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In an increasingly globalised and connected world, political communication happens not only within the confines of a nation but frequently across linguistic and cultural boundaries to reach a wider audience and producing extensive political effects. The latter case entails that translation is usually involved, which points to the entanglement between politics and translation. In academic research, the intricacy of the relationship between them can be approached from two main vantage points, either the translation of politics or the politics of translation. Indeed, both have fascinated a substantial number of scholars from diverse disciplines, including political science, linguistics, translation studies, and communication studies, to name but a few. The volume *Interlingual Readings of Political Discourse: Translation, Interpreting and Contrastive Analysis*, edited by Jun Pan, Sandra L. Halverson and Jeremy Munday, as part of the book series “Utrecht Studies in Language and Communication”, represents a recent attempt to gather together a number of contributions that explore the ways in which the two fields can intersect. In what follows, I shall provide a brief summary for each chapter before reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

In addition to Chapter 1, an introduction by the editors, the book comprises nine further chapters which are arranged in three parts. Part 1, “Translation, Interpreting and Political Discourse: New Issues and Resources”, consists of two chapters. In Chapter 2, Jeremy Munday, by suggesting that any political speech “may exist in various formats or versions” (p. 11) and “be transformed into multiple modes” (p. 11-12) after delivery, sets out to explore new issues arising from the analysis of such speeches and their translation/interpreting. Drawing on instances from President Trump’s speeches, Munday illustrates how the Hallidayan model of language and discourse, of register analysis, and the so-called ‘appraisal framework’, all drawn from systemic functional linguistics, can be used as linguistic tools to tease out the ‘critical’ points or examples in a text where key values are at stake and which may thus pose a translation problem. This leads to the crucial question of the interpreter’s positionality, which sometimes gives rise to ethical issues. The chapter ends with a discussion of three reading positions (‘resistant’, ‘compliant’ and ‘tactical’) in which the latter one (‘tactical reading’), defined as a reading that is applied in a new context and which was not envisaged when the source text was composed, is advocated as being useful in the analysis of translation.

In Chapter 3, Jun Pan begins by outlining a number of existing monolingual and bilingual corpora of political discourse across the world, the latter type of which are



shown to be usually limited in size and accessibility. The author then introduces her self-built Chinese/English Political Interpreting Corpus, which has been developed into an open access online platform with some 6.5 million word tokens. The corpus includes Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua)/English political speeches and their translated/interpreted texts aligned at paragraph level. The corpus features metadata information, annotations of paralinguistic and extralinguistic features, and part-of-speech tagging, aiming to represent both linguistic and social dimensions of the data. Suggesting that the corpus serves as an important resource for the research community, the author illustrates with several case studies how it can be applied to analyse a variety of issues, such as features of interpreted language and of translation/interpreting of political discourse.

The three chapters in Part 2, entitled “Language Convergence and Meaning Divergence”, are devoted to exploring issues of language and meaning in the interpreting of political discourse, and are all characterised by the use of corpus methods. In Chapter 4, Bart Defrancq and Koen Plevoets aim to investigate linguistic convergence between Members of European Parliament (MEPs) and interpreters in the EP by comparing three different varieties of Dutch: the variety spoken in national parliaments, the variety spoken by MEPs, and the variety spoken by interpreters. The authors use N-grams (strings of N items occurring frequently in combination, also known as ‘lexical bundles’) from corpus linguistics as the indicator to test whether MEPs and interpreters may constitute a ‘discourse community’ showing a high degree of linguistic convergence. The results of Discriminant Correspondence Analysis of N-grams suggest that MEPs and interpreters do not unambiguously appear to share the features of a homogeneous discourse community. However, the fact that the language patterns employed by MEPs resemble more those used by interpreters than those used by national parliamentarians suggests an influence of the interpreters’ variety on the MEPs’ variety. The findings are partly explained by reflecting on the role of interpreters in relation to that of MEPs in the EP context (‘instrumental’ vs. ‘substantive’), that is, although the interpreters can be considered members of the EP discourse community, their membership is only peripheral.

