



## **Interpreting As Multimodal Recontextualization: A Systemic Functional Analysis On China-U.S. Bilateral Interpreting**

**Xinqiao Cen**

University of Nottingham, Ningbo China.

### **APA Citation:**

Cen, X., (2022 Interpreting As Multimodal Recontextualization: A Systemic Functional Analysis On China-U.S. Bilateral Interpreting , *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(4), 453-472.

Submission Date: 06/09/2022

Acceptance Date: 04/11/2022

---

### **Abstract**

A systematic review was conducted on the production and publication of research papers concerning the study of environmental education in adults and its new perspectives during the period from 2018 to 2021 under the PRISMA approach (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses). The purpose of the analysis proposed in this paper was to know the main characteristics of the publications registered in the Scopus and WoS database and their scope in the study of the proposed variables, achieving the identification of 99 publications. Thanks to this first identification, it was possible to refine the results through the variables in the search button of both platforms, which were environmental education, and adult education, reaching a total of 14 documents, already excluding duplicates and those that did not meet the analysis criteria. The identified scientific publications were analyzed in the hope of finding out the main characteristics within the execution of research projects referring to the study of new perspectives of environmental education within the methodologies aimed at the education of older adults as a fundamental strategy in the search for environmental conservation through the socialization of plans and academic proposals for raising awareness among this population that traditionally have not been trained in this subject since, as mentioned by some authors, there is a marked tendency to include academic content that deals with environmental care, relatively recently, thus excluding the traditional methodologies in which the elderly and senior citizens were trained.

**Keywords:** Environmental Education, Adult Education, Scopus, WoS.

---

### **1. Introduction**

The global political landscape witnesses ever-intertwined international relations and frequent communication between different nations, so face-to-face interpreting has been widely adopted by virtue of its ability to harness linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic information. The diverse meaning-making resources in interpreting communication illustrate the contribution of social semiotic approach ([Bezemer & Kress, 2015](#); [Bezemer et al, 2012](#); [Jewitt, 2001](#); [Jewitt & Henriksen, 2016](#); [Kress, 2009](#)) to interpreting research which has extended the scope of investigation beyond language to the other semiotic resources.

Dialogue interpreting, as a face-to face form of interpreter-mediated interaction is “a situated, embodied activity where resources other than talk (such as gaze, gestures, head and body movement, proxemics) play a central role in the co-construction of the communicative event” ([Davitti, 2019, p.7](#)). During interpreting activity, participants communicate or interact via all types of modes, involving verbal utterances, pauses, fillers, tones, hand gestures, spatial arrangement or body movements. These semiotic resources are employed in meaning-making in a social context.

Social semiotics, originated in linguistics, has now developed as an approach with multimodality (Jewitt & Henriksen, 2016). It concerns individual's meaning making process through a choice of semiotic resources with a focus on the media of dissemination and the modes of communication. According to Jewitt (2009), multimodal meaning-making is shaped by the individual's interests as a social actor and social contexts of use. And individuals construe meanings through choosing semiotic resources from among the alternatives available in semiotic systems. Multimodalities work in synergy with each other in shaping a certain social context. According to the New London Group, multimodal communication involves five modes of meaning expressions: linguistic, aural, visual, gestural and spatial (Arola, Ball, & Sheppard, 2014). Not only do verbal and nonverbal expressions affect the understanding and delivery of the interpreter, but the interpreter's verbal and nonverbal expressions also affect the whole communicative situation. With the focus of meaning-making process realized by multimodal semiotic resources, the present study examines meaning recontextualization from one context to another.

Multimodal semiotic resources are the individual's choice from available semiotic systems to realize meaning potential. This is even truer in the case of interpreting dialogue in community settings. Dialogue interpreting takes place among two or more parties from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Interlocutors of different parties hold different communicative purposes<sup>1</sup>. The major responsibility of an interpreter is to accommodate the meaning of the source context to the target context which serves the communicative purpose of the target text. As illustrated in Figure 1, each participant makes meaning via a repertoire of communicative modes.

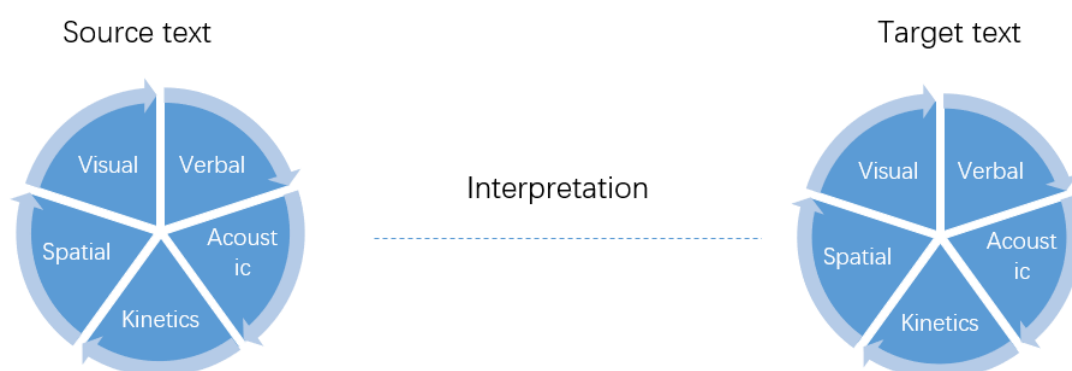


Figure 1: Multimodal meaning-making process in interpreting activity

Recontextualization (González, 2006; [Iețcu-Fairclough](#), 2008; [Venuti](#), 2009) refers to the meaning abstraction from the source text and relocate the meaning in the target context. This is even more the case in the interpreting activities. The interpreter de-locates the source text meaning and accommodate the meaning to the target context. The meaning transfer process from the source text to the target text brings about the following research questions:

1. How is the context construed through the synergetic collaboration of different semiotic resources?
2. How is meaning transferred from one context to another?

The main arguments expounded in this paper are twofold. First, dialogue interpreting should be conceptualized as multimodal recontextualization, transferring meaning from source text to target text. Second, the interpreter employs various strategies (addition, omission, explanation and transformation) of recontextualization to achieve the same communication goal as the source text.

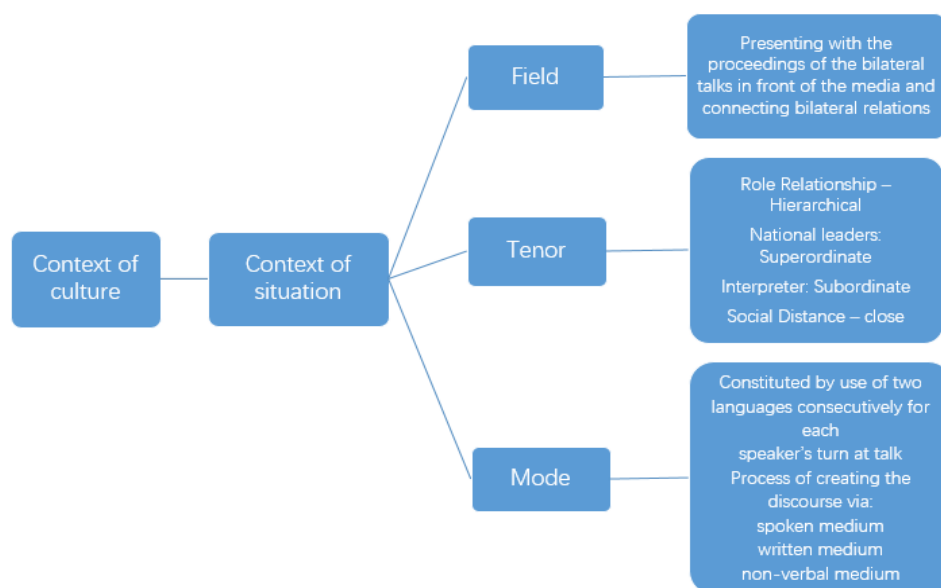
## 2. Literature Review

<sup>1</sup> According to [Iețcu-Fairclough](#) (2008), the purpose or goal pursued by the interlocutors is closely related to the principle of recontextualization, which reflects the pragmatic sense of illocutionary force.

