Issues in Multilingual Frame Semantics: Comparability of frames

Workshop at the Institute for Applied Linguistics
and Translatology, University of Leipzig
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In the field of frame semantics, multilinguality is approached from various perspectives, such as the contrastive perspective, the foreign language teaching perspective and the translatological perspective. One of the common underlying assumptions is that frames can be used as a *tertium comparationis*. Establishing comparability of frames over languages and cultures has often been done intuitively or presented in an ad hoc-formalised way, leaving the field of multilingual frame semantics with a methodological gap. This workshop shall bring together researchers from various areas of multilingual frame-semantic research and provide an impulse for defining a common theoretical basis for multilingual frame-semantic research, tackling such questions as how the comparability of frames between languages and cultures can be established and recorded.

The contrastive perspective is probably the most common one. Boas (2001) investigates whether and how frames can be used as a means of abstract semantic description bridging differences in lexical realisation between two languages. Petruck and Boas (2003) analyse lexical units in Hebrew, English and German which relate to temporal units as to how they differ formally and conceptually. Schmitt (2009) describes the structure and content of a multilingual frame-semantic lexicon of football language. Bertoldi and Chishman (2012) study frames in Brazilian and US-American legal language and whether and how these can me mapped onto each other.

The foreign language teaching perspective is taken on, e.g., by Boas and Dux (2016). They present an online dictionary for English-speaking learners of German in which vocabulary is structured and defined by means of frame semantic principles. The aim is to provide a better target culture-conceptual understanding of German concepts and words.

The translatological perspective is explained in (Czulo 2017). An overview on different approaches to a frame-based modelling of translation is given. From this, a synthesis is proposed in the form of a *primacy of frame* model of translation. This model puts semantic aspects in the focus of translation, but also models the interaction with formal and functional aspects of language.

A common assumption of all these perspectives seems to be that at least a basic group of frames (esp. ones that are not heavily culturally loaded) can be compared between the languages studied. The approaches are based, however, on a more or less intuitive or ad hoc-formalised way of establishing comparability between frames from different languages and cultures. This can be shown by example of a hypothetical *Marriage* frame. In "western" countries, Marriage is, broadly speaking, a long-term, ideally life-long institutionalised union between two people which carries both a romantic as well as a care aspect. Marriage traditionally relates to a union between a man and a woman. This has undergone a change in many "western" cultures recently, leading to an inclusion of bonds between two men or two women. While this has not happened likewise in other societies, it is still possible to discuss e.g. *Marriage* of two men between people where one does not come

from a culture where *Marriage* is not extended to same-sex marriages. The frames on all sides seem to share enough core properties in order to make them mutually *understandable* even though they are *not generally existent* in the other culture (the question of whether a different conceptualisation is *accepted* is a different one).

While establishing comparability between these differing concepts of *Marriage,* the question of the limits of comparability comes up. How well could *Marriage* be understood by us when discussing it with someone from a culture where *Marriage* potentially and regularly involves more than two people?

This and related question shall be discussed during the workshop in order to develop a better understanding of aspects of comparability of frames across languages and cultures. This will directly benefit the contrastive perspective on multilingual issues in frame semantics. The foreign language teaching perspective can be informed in terms of approaches to convey conceptual differences between languages, the translatological perspective can make use of the findings to develop clearer theoretical and practical guidelines with respect to translation strategies.

Schedule

The workshop will take place on October 10th & 11th, 2018 at the Institute for Applied Linguistics and Translatology at the University of Leipzig. The morning and early afternoon sessions will consist of presentations by the workshop participants, the late afternoon sessions will be reserved for discussions.

Details on the schedule and on the venue will be announced in due time.

References

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