A similar corpus-related quantitative approach is also adopted in Chapter 5 by Nannan Liu, who conducts a contrastive register analysis between Chinese political speeches, their interpreted English versions, and political speeches originally formulated in native English. As the author argues, a distinguishing feature of the study lies in the fact that it enables both intralinguistic and interlinguistic comparisons which aim to unravel the potential effects of target register expectations, of the interpreting modality used, and of interference from the source speech. Drawing on a sophisticated, statistically-based multidimensional analysis, the results in general suggest that, regardless of the type (oral vs. literate) of source speech, their interpreted versions show highly similar characteristics. Specifically, the interpreters are shown to shift literate source speech

to a more oral, attitudinal, less formal, and narrative register, and to transform oral sources into a less oral, narrative, more attitudinal and formal register, which testifies to the 'equalising effect' of interpreting at the level of register. Yet, the importance of target context expectations in terms of register are shown to have only a limited impact.

Adopting a slightly different approach from those used in the two preceding chapters, Shanshan Yang resorts to a corpus-assisted method to investigate the effect of professional experience on interpreter performance by comparing two groups (i.e. professional *versus* novice interpreters) in Chapter 6. A distinctive feature of the data collected is that two interpreted versions of the same source (political) speech were obtained by asking the two groups to work under the same conditions in a naturalistic (instead of experimental) setting. Placing the focus on how culture-specific items (CSIs) in the source speech are managed, interpreters' rendering strategies are categorised into transcoding, paraphrasing, substitution and deletion. In general, professional interpreters are shown to have used more sophisticated strategies for processing CSIs, while novice interpreters exhibit a high proportion of deletion. Based on these results, the author concludes that professional interpreters show better command of encyclopaedic knowledge and greater strategic processing ability, which is suggestive of the importance of professional experience in high-quality interpreter performance. While the chapter possibly provides insights for future interpreter training, its findings are unsurprising, given that interpreting is a skill that needs to be honed for perfection.

Moving beyond meaning level, Part 3, entitled "Politics, Power, Language and Identity", assembles four chapters that look into issues related to identity and power in connection with political discourse. Chapter 7, by Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta and Aprameya Rao, who have backgrounds primarily in communication and media studies, presents a cross-disciplinary empirical analysis of 'languaging' (i.e., "the meaning-making and deployment of semiotic resources" (p. 139) in public mediascapes in the nation-states of India and Sweden. By analysing data that includes all posts on the official Facebook pages of four political parties across a six-week period, the chapter outlines similarities and differences among the parties in terms of three overlapping themes that emerge from the data: nature of the media, identity-positions in political mediascapes, and the nature of language in social media. Of particular relevance to Translation Studies are the (non-)translation issues involved when multiple language-varieties/modalities and other semiotic resources are deployed in current political mediascapes, raising important questions in relation to the accessibility of messages, the boundaries between languages/scripts, and colonial hegemony. The authors conclude by reflecting on the ways in which current mediascapes enable and curtail new ways-of-being-with-words across global-South-North and highlighting the contribution of understandings from the global-South to illuminating areas of current concern in the global-North.

The following two chapters put their analytical gaze on the pragmatic dimensions of political discourse. In Chapter 8, based on a review of relevant literature, Jun Pan proposes a 'pragmatic framework' (p. 181) for analysing political discourse, which encompasses three layers (i.e. the meaning of meaning, the structure of meaning, and meaning in extended spheres). Using a corpus that collects the bilingual versions of policy addresses and budget speeches delivered in Hong Kong and their comparable speeches delivered in the United Kingdom from 1997 to 2017, the author illustrates how the framework can be applied to the analysis of the three layers of political discourse referred to above. Of note is the author's use of corpus linguistic tools and concepts to identify pragmatically important linguistic patterns as a starting point for further analyses. In addition to contributing to the study of political language, this study also sheds light on the nature of translation/interpreting in political contexts by highlighting its mediating role.

The same interest in the pragmatics of political communication can be observed in Chapter 9. With a focus on the Chinese diplomatic context, Maria Marakhovskaiia and Alan Partington set out to test whether and how face theory, initially devised to interpret social interactions among individuals, can be applied to describe national face and facework. By collecting the English versions of press briefings by the Chinese Foreign Ministry in 2016 and their counterparts by the White House, the study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach based on the results of N-gram analysis for investigating the facework strategies used at the podium when representing China's relations with its neighbours. In general, while shedding light on the workings of national face, a shortcoming of the study may lie in its lack of attention to its implications from a Translation Studies point of view, since the (discourse) analysis is actually based on a set of interpreted (and possibly edited) texts in which the interpreters/editors' engagement and mediation may be inevitable.