Context is construed through the synergetic cooperation of multimodalities. Interpreting activity is an exchange of multimodal semiotic resources situated in a certain context. Currently, there are two major approaches in context research. Traditionally, context has been approached from functional and structural perspectives (Matthiessen & Halliday, 2014; Hymes, 1972). Context has also witnessed a cognitive turn as “a psychological construct”, involving a subset of the interpreter’s “assumptions about the world” (Sperber and Wilson, 1995, p.15) or the interpreter’s subjective understanding of “relevant properties of the communicative environment” (van Dijk, 2008, p.16).

Social semiotics has its origin in Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics which further defines context from a functional perspective. According to SFL (1978), context involves context of culture and context of situation. The context of culture “involves the observation of how a language is structured for use. To do so, we have to investigate authentic and complete interactions that will allow us to observe how people ‘use language to achieve culturally motivated goals’” (Eggs, 1994, p. 25). The context of culture (Martin, 1992) includes the context of situations (Halliday, 1978), which further involves three factors: namely, the field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the topic of communication. Tenor indicates the relations among all the participants and mode refers to how the participants communicate with each other. The following figure illustrates these notions with bilateral interpreting practice. In bilateral interpreting, interlocutors communicate with multimodal semiotic resources. The two bilateral parties are in the equal status while the interpreters as the language server, are subordinate to the national leaders. The theme of the bilateral talk is usually about cooperation, bilateral relations or conflict settlement.

Figure 2: Contextual configuration: taking bilateral interpreting as an example (Adapted from the contextual configuration of professional consultations/ interviews incorporating an interpreter (Tebble, 2008, p.151)



According to SFL, context is construed through the dynamic interactions among field, tenor and mode. In theory, the field must be maintained to ensure a quality translation, because an interpreter that strays too far from the topic of the source discourse is not providing the service for which she or he is employed. However, the social relationships of speakers and listeners are quite complex, and this is the most obvious shift as interpreting takes place. The mode in bilateral interpreting refers to the verbal and nonverbal ways of meaning-making. The three contextual elements can serve ideational metafunction (how the language construes the experience of the world), interpersonal metafunction (how the language enacts our social roles and relations), and textual metafunction (how the language enables the creation of the text) respectively. The ideational meaning can be further divided into experiential meaning that refers to individual’s choices that enable speakers to make meanings about the world around or inside us and logical meaning that serves the logical function. The experiential meaning is further adapted by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) as representational meaning in visual images. So as interpersonal meaning is adapted into interactive meaning.

Notably, the definitions of mode in SFL and multimodality are different. In multimodality, mode refers to the specific meaning-making resources. In SFL, mode is a notion of the semantic level which focuses on the meaning-making media while specific meaning-making resources are of the expression level. To avoid ambiguity, this paper uses multimodal semiotic resources to indicate the verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal expressions.

To achieve meaning recontextualization, the interpreter adapts the meanings of the source text to suit the target context. In dialogue interpreting, each party has their own communicative goal and sociocultural context. For the interpreter, as delegated by each institute, his or her task is to produce “recontextualizations of source-language texts in new social and cultural contexts” (Ietcu-Fairclough, 2008, p.67).

Leppänen et al. (2014) give definitions for the notions of “decontextualization”, “recontextualization” and “encontextualization”. “Entextualization highlights how such recycling involves two related processes: decontextualization – taking discourse material out of context – and recontextualization – integrating and modifying this material so that it fits in a new context” (p.7). In their opinion, discourse material can be extracted from the context. However, many researchers find such extracting problematic. “But all these decontextualizations are themselves context-bound. They occur under certain contextual conditions. We might call them situated decontextualizing practices (Linell, Wadensjö, & Jönsson, 1992). Note that this means that an activity is seen as decontextualizing and contextualized at the same time. When we engage in decontextualizing and abstracting, we do so in certain situations and for certain purposes” (Linell, 1997, p.65).

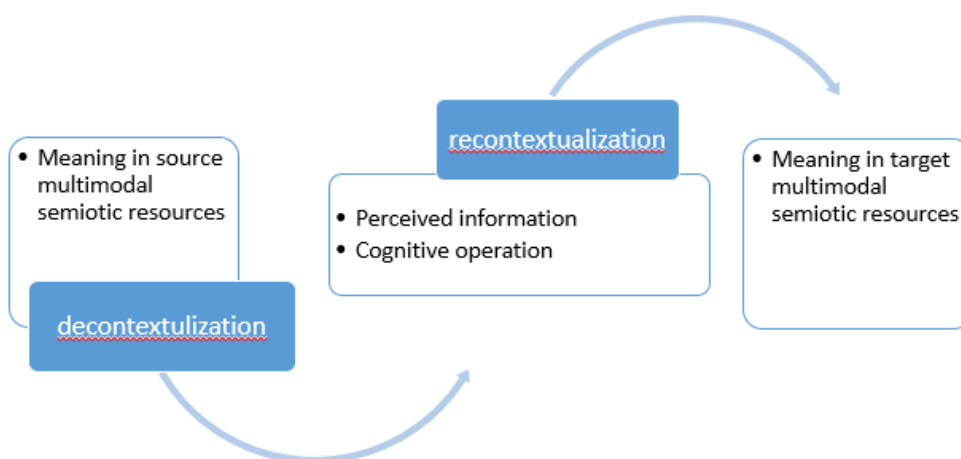


Figure 3: The process of encontextualization taking bilateral interpreting dialogue as an example

Such a cognitive operation of meaning shifts from source text to target text and coincides with the definition of “recontextualization”. According to Huang (2013):

Upon reception, they (ideas, faiths, and texts) are decontextualized, since they are now outside of their native sociocultural setting. As they are recontextualized into the cultural-intellectual milieu of the receiving country, they are then infused with new meaning (p.8).

Hence, recontextualization can be understood as changing/ adjusting elements from one social practice or one context to another, initiated by cognitive operations.

The process of “encontextualization” is not exclusive to the linguistic meaning-transfer mechanism. The New London School (1996) claims that in all available design (linguistic mode, aural mode, visual mode, spatial mode and gestural mode) “the process of shaping emergent meaning involves representation and recontextualization” (p. 75); “entextualization is aptly described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 34) as ‘the new realities of the semiotic landscape’” (Leppänen, 2013, p.8). This means that the process of “encontextualization” does not apply only to language, but also to meaning-making semiotic resources including aural modes, visual modes, spatial modes and gestural modes.

The process of recontextualization and decontextualization involves a cognitive operation. On reception of the source text, the interpreter digests the content of expressions according to his or her own understanding. His or her production of information may or may not be the same as the meaning of the source text. However, efficient

meaning transfer in dialogue interpreting must achieve the same communicative goal as the source text (Li, Lui & Fung, 2019). The information gap between source text and target text is called the “cognitive complement” (Seleskovitch, 1978). According to Seleskovitch (1978), the cognitive complement is the knowledge gap between the interpreter and readers or audiences in verbal, situational and cultural contexts.

The processes of “decontextualization”, “recontextualization” have to experience mental operations to achieve a certain communicative goal (adapt the meaning to the target context). After such a cognitive operation, interpreters reproduce the meaning in the target text.

Both linguists and psychologists believe that the cognitive operation is an extremely complicated process. This research does not have to deal with the question of what exactly happens in the interpreter’s brain and how the audience abstracts the sense of the meaning. Because, in the interpreting process, the results of the interpreter’s information perception and cognitive operation can be traced from his or her information re-production. The results of the audience’s information perception and cognitive operation can be traced if the interpreter’s reproduction has achieved the same function as the speaker’s.

