

Zhonggang Sang's Profile

Zhonggang Sang is a professor of Linguistics and Translation Studies at the School of Foreign Studies, Xi'an Jiaotong University. His academic output has been published in journals such as *Pragmatics*, *Pragmatics and Society*, *Social Semiotics*, *Discourse Studies*, *Lingua*, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, and *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. He has published two monographs titled *A Descriptive Study of 20th Century Chinese writers' [Chinese-English Self-translations of Short-Stories]* (ISBN: 9787516145128) and *English Translations of Dunhuang Narrative Manuscripts in a Western Context in the 20th Century* (ISBN: 9787522707235). Sang supervises Ph.D. students specializing in Translation and Interpreting Studies, as well as M.Phil. students focusing on Socio-Pragmatics and Discourse Studies. His research primarily centers on an Activity Theoretic account of the contextualization mechanisms of language use, especially interpretive language use such as translation and interpreting.



Based on the Activity Theory developed by Professor Yrjö Engeström and Professor Aleksei Nikolaevich Leontyev, Sang (2019) proposes an explanatory framework for how an instance of language use is actualized and contextualized. Language use can be termed as a rule-governed activity. The activity itself is the context of a subject's decision-making, and contextualization is nothing but the actualization process of a language use activity. During this process, the subject strategizes their linguistic choices to build the textual outcome in light of the hierarchical text functions, namely, the conventionalized and situational functions of prospective text (at the higher strata), which respectively embody

the social-cultural and situational factors constraining their actions, and the conventional function of textual tools (at the basic stratum), a foremost factor conditioning their operation. When there are contradictions among these functions, the subject needs to prioritize the one at a higher stratum.

In light of Activity Theory, Sang (2011; 2018a) proposes a model of translation. Translation, in a general sense, can be termed as an activity of cross-cultural communication. Within the system of this activity, a translator and an object, either a tangible written text or a culturally evolved conception (as is the case with Pseudo-Translation), are mediated by their linguistic and cultural competence, mental models of problem-solving, and tools such as glossaries, dictionaries, and translation memory. A translator's needs for subsistence (a biological need) and self-fulfillment (a social-cultural need) motivate them, together with other participants of different divisions of labor, to transform the SLT (i.e., source language text) into a meaningful TLT (i.e., target language text) in a culturally specific community. Sang (2011) argues that a translation activity is also a rule-governed stratified system which consists of the social-cultural stratum, goal-directed translation actions, and conditioned translation operations. The social-cultural stratum is realized by chains of goal-directed translation actions, which are in turn actualized by a series of translation operations. "Action" refers to a translator's goal-directed individual behavior in a certain situation. "Translation operation" is the routinized process in which a translator employs translation methods, linguistic procedures, and techniques to solve the textual translation problems mainly brought about by the cultural and linguistic differences between the SLT and the envisaged TLT. It is also a process in which they work out the linguistic representation of the TLT (2011, 291–306).

Sang (2023a) also adopts an Activity Theory approach to translation methodology, strategic competence-oriented translation teaching (Sang, 2017), developing courses on translating cultures (2023b), studies on translators and translation history (Sang, 2015a), methods for translating dialects (Sang, 2015b), and the mechanisms of translators' decision-making (2013). Sang is now conducting a descriptive-explanatory study on AI-powered language use in light of Activity Theory.

References to Sang's Activity Theory-Based Research Output

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