While most of the previous chapters are primarily concerned with the translation of politics, the last chapter distinguishes itself from the rest in that it looks into the politics of translation by zooming in on the translation and dissemination of Chinese literature in East Germany in the 1950s and beyond. Rather than focusing on linguistic aspects in particular works, the author Babette Bernhardt situates the translation activity within a broader institutional and historic context to highlight its political and ideological nature. The data analysed come from official application files, documents in the publishing houses' archives and other sources such as translations' paratexts (e.g. prefaces or postfaces). It is shown that the selection, translation, circulation and assessment of certain Chinese literary genres at the time were primarily in tune with a cultural policy that aimed to develop a national and international socialist culture, a scenario in which literary criteria were only of secondary importance. In this sense, the chapter serves as a good illustration of how the analysis of translations can tell us of the context in

which they are produced and received.

In general, inasmuch it draws on the latest reflections on and developments within this multidisciplinary field of translation/interpreting and political communication, this volume will be of interest to scholars and students in the fields of translation studies, political science, linguistics, diplomacy, communication and media studies. Specifically, this volume is impressive in a number of aspects: firstly, the multiplicity of genres of political discourse that are analysed, the language varieties covered, the modes of (mediated) language communication studied (spoken and written, monolingual, bilingual and multilingual), the variety of institutional and cultural contexts explored, as well as the topics and methods addressed can provide readers with an enriching reading experience that makes them aware of the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of the field. Secondly, translation/interpreting in this volume is understood not only in the conventional sense of activities overcoming linguistic barriers to enable cross-cultural communication, but also in terms of transformation of ideas ('translation') and meaning-making ('interpreting'), as is clear, for instance, in Chapter 7. By understanding translation/interpreting in a relatively broad sense, a myriad of translational/interpreting phenomena are brought under scrutiny and examined through a cross-disciplinary lens. In this way, by not restricting itself to the narrow confines of a specific field, the scope of the volume is greatly expanded. Thirdly, rather than assigning either one a prioritised position, politics and translation are placed on an equal footing and the relationship between them is approached from both vantage points, thus potentially prompting further insights into their complex interplay. In view of the features stated above, this volume shall be a beneficial addition to recent publications in this area (e.g. Almanna and House 2023).

Despite their merits, the contributions collected can still be strengthened in several aspects from my point of view. The first issue relates to the interpreting corpora used in these studies, which are mostly very small in size. This usually leads to very low raw frequencies of reported linguistic features, which may in turn impair the validity of statistical results. For example, Bart Defrancq and Koen Plevoets admit that their chapter "reports on one booth only with a small amount of corpus data and is exclusively quantitative" (p. 68). To address this limitation, one promising solution lies in concerted efforts among the community of interpreting studies to enable the openness and accessibility of already compiled interpreting corpora, although it seems that there is still a long way to go.

In addition, Bart Defrancq and Koen Plevoets' approach also reflects another problem common to several chapters, i.e. relying overly or exclusively on quantitative analysis of linguistic features. However, the association between linguistic features and their communicative functions/purpose is not straightforward. For example, a feature may fulfil different functions, and a function can be instantiated as various features. Besides,

cross-linguistic differences also exist in this regard. For example, Nannan Liu observes that Chinese and English “employ distinct features for narrative purposes, and so the comparisons herein are rather preliminary” (p. 91). In fact, as regards the use of corpus for translation studies, Mason (2001, p. 78) warned that statistically-driven generalisations about translator behaviour from corpora should be nuanced taking into consideration genres, discourses and rhetorical purposes. In his opinion, generalising solely from concordance-based analyses and quantitative data, and considering only isolated sentences, risks ignoring “the rhetorical purposes which give rise to them” (Mason, 2001, p. 71). This is where detailed qualitative analysis can be used to contextualize the quantitative results. As argued by Saldanha and O’Brien (2014, p. 61), a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches “offers a more powerful means of establishing a connection between everyday routine and cultural transmission than either of those methodologies on their own”. Therefore, the predominantly quantitative analysis used in some chapters can be supplemented and strengthened by contextualised qualitative analysis.

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