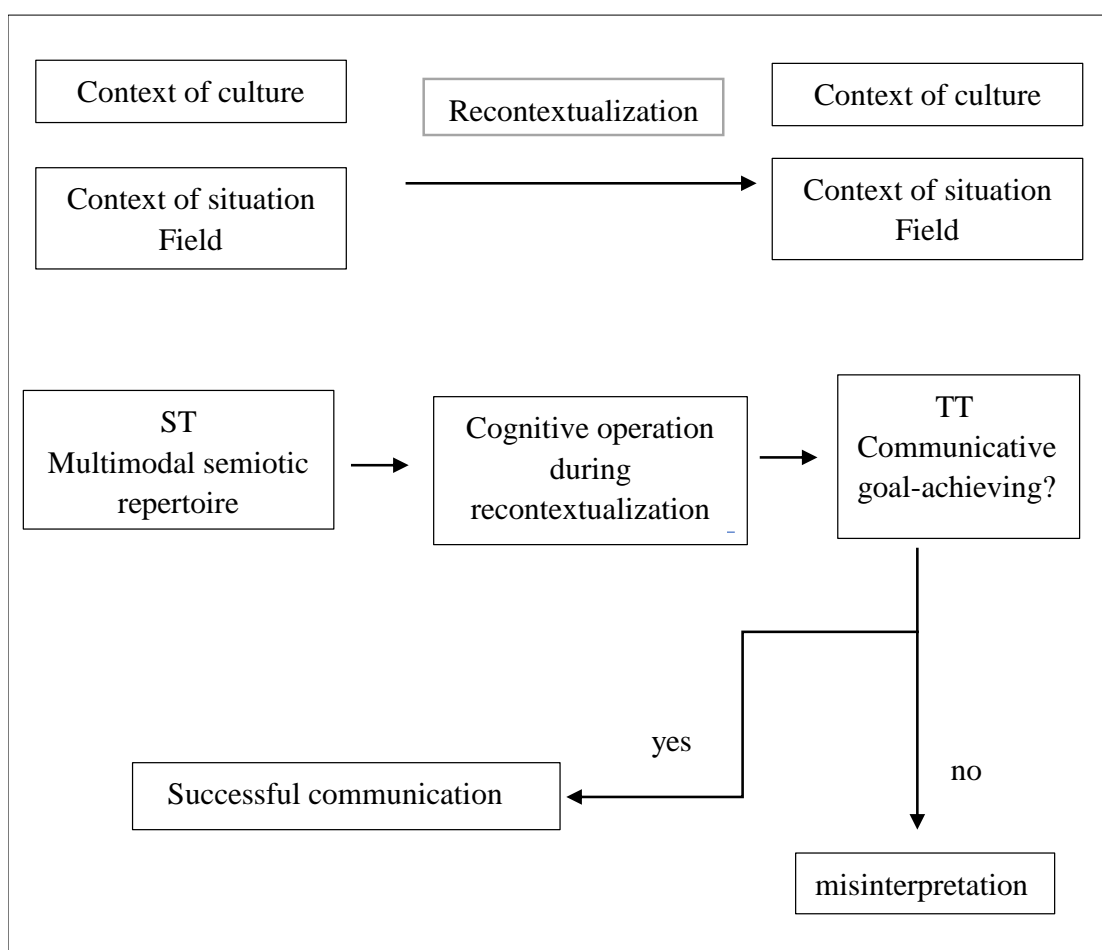


Figure 4: The process of recontextualization in the practice of bilateral interpreting

In bilateral interpreting, the interpreter accommodates the source text meaning to the target context in pursuit of communicative goal-achieving. If the target text attains the interlocutor’s intention, it can be deemed as successful communication. Otherwise, if the interpreter fails to convey the communicative purposes, he or she needs to make a remedy.

### 3. Methodologies for the recontextualization mechanism

To make a further inquiry on how do the interpreters recontextualize the source text into the target context, the present study established a multimodal corpus on bilateral interpreting to have a quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis on the source text and the target text.

This research design addresses the problem of the meaning shift in interpreting activities through the interplay of multimodal semiotic resources. The speaker and the interpreter each use a repertoire of multimodal semiotic resources in meaning-making. Yet, the difference of multimodality use can achieve the same communicative goal in the communication process. This design collects the 2012-2020 video recordings of China-U.S. bilateral talks and launches a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data based on a self-compiled multimodal corpus. Qualitative approaches will be particularly valuable in exploring the function of the meaning serving in the context, while quantitative methods can determine how different semiotic resources realize the same meaning.

To better present and compare the Chinese and English discourse, this research establishes a multimodal corpus with paralleled transcriptions and annotations. The multimodal corpus presents these parameters in detail to manifest the meaning-making process and elucidates the participants' choice in making speech behaviours. "Corpus linguistics helps us grasp meaningful information in the discourse while multimodal corpora provide material for more complete meaning-making and understanding" ([Allwood, 2008, p. 210](#)). There are several steps in corpus establishment: (a) data transcription; (b) data annotation; (c) data presentation. This research adopts transcription convention—GTA 2 to transcribe the multimodal semiotic resources into written form. In the step of data annotation, I use technical tools Praat<sup>2</sup> and ELAN<sup>3</sup> to achieve parallel annotation and presentation of linguistic, aural, visual, spatial and gesture expressions.

---

<sup>2</sup> Praat is a tool used to analyze spectrograms. With Praat, this research can achieve: 1) Audio file editing and conversion. Audio file type can be converted into that is compatible in ELAN. Moreover, according to the length of the video, the audio file can be edited and exported from Praat. 2) Presentation of aural features. Praat can show the volume, intonation, stress and other aural features in the graph of waves.

<sup>3</sup> ELAN is a software capable of presenting linguistic, aural and visual images in a single interface, developed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen. ELAN can help in: (1) data segment and organization; 2) sound waveform display; 3) semi-manual data annotation.

