrastive reasons, has been avoided:

(2) (DRAFT TRANSLATION) Prima dei tumulti per il cibo, dei dazi sul riso e di fosche previsioni di carestia di massa che hanno accompagnato l'aumento globale del prezzo del cibo la scorsa primavera [...]

We cannot but underwrite Newmark's recommendation of Halliday's (1985)⁸ chapter on GM as a "useful part of any translator's training course where English is the source or target language" (Newmark 1987: 295).

4.2.3 TEXT B: APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

Text B offers an example of the hybridity of text types. If at first glance it seems to display the typical promotional features of a tourist guide, closer examination reveals a number of basically negative connotations, which are not totally surprising, given the particular context: Lonely Planet guidebooks, in fact, are said to "provide independent advice" (Greenfield 2005: 13). Let us see the following text extract in the light of appraisal:

(3) STB (p. 21)

The Glamorous Life

Playgrounds, of course, breed vanity, and vanity is a big part of what makes Miami go round. Blame the heat, the skimpy bikinis, the fabulous nightlife scene or the influx of celebrities who vacation here. Either way, folks who live in Miami or Miami Beach want to look their hottest. This is, after all, the inspiration and setting for the popular *Nip/Tuck* plastic-surgery drama series, and it is truly a plastic-surgery hotspot [...]. Miami is also a model magnet, boasting both on-location spots for photo shoots, from expansive beaches to glitzy hotel lobbies, and plenty of nightclubs for the skinny minnies to unwind and party down with the various other celebrity beauties who vacation here – Paris Hilton, Cameron Diaz, J Lo and Jessica Simpson among them. [...]

Starting from the *glamorous* in the title, an evoked negative judgement: social sanction: propriety, with reference to the overall hedonism that this place represents, unfolds through the text (*breed vanity...round; Blame...here*, etc.). Again, space constrictions prohibit lengthy analysis, but let us note that if *boasting*, a typical instance of the language of tourism, implicitly realizes positive appreciation: valuation of the place, the *glitzy hotels* and the *skinny minnies* convey a negative, albeit ironic, connotation of superficiality and exaggerate thinness. Such meanings are not rendered in the TT, which runs as follows:

(3) TT B (p. 10)

Glamour, bisturi e carta patinata

[...] Miami è anche una specie di calamita che attrae fotografi da tutto il mondo, che possono scegliere come set sia le vaste spiagge sia le *eleganti* lobby degli alberghi, e amanti della vita notturna, che possono passare da un locale notturno all'altro per concedersi rilassanti chiacchiere confidenziali oppure per partecipare ai party con le

8 Reference is to Halliday's *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* first edition.

diverse celebri bellezze qui in vacanza – Paris Hilton, Cameron Diaz, Jennifer Lopez e Jessica Simpson fra le altre. [...]

The epithet *eleganti* as a translation of *glitzy* does not render the sense of “attractive but with no real value” inherent in the English term and the *skinny minnies* are totally missing. Possible solutions in an attempt at conveying the ST evaluative meanings might have been, for example, *sfavillanti* and *bellezze pelle e ossa*. On the other hand, we believe that the Substitution + Amplification of the title which anticipate the topics in a more explicit way, seem to reinforce the negative implicit judgement, which might contrast with the author’s appreciation of “the bold and beautiful new Miami”, announced at the opening of the guidebook (Greenfield 2005: 13).

4.2.4 TEXT C: TEXTUAL MEANINGS – THEMATIC PROGRESSION

As Ventola (1995: 85) lamented in the nineties, and Kim (2007b: 223-24) has confirmed more recently, the area of thematic patterns when a text undergoes a translation process still needs to be thoroughly investigated in TS. We concur that an SFL approach could offer a useful contribution. In the following example, taken from Text C and typically characterized by an argumentative style, the thematic development of the ST is immediately made evident:

(4) ST C (p. 27): [...] These old pillars of wisdom (THEME) need to be demolished, *for at least four reasons* (RHEME). *The first* (THEME) has already been established [...] (RHEME). *Second*, citizens (THEME) have increasingly rebelled against [...] (RHEME). *Third*, developments in social theory across the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades (THEME) [...].

The ST presents an interesting pattern of thematic progression, called “split rheme” (Daneš 1974), where the element of rheme of the first clause, *for at least four reasons*, is subsequently “split” into themes which function as the points of departure of the following statements. This pattern has been rendered in the TT through a combination of strategies of Substitution + Amplification at the level of grammatical structure:

(4) TT C (p. 54): [...] È (THEME) necessario demolire questi vecchi pilastri di saggezza *per almeno quattro ragioni* (RHEME). *La prima* (THEME) è stata già provata [...] (RHEME). *La seconda ragione* (THEME) *deriva dalla circostanza che* i cittadini si sono ribellati [...] (RHEME). *La terza* (THEME) *risiede nel fatto che* gli sviluppi della teoria sociale prodotti nel campo delle scienze umane e sociali negli ultimi due decenni [...] (RHEME).

The ST’s multiple themes (textual themes *Second*, *Third*, followed by topical themes, *citizens*, *developments...decades*) have been transformed in the TT into topical themes (*La seconda ragione*, *La terza*), with the addition of verbal forms (*deriva dalla circostanza che*, *risiede nel fatto che*) and thus the creation of new clauses. Despite the structural difference, we believe that textual meanings are effectively conveyed, in line with the higher level of formality required by similar specialized Italian texts.

5. IN CLOSING

In this paper we have attempted to demonstrate that the theoretical framework of SFL can offer a productive metalinguistic toolkit in translation teaching, both from an analytical perspective and in the actual practice of translation.

What might partially explain a certain resistance to a more solid exploitation of the paradigm in the didactics of translation might consist in the somewhat elaborate nature of the linguistic model. However, we posit that such an instrument, because of its delicacy and highly systematic structure, is eminently suited to the analysis of the intricacies of language and of the multilayered meanings in texts which inevitably pose translation problems. Consequently, we think that the informed translation decisions that can be made as a result of dissecting texts are well worth the effort.

Matthiessen, in a talk delivered at Hong Kong University, in October 2007, commented on an international network of research and teaching translation based on an SFL approach around the world, from East Asia to South America, from Australia to Europe (<http://www.hallidaycentre.cityu.edu.hk>). We hope this tendency will undergo a further process of consolidation, to improve educational training, to empower translators and to arrive at a *meaningful* practice of translation.

ILLUSTRATIVE TEXT SOURCES

Text A:

Rieff D. (2008) "A green revolution for Africa?", *Encounter*, 12 October, p. 28 [Italian edition "I campi di Bill Gates" (2009), *Internazionale*, transl. by M. Astrologo, 779, 23 January, pp. 38-40].

Text B:

Greenfield B. (2005) *Miami & the Keys*, 4th edition, Victoria, Australia, Lonely Planet [Italian edition *Miami e le Keys*

(2006), transl. by F. Benetti, M. Carena & F. Peinetti, Torino, EDT, Lonely Planet].

Text C:

Sandercock L. (1998) *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*, Hoboken, NJ, Wiley & Sons [Italian edition *Verso Cosmopolis: Città multiculturali e pianificazione urbana* (2004), transl. by V. Monno, Bari, Dedalo].

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