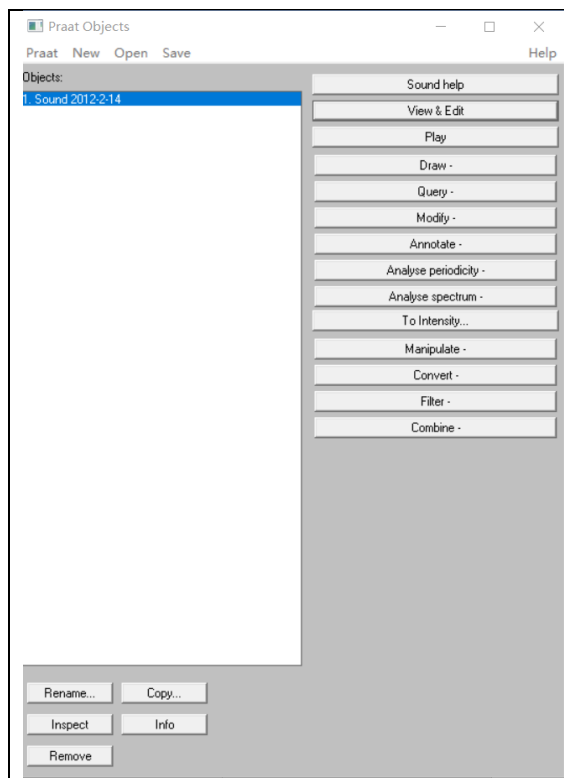


Figure 5: PRAAT interface

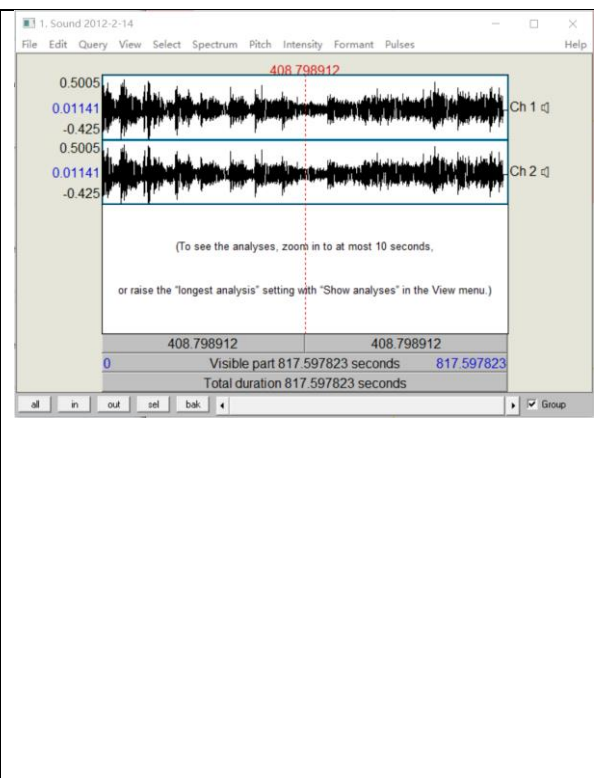


Figure 6: Audio presentation through PRAAT

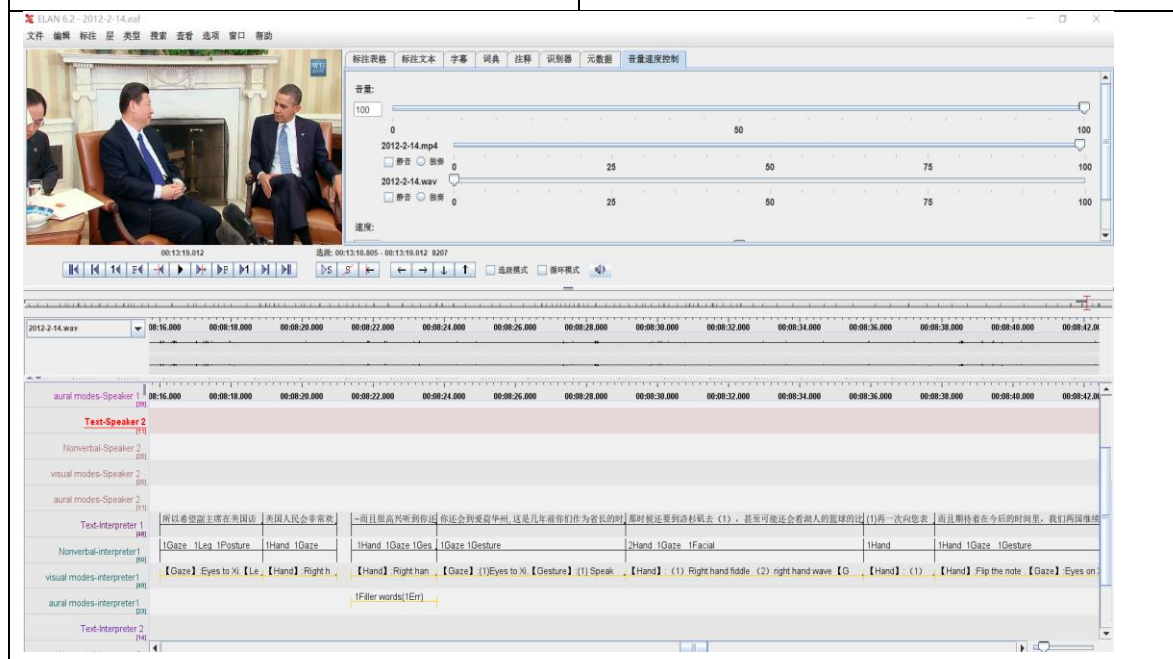


Figure 7: Screenshot of data presentation through the annotation tool of ELAN

Observation on the collected data elucidates the meaning-making patterns through multimodal semiotic resources. Aural modes can make meaning via break indices, fillers, tones and self-repairs. Visual modes can make meaning through settings, surroundings, participants. The participants' relevant position and distance also convey significant pragmatic meaning in interpreting interaction. Just as importantly, kinetic movements convey meanings through head movements, hand gestures, postures, leg movements, facial expressions and gaze.

Under systemic functional framework, multimodal semiotic resources can realize ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning synchronically. Notably, different use of these semiotic system can

Function	Ideational	Interpersonal	Textual
Multimodality			
Visual images/Spatial information	Settings and surroundings participants Space	Social distance/proximity Power relations Visual effects Ambiance	Relevant position (front/back/ parallelism) Coherence and cohesion (color, appearance, outfit)
Kinetic features	Body component Character acts	Engagement (monogloss; hetergloss positive; negative) Attitude (affect; appreciation) Graduation (fast; medium; slow)	Directionality Specificity
Aural features	Break indices Fillers Tones Self-repairs	Rhythm Voice qualities and attributes Intonation Modal particle	Rhythm relations Voice coherence Repetition Self-repairs
Verbal elements	Addition Omission Transformation Substitution	Interactive elements (mood and modality)	Conjunction Cohesion (Reference, parallelism, contrast, substitution & ellipsis)

achieve three metafunctions respectively. For example, interlocutors can use verbal utterances in ideational meaning-making. They can also achieve textual metafunction through cohesion and coherence in their speech.

Chinese and English languages differ significantly in lexicogrammatical level including the transitivity system and the mood system. Hence, comparison and contrast on lexicogrammatical level in the corpus to illustrate the semantic meaning shift may seem less convincing. Instead of focusing on the language pairs, this research concentrates on the analysis of meaning units. Through the comparison and contrast on meaning units, this research can find how the source text and the target text make ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning respectively.

The comparison and contrast metrics have been listed in Table 1. Analysis on the ideational meaning-making and transfer will be based on the comparison on the ideational meaning-making units of different semiotic resources. Analysis on interpersonal meaning-making and transfer will focus on interpersonal meaning-making units of different semiotic resources. And the textual metafunction will be investigated by paying particular attention to the organization of meaning and cohesion.

Table 1: Dimensions of appraisal of Multimodal functions and systems (adapted from the multimodal appraisal model of Lim, 2011)



To better present the data, this paper transcribes all the video files based on these annotative categories.

0702 OBM : And these kinds of person to personize uh are extremely important,

((LH indexical gesture)) ((nod))

And she also uh played some table tennis,

((beat))

although I think this was not the high level ping pong diplomacy

((LH rotate motion)) ((LH draw a vertical line))

that we saw in the past

((background laughter))

This is an excerpt of transcription of the China-U.S. bilateral meeting in the Netherlands in 2014. During the conversation, Obama employs numerous nonverbal expressions in meaning-making. Verbatim transcription along with annotation can present the verbal utterances, gestures, aural features, spatial information and background reaction. Data visualization becomes conducive to the qualitative analysis in the following step.

#### 4. Result and discussion

This paper problematizes the content that has been added, omitted, substituted and transformed. The observation demonstrates that all semiotic resources, including verbal expressions, aural features, visual images and spatial information, kinetic movements can achieve three metafunctions and meaning recontextualization.

Participants in the bilateral interactions can use multimodal semiotic resources to making pragmatic meaning and recontextualize the meaning of the source text in the target context. Four meaning-making and recontextualization patterns can be identifies in the corpus: recontextualization by semiotic equivalence or semiotic shift. Semiotic equivalence refers to the situation when the interpreters use the same semiotic resources as the speakers to achieve the communicative goal. On the other hand, interpreters can shift the semiotic resources through addition, omission, transformation or substitution to achieve the same communicative goal as the source text.

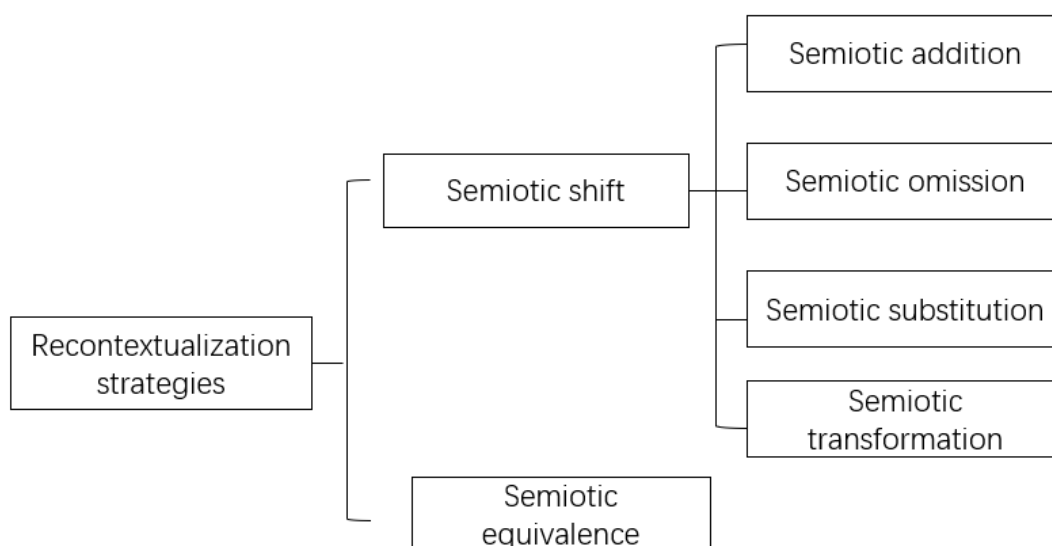


Figure 8: Recontextualization strategies in diplomatic interpreting

The following sections give a thorough elaboration on the interpreters use these recontextualization strategies in the meaning-making and meaning transfer from the perspectives of verbal utterances, aural modes, gestures and visual images and spatial information.

##### 4.1 Recontextualization through verbal expressions

The analysis on the speech demonstrates that there are four strategies of recontextualization with different patterns of realizations, namely, addition, omission, transformation and substitution. Each achieving the same communicative goal as the source text. Through a parallel comparative analysis on the multimodal semiotic resources in source text and target text, different recontextualization strategies can be identified in the meaning transfer patterns.

Addition happens when the interpreters add new elements during meaning-making and meaning transfer process. Two patterns of addition can be identified in the collected corpus. Firstly, the interpreters can offer indispensable background information to maintain smooth meaning transfer when they anticipate that the audience may have difficulty understanding. The second pattern is explanation on the content. That means the interpreters elaborate on the content by offering more details. For example, Chinese political discourse is in particularly favor of summative phrases like “Three Stricts and Three Steadies” which stand for the requirements from National Central Committee to maintain personal integrity. To deliver this into English, interpreters can add specific information to the source language and explain specifically what these requirements are. In this way, the intention of the source text can be transferred in the target text.

Omission often occurs when the interpreters delete the constitutional elements in the source text. Based on the corpus analysis, omission is adopted under two circumstances. Firstly, interpreters will omit what will seem to be meaningless in the target text, for example, the speakers’ filler words. Sometimes, filler words can help speakers establish authority or make time to think. It would be redundant and meaningless for interpreters to do the same. There is also a case when interpreters omit the contradictory information in the source text. Though very rare, the speakers can make unintentional mistakes, usually very minor to draw people’s attention.

Substitution refers to the process of representing an element constitutive of the social event through alternative semiotic resources. In bilateral interpreting, interpreters use related representations to replace the meaning-making elements in the text to serve different communicative needs.

China and U.S. as two independent countries have different standpoints and their own national interests. For example, China and U.S. have disagreements on the South China Sea territorial entitlement. Sometimes, such differences can be reflected from the experiential meaning in the speech during the bilateral talks. To safeguard their own interests, they use different expressions on the same issue. The following example illustrates interpreter’s shift of experiential meaning via substitution to safeguard their national interests while conveying the experiential meaning effectively to the audience.

According to the data, the U.S. side takes 南中国海 (South China Sea) as official Chinese name for the South China Sea area while the Chinese side takes 中国南海 (Chinese South Sea). The present study chooses the following two examples as a showcase of how China and U.S. choose different phrases to show their standpoint or safeguard their national interests.

Excerpt One: President Barack Obama meets with President Xi Jinping at Nuclear Security Summit in 2014

Obama:	But we're also able to work through frictions uh that uh exists in our relations around issues like human rights or uh you know, dealing with maritime issues uh in <b>the South China Sea</b> and in the pacific region uh in a way that's constructive.
EI:	所以摩擦因素也可以建设性的进行讨论，比如说人权问题或者这个海事问题，像南中国海或者太平洋地区这些问题都能够以建设性的方法来对待。

Excerpt two: Vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies, Ruan Zongze’s comment on Chinese official visit to Australia and New Zealand in 2017 (CRI News)

Ruan:	中国和澳大利亚之间的关系在过去几年里并不十分顺利。特别是我们注意到澳大利亚对 <b>中国南海</b> 问题提出了一些不负责任的评论。
Translator:	The relationship between China and Australia has not been perfectly smooth in the past few years. Especially we have noticed that Australia has made some irresponsible comments on <b>the South China Sea</b> issue.

The South China Sea is a disputed area between China and the Philippines. The geographical area of the South China Sea refers to the marginal sea area in the Western Pacific Ocean located in the south of China. According to the Chinese State Council Information Office, “China has always been resolute in upholding its territorial

sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea”. (2016, p.1) The official Chinese name of the South China Sea is 中国南海 (BT: China South Sea). There are also international voices including America, who don't recognize China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in such areas. So, they use the term 南中国海 (BT: South China Sea) as an equivalence of the English name.

The difference between the two diplomatic parlances is very subtle. The Chinese side puts the adjective noun “China” at the very beginning of the phrase to announce the territorial sovereignty in this area. However, the American side puts “South” before “China” to simply emphasize the location of this area. In these two phrases, the nominal group structures have changed. In English, the shift from “China” as a classifier to “Chinese” as a possessive determiner indicates ownership. According to the Nomenclature Regulations in Vienna Convention (take effect from 1969), the naming of a location should comply with its sovereign country. The American side's nomenclature implies that it does not recognize China's sovereignty right in this area.

In this conversation, the English interpreter works on behalf of America's standpoint and interest. Hence, his choice of translation represents the American's opinion, which is that they do not recognize China's sovereignty over it. However, with such a shift, the interpreter also achieves the communicative goal by both renderings the meaning and the political stand.

Transformation is a recontextualization strategy that present the source text content in different organization, word choice with different repertoire of semiotic resources. Two patterns of transformation can be identified in the corpus. First, in face of bilateral conflict of interests on a certain issue (e.g., territorial issue), to safeguard the interests of one's own side, the interpreters will choose different words or phrases. Secondly, the source text logic seems to be weak and may cause confusion in comprehension. The interpreters can transform the source text organization, information sequence or make adjustments to facilitate the meaning transfer process.

#### 4.2 Recontextualization through aural features

When the speaker stops his or her speech, the break index seems to be a signal for the interpreter to take turns, as well as a gap for the interpreter to take notes and organize his or her words. In such cases, the break index is a prosodic cue being produced with interactional functions. Break index is thus more prominent in consecutive interpreting than in simultaneous interpreting. The interpreter has to wait for the speaker to finish the sentence or a short paragraph until he or she starts to interpret.

The tone is closely associated with verbal expressions. Many researchers (e.g., Bateman, 1990; Levinson, 1983; Pickering, 2009; Romero-Trillo, 2014, Vandepitte, 1989) have looked into the pragmatic functions of tone in speech. Tones can reflect the speaker's attitude and feelings dependently or independently. Independent use like laughter, sigh or moaning while conveying emotions, has the power to engage the listener into such a mood. Tones can also use along with verbal messages, for example, one would raise his or her voice when asking questions or tone down when making inquiries.

Given its formality in bilateral talks, aural modes are discreetly used to avoid disfluency or ambiguity. For example, pauses in speech are usually measured by seconds and qualified as long pauses or short pauses. Nevertheless, long or short are relative. Obama speaks faster than Xi, so even if a pause in Obama's speech is shorter than in Xi's speech, we may annotate the pause as a long pause for that speaker.

Self-repairs can reflect one's fluency or speaker's intention of meaning shift. The following data shows the characteristics of China-U.S. bilateral talks.

Aural modes	occurrences in the videos									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total
video										
Filler-words	65	94	31	10	108	86	18	103	39	554
Short pause	58	84	37	34	85	50	18	23	25	414
Long pause	39	69	15	8	36	24	5	10	7	213
Stress/emphasis	5	7	3	5	10	6		8	1	45

Stutter	1	4			4	2		2		13
Self-repair	2	5	2		6	3		2		20
Repetition					2					2
Tone raise	1					1		1		3
Stretched voice	2	13		2	20	2	2			41
Shaky voice/voice shiver	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	4	17

Table 2: Aural modes in bilateral video recordings and their occurrences

Among the aural modes, fillers and short pauses are the most frequently used in the talks. Due to nervousness, stutter or shaky voices from the English interpreter can be identified. The data not only shows the overall characteristics of the aural modes, but also individual's employment of aural modes in pursuit of goal-achieving.

The following example shows how self-repairs play a significant role in representational meaning shift

### Representational meaning shift through self-repairs and meaning transfer through omission

These examples manifest how Obama and Xi make experiential meaning by self-repairs and how interpreters deal with them. In the first example, Obama expresses the meaning that cooperation is in the interests of the United States and China. Then he mentioned again the interest of the United States, which was repetitive. Obama immediately realized the error in the speech and self-corrected it into in the interest of the world. In transferring the meaning, the English interpreter omitted the self-repairs and conveyed the corrected meaning smoothly to the audience. In a similar vein, Xi in his speech made a self-correction to express his pleasure visiting Sunnylands. He realized that he needed to change some words to make the expression smoothly. Hence, he made a re-arrangement in his speech. Just like the English Interpreter, the Chinese interpreter omitted the repairs and translated the corrected meaning to the audience.

Excerpt from Bilateral meeting between President Barack Obama and Vice President Xi Jinping of China at Oval Office in 2012	
Obama:	...a cooperative relationship based on mutual interest and mutual respect is not only in the interests of the United States and China, but is also in the interest of the region <b>and in the interest of the United States, err, in the interest of the world.</b>
EI:	...一个基于互相利益互相尊重的这样一种合作的关系，这样做不仅仅是符合美国和中国的利益，也符合整个地区以及全世界的利益。
Excerpt from President Barack Obama meets with President Xi Jinping in 2013	
Xi:	感谢总统先生的邀请， <b>(能够)</b> 很高兴能够来到阳光之乡的安纳伯格庄园与你会晤。
LT:	I want to thank you for your invitation, <b>(so I can)</b> and I'm glad that I can meet you here at Sunnylands, the Annenberg Estate.
CI:	I want to thank you for your invitation, and it's my great pleasure to meet you here at Sunnylands, the Annenberg Estate.

In diplomatic speech, interlocutors use self-repairs to shift the experiential meaning. Self-repairs can serve as multi-functions in the discourse, for example, error correction and resolving misunderstandings (Simpson et al., 2013), information addition, expansion of the turn, hesitation, repetition of the previous word(s), or replacement of a word (Sparks, 1994).

In Obama's speech, the participants of the last clause are "the region" and "the interest of the world". During the speech, Obama recognizes the speech error "in the interest of the United States" and substitutes what has been said with correction "in the interest of the world". The self-repair is marked by the filler word "err."

Schiffrin (2006) points out that the speakers “are able to continuously monitor their own speech, and if they detect a problem, to then self-interrupt, hesitate and/or use editing terms, and then make the repair” (p.36). Hence, self-repair can represent a process of self-correction which aims to correct the experiential meaning of the utterance. In this example, Obama conveys the meaning to the audience and achieves the communicative goal by self-repair.

In the second excerpt, Xi makes a self-repair in his attempt to re-organize the information and add “很高兴” (it’s my great pleasure) in front of “能够” (I can). He interrupts the speech flow to add the information and changes the experiential meaning.

In the meaning transfer process, the interpreters conveyed the speaker’s corrected experiential meaning faithfully to the audience and avoided unnecessary interruptions.

#### 4.3 Recontextualization through visual images and spatial arrangement

Based on the observations of the data, this research identifies that visual images and spatial arrangement can make representational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning in both source text and target text. These meanings can be recontextualized through shift of these semiotic resources.

##### Example one: visual images and spatial information in representational meaning-making

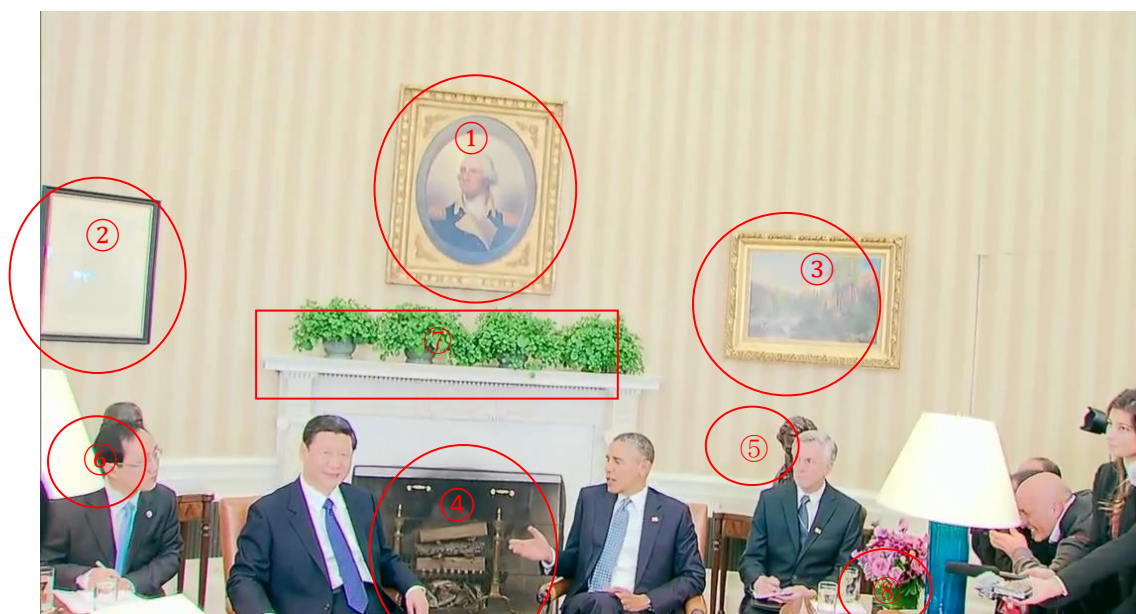


Figure 8: Screenshot from President Obama's Bilateral Meeting with Vice President Xi of China in 2022. Participants from left to right: Sun Ning (SN), Xi Jinping (XJP), Barack Obama (OMB), Jim Brown (JB), journalists.

This bilateral talk is held in the Oval Office—a symbol of presidential power. The venue and decorations of the talk imply the representational meaning of Obama’s identity and political standpoint. In the opening remarks, Obama as the host shows his welcome to the then Vice President Xi. The multimodal cues send the representational information to enhance such a message.

Multimodal cues in the settings	Representational meaning	Spatial information
① the picture of American founding father George Washington	The identity of the U.S.	On the center of the wall, right above the fireplace, right in front of the camera
② American presidential oath	Indicating that this room is related to the President	Hang on the lower left
③ A Brook in the Forest	Represent Obama’s individual taste	Hang on the lower right
④ fireplace	Represent cozy and relaxed ambiance	Against the backdrop

⑤ A bust of Dwight Eisenhower	Represent Obama’s individual taste	Put on the desk of the right, behind the American side
⑥ A bust of Winston Churchill	Represent a highly-regarded statesman	Put on the desk of the left, behind the guest side
⑦ Green plant ⑧ flowers as table setting	Represent liveliness and refreshment	right above the fireplace and on the tables of each side

Table 3: Visual images and spatial information in representational meaning-making

The picture of Washington is in the center of the wall and right above the fireplace. It manifests the identity of the host that Obama is a statesman. The Presidential Oath hangs a little lower on the left side, which is the manifestation of loyalty to the nation. The portraits are ideologically embedded, sending the culture and political features of America. The bust of Dwight Eisenhower is one of them. Dwight Eisenhower is America’s 34th president and the commanding general of the victorious forces in Europe during World War II. His quality and achievements have inspired generations of Americans. His bust in the oval house is an encouragement for both Obama and all statesmen. Similarly, the presence of the bust of Winston Churchill is not only a manifestation of acknowledging for his achievement but also an acknowledgment of U.S.-Britain relations.

Houseplant symbolism has been discussed by numerous researchers (e.g., Domec, 2004; Baker, 2011; Song, 2014). These researchers have drawn people’s general acknowledgment of the symbolic meaning of some houseplants. For example, the green plants can give a feeling of liveliness and positiveness. The butterfly orchid generally represents love, beauty, sophistication, and luxury.

The representational function of table decorations can be further enhanced by the following example.



Figure 9: Screenshots of spatial arrangement from China-U.S. bilateral talks from 2012-2014

Visual images	Features	Spatial information	Representational meaning
Outfit	Suit-and tie	Participants on the opposite side	Formal, seriousness
Color	White shirt, dark suit		Formal, seriousness
Flowers	Gardenias	In the middle of the table	Clarity, innocent

Table 4: Visual images and spatial information in representational meaning-making

In these photos, participants are all dressed in suits and ties. As stated in Section 5.4, a dark suit and white shirt convey the representational meaning that the situation is formal and serious. It is not an occasion for a personal

show but a diplomatic talk on behalf of the nation. The gardenias are frequently used in bilateral talks for their aesthetic value (Yu & Zhou, 2010). They also give a positive and lively touch to the situation.

These two examples give a detailed illustration of how visual images and spatial information make representational meaning in the discourse. On the perception of these representational meanings, the participants can have an idea of the field of the context.

#### 4.4 Recontextualization through hand gestures

McNeil (1992) identifies different types of hand gestures and classifies them into four major categories: iconic, metaphoric, deictic (pointing) and beat gestures. Among the four typologies of hand movements, this research finds that the participants use the beat and deictic hand gestures most, while they use iconic and metaphoric gestures the least. This might be attributed to several reasons: (1) To avoid misunderstanding or conflict in cultural-loaded gesture-making, the participants are conservative in gesture use and keep the gestures as general as possible. (2) To avoid too much distraction, the participants use hand gestures as simple as possible.

Another significant feature lies in the distinctions of gesture use among different participants. Participants on the American side are more generous in gesture use while participants on the Chinese side are more conservative in conveying meaning with gestures. Further, the speakers are more frequent in gestures than the interpreters which is mainly because interpreters are confined by their “invisible” role and often hold pens and notebooks. However, this raises a crucial question to this study: given the use of nonverbal communication by the source text speakers, how do the interpreters recontextualize the meaning which was conveyed by gesture into other meaning-making modalities?

This research finds that all these four types of hand gestures are capable of making meaning.

Gesture typology	Frequency in the videos										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Video											
Beat	23	54	15	9	67	20	11	33	8	38	197
Deictic	6	7	1	8	39	11	2	6	3	4	87
Iconic	2	4		2	35	3	1	1		1	49
Metaphoric				1	3			3			7

Deictic gestures can make representational meaning through specific indication of objects, person, places from real-world or imaginary. Beat gestures are capable of making interactive meaning including emphasis or textual meaning which connecting the meaning entities in the utterances. Iconic or metaphoric gestures can make representational meanings with specific references. Moreover, they can also make interactive meaning by engaging the participants actively in the conversation.

**Example one: Metaphoric gestures in representational meaning realization** Excerpt from Bilateral meeting between President Obama and President Xi of China (one-on-one) in 2013

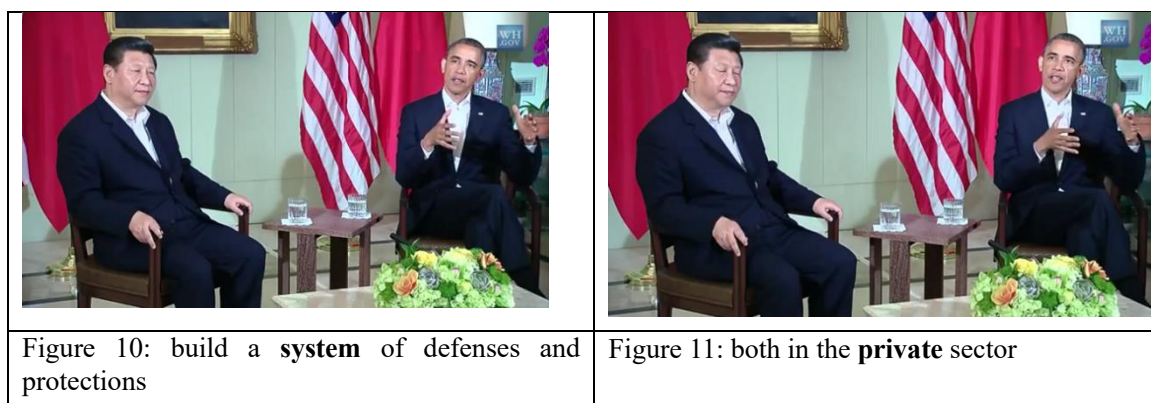


Figure 10: build a **system** of defenses and protections

Figure 11: both in the **private** sector

Figure 12: and in the **public** sectorFigure 13: even as we **negotiate** with other countriesFigure 14: **around** setting up common rules of the road

Figure 15: hands contraction

Hand gestures can make meaning independently or accompanied by speech. According to Martin and Zappavigna (2019), “semivergent paralinguistic supports these resources with hand shapes, which potentially concur with entities, and hand/arm motion, which potentially concurs with occurrences” (p.12).

In China-U.S. bilateral talks, gesture use is usually speech-dependent for two reasons. Given the formal situation and rigorous requirement for expressions, there are rarely speech-independent gestures in the communication between two national leaders to avoid any misunderstanding from the nuances of the connotative meaning. Moreover, communication between the leaders needs to be translated by the interpreter. Using gestures in meaning-expressions is less explicit. It is always a challenge for the interpreters to add verbal information in the source text from nonverbal information in the target text in the meaning transfer process.

In Figure 10 Obama’s both hands are in a round shape as a metaphor for “system”. In Figure 11 and Figure 12, he moves both hands from the right side to the center. Experientially speaking, the gesture stands for “from one place to another”. In this circumstance, he uses this gesture to vividly describe a move from the private sector to the public sector. In Figure 13, he raises two fists in the center as a metaphor for the two sides--Chinese and U.S. Then he waves the two hands in a consecutive mode to depict the process of negotiation. In Figure 14, his hands again form into round shapes to refer to “the system”. According to the spoken speech, the system can be equal to “setting up common rules of the road”. The last figure shows the last stage of the gesticulation—hand contraction.

The interpreter can be so performative as the speaker in interpreting interaction for two reasons. Firstly, because of the “invisible in existing” (Baker, 2010, p.122) role of the interpreter, interpreters cannot make prominent gestures during the interaction to draw extra attention from the audience. Secondly, these gestures are speech-dependent, which can be reproduced thoroughly through verbal utterance. Thirdly, when the speaker gesticulates, all the participants have already received the non-verbal expressions. Though they might have no idea what the gestures are about, they are able to connect the gestures with the interpreter’s reproduction later. Given these, Obama’s interpreter uses verbal expression instead of conveying the meaning.



## 5. Conclusion

This article has considered multimodal semiotic recontextualization patterns in dialogue interpreting. Following a cognitive-pragmatic approach to multimodality (Seleskovitch, 1978; O'Halloran, 2018) and discourse analysis (Halliday, 1984), it seems timely to call for a more holistic method for exploration of the meaning-transfer mechanism in consecutive interpreter-mediated interaction. This article proposes the systemic functional framework (Halliday, 1984) and sense theory (Seleskovitch, 1978) to delve into the complexity and nuances of interpreting processes.

In the review section, I discuss the multimodal nature of dialogue interpreting. Each participant makes meaning via a repertoire of semiotic resources. The speaker makes meaning with aural modes, kinetic movements, visual images and spatial information during speech. On reception of these multimodal semiotic meanings, the interpreter adapts the meanings to the target discourse and transfers the meanings with their constellation of multimodal semiotic resources. The audience, including the bilateral counterpart and the media, can receive the nonverbal expressions of the speaker and verbal and nonverbal expressions. Then, the other side takes a turn and continues the talk. The speech consists of responses to previous speeches and new insights the speaker wishes to make.

Through qualitative analysis, I find recontextualization patterns in the meaning-transfer process. The recontextualization of verbal utterances is facilitated through several strategies: addition, omission, substitution or transformation (cf. Table 3). The shift in aural modes realizes the recontextualization of meaning through multichannels like pauses, filler-words, self-repairs, rhythm and pitch. In a similar vein, the interpreter can adopt gestural modes including head movements, hand movements, facial expression, gaze and posture to express the same meaning as the source semiotic resources. To achieve the same communicative goal of these expressions, the interpreter may shift expressions in their orchestration of multimodal semiotic resources situated in the target discourse. In a similar manner, the interpreter can recontextualize the meanings manifested through various kinetic movements into another cultural system. Since the interlocutors are situated in the same meeting room, they share the same perception of the constellation of visual images, spatial arrangement and contextual information. They are all available as meaning-making semiotic resources to the participants. It is reasonable to extrapolate from such meaning shifts that to adapt meanings into another cultural context, interpreters decontextualize the meaning in the source semiotic repertoire and recontextualize the sense of the meaning in the target semiotic repertoire in order to achieve the same communicative goal as the meaning in the source discourse. In a word, the interpreter can shift modes of expression to make the same meanings as the source discourse. They can also shift the meanings of the source discourse to achieve the same communicative goal. Echoing the findings of Diriker's (2004) research in a pragmatic view that interpreters shift the meaning of the source text in pursuit of the same interactive function as the source text, this article enriches these findings by discussing them in a multimodal dialogue interpreting environment. This article contributes to the current literature via the application of a cognitive-pragmatic study of interpreting dialogue to unveil its meaning-making and meaning-transfer process from one semiotic repertoire to another.

Via a case study of multimodal synergies in meaning-making and recontextualization, this article finds that:

- (1) The same semiotic resource, be it verbal, para-verbal or nonverbal, can make different meanings and achieve different communicative goals.
- (2) Different semiotic resources can make the same meaning in discourse and achieve the same communicative goal.
- (3) The interpreter, on perception of the meaning from source text, re-construes the meaning with his or her own semiotic repertoire through a cognitive operation.
- (4) The interpreter recontextualizes the sense of the meaning into a new context, shedding the original form of the multimodal semiotic resource.

This article, through a cognitive-pragmatic analysis of multimodal semiotic resources in dialogue interpreting, hopes to extend its application to interlingual and intercultural communication in a broader sense.

## References

- Arola, K. L., Ball, C. E., & Sheppard, J. (2014). *Writer/designer: A guide to making multimodal projects*. Macmillan Higher Education.
- Baker, M. (1992). *A coursebook on translation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Basil Hatim & Ian Mason. *Discourse and the Translator*. London and New York: Longman, 1990.
- Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J., Kalantzis, M., Kress, G., . . . Nakata, M. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard educational review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Chun-chieh, H. (2013). On Decontextualization and Recontextualization in East Asian Cultural Interactions: Some Methodological Reflections. *Journal of cultural interaction in East Asia*, 4(1), 7-20.
- Davitti, E. (2019). Methodological explorations of interpreter-mediated interaction: novel insights from multimodal analysis. *Qualitative Research*, 19(1), 7-29.
- Diriker, E. (2004). *De-/re-contextualizing conference interpreting: interpreters in the ivory tower?* (Vol. 53). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Egins, S. (2004). *Introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. A&C Black.
- Eraslan, S. (2011). *International knowledge transfer in Turkey, the consecutive interpreter's role in context*. Universitat Rovira i Virgili.
- Gambier, Y., & Van Doorslaer, L. (2010). *Handbook of translation studies* (Vol. 1). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989). Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective.
- Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (2005). *The translator as communicator*. Routledge.
- House, J. (2014). Translation quality assessment: Past and present. In *Translation: A multidisciplinary approach* (pp. 241-264). Springer.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. *sociolinguistics*, 269293, 269-293.
- Iedema, R. (2001). Resemiotization. *Semiotica*.
- Ietcu-Fairclough, I. (2008). Critical discourse analysis and translation studies: Translation, recontextualization, ideology. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*(2), 67-73.
- Jewitt, C. (2009). *Different approaches to multimodality*. Routledge.
- Kim, M., & McDonald, E. (2012). SFL-based text analysis for translator education. *To boldly proceed*, 93.
- Krebs, R. R., & Ralston, R. (2020). Civilian Control of the Military is a Partisan Issue. *Foreign Affairs*, July, 14.
- Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996, 2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. Psychology Press.
- Ledin, P., & Machin, D. (2019). Doing critical discourse studies with multimodality: from metafunctions to materiality. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(5), 497-513.
- Leppänen, S., Kytölä, S., Jousmäki, H., Peuronen, S., & Westinen, E. (2014). Entextualization and resemiotization as resources for identification in social media. In: *The language of social media* (pp. 112-136). Springer.
- Li, E. S.-h., Lui, P. L.-t., & Fung, A. K.-c. (2019). *Systemic Functional Political Discourse Analysis: A Text-based Study*. Routledge.
- Linell, P. (1997). Interpreting as communication. *Benjamins Translation Library*, 23, 49-68.
- Linell, P., Wadensjö, C., & Jönsson, L. (1992). Establishing communicative contact through a dialogue interpreter. *Communication for Specific Purposes—Fachsprachliche Kommunikation*. Ed. by A. Grinstead and J. Wagner. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 125-142.
- Manfredi, M. (2011). Systemic Functional Linguistics as a tool for translation teaching: towards a meaningful practice.

- Martin, J. R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Matthiessen, C., & Halliday, M. A. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge.
- O'Halloran, K. L. (2008). Systemic functional-multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA): Constructing ideational meaning using language and visual imagery. *Visual communication*, 7(4), 443-475.
- Pérez-González, L. (2014). Multimodality in translation and interpreting studies. *A companion to translation studies*, 119-131.
- Poulsen, S. V. (2019). Multimodal meaning as a blend? Critical discussion of integrating cognitive and social semiotic theories. *RASK–International journal of language and communication*, 50, 141-161.
- Poyatos, F. (1997). *Nonverbal Communication and Translation: New perspectives and challenges in literature, interpretation and the media* (Vol. 17). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Seleskovitch, D. (1978). *Interpreting for international conferences: Problems of language and communication*. Pen & Booth.
- Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson (1995). *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edn. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Steiner, E. (1998). A register-based translation evaluation: an advertisement as a case in point. *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies*, 10(2), 291-318.
- Tebble, H. (2008). Using SFL to understand and practise dialogue interpreting. *Proceedings of ISFC 35: Voices Around the World*, 149.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and power*: Macmillan International Higher Education.

**Appendix I: Summary of the multimodal semiotic transcription conventions used in the analysis (based on GAT 2 transcription conventions, Selting, Auer, & Barth-Weingarten, 2009)**

(.)	Short pause
(-)	Long pause
(2.1)	Timed pause
:	Tone lengthening
((laughter))	description of laughter
<<f>>	forte, loud
<<p>>	soft
((coughs))	non-verbal actions and events
er, erm, um	filled pauses and hesitation sounds
°h / h°	in- / outbreaths
1001	First speaker, first speech chunk
1002	First speaker, second speech chunk
2001	Second speaker, first speech chunk
3001	Third speaker, first speech chunk
→1001	Speech chunk to be analyzed in data discussion

**Appendix II: ToBI annotation conventions used in the analysis**

H*	Pitch higher
----	--------------

L	Low pitch
L+H	Low pitch then higher

**Appendix III: Gesture annotation conventions used in the analysis**

RH	Right hand
LH	Left hand
Up	↑
Down	↓
((Leg movement))	non-verbal actions and events