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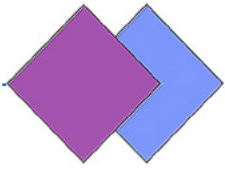
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Book Review: *Theorising Interpreting Studies*

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Book Review:

Theorising Interpreting Studies

Over the past few decades, interpreting studies (IS) has enjoyed significant advances globally as a subdiscipline of Translation Studies (TS). Interest in IS has gained high momentum in China in the past two decades with the increasing presence of articles and theses on interpreting (p. xvii). Several publications have tried to theorize IS as a sub-discipline of TS from various perspectives (e.g., Zhong et al., 2012). Binhua Wang's *Theorising Interpreting Studies* is one of the latest works in this respect.

As the title suggests, this work, in the words of Wang, aims to “strengthen the theoretical basis of IS based on a large pool of empirical research outcomes” (p. xix). It is part of a series of books focusing on key topics in TS. Covering the latest research outcomes in IS, this book is intended for postgraduate research students in IS, interpreter educators, and interpreting researchers. However, it should be noted that because the book is written in Chinese, naturally, it addresses topics that have direct relevance to Chinese readers. The choice of the target audience, to some extent, leads to the stance and perspective taken by the author in presenting this book. With the target audience in mind, the author adopts an international versus Chinese perspective to illustrate how IS has emerged and thrived across the world and in China respectively in Chapter 1. Here, the comparison is made for the Chinese reader to better situate IS in China within the international arena. However, such a perspective is dangerous because it might result in the misunderstanding that the author adopts a China-centric view. Unfortunately, the author does not adequately explain the choice of this perspective, which could lead to confusion.

The 180-page work is organized around six chapters. The introductory chapter lays out a theoretical framework of interpreting studies based on five dimensions: (a) interpreting as an activity of bilingual and cognitive operation processing, (b) interpreting as an activity of real-time information processing, (c) interpreting as an activity of communication and mediation, (d) interpreting as a sociocultural activity, and (e) interpreting as a professional skill and competence. This framework is enriched by a large number of empirical research results explored in Chapters 2–5. It should be noted that the fifth dimension is not addressed in this book, as another book dedicated to this dimension will be published soon in Chinese. Chapter 6 concludes this book by describing the current state of IS in China and offering solutions for improvement by explaining different research approaches that could be adopted. Most importantly, at the end of this chapter, Wang proposes a comprehensive research framework to systematize interpreting studies.

The introductory chapter starts with basic definitions and features of interpreting. Subsequently, the author discusses the five key topics frequently explored in IS: the nature, process, product, and effect of interpreting and the skills required for interpreting. Correspondingly, the author proposes an IS theoretical framework based on these five topics. He then provides an overview of different stages of IS with representative works in China and across the world. Specifically, the author identifies five stages for the development of IS internationally and four stages for the development of IS in China, with representative and influential works being introduced in chronological order. Lastly, the author categorizes the just-reviewed interpreting research outcomes in China and across the world into the theoretical framework that he develops for IS. This chapter is a must-read for any novice researchers to grasp the history and developments of IS and how it has become a field in its own right.

Chapter 2 presents major theories and models exploring interpreting as an activity of bilingual and cognitive operation and processing, with a focus on simultaneous interpreting and longer sessions of consecutive interpreting. The author starts by explaining *théorie du sens* developed by Seleskovitch and Lederer in the 1970s, the first “relatively systematic theory in the history of interpreting” (p. 45). Specifically, the core model and key concepts, including interpretive translation, sense, and cognitive complement, are discussed. The author then explains the Effort Models of Interpreting developed by Gile in the 1990s. Wang maintains that Gile's model can be used

for explaining and predicting the interpreting process, as it is based on cognitive theories and clearly explained through equations. In parallel, Wang also illustrates theories put forward by such scholars as Gerver (1976), Moser-Mercer (1978), and Setton (1999). Unlike previous researchers, these authors adopt a psychological approach to study the interpreting process. More recently, as Wang suggests, new approaches, such as psycholinguistics, have been applied in the study of online processing of interpreting, represented by Macizo and Bajo (2004) and Dong and Lin (2013). However, although the author acknowledges the value of applying an interdisciplinary approach toward cognitive operation and processing in interpreting, he also points out that attention should be paid to ecological validity and other variables that are at play during the process of interpreting.

Chapter 3 touches on the literature on interpreting as an activity of bilingual information processing. The author reviews studies on the mechanism, product evaluation, strategy, and operation norms during bilingual information processing in interpreting. The highlight of this chapter is the multidimensional and multimodal approach for studying bilingual information processing of interpreting proposed by the author. He remarks that “so far, there is a lack of large-scale empirical research on the effect of paralinguistic features and non-verbal features on meaning-conveying in interpreting” (p. 84). The necessity of integrating linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonlinguistic analysis as they are interconnected in interpreting is also highlighted.

In Chapter 4, the author examines studies on interpreting as an activity of interpersonal interaction and intercultural communication, with a focus on community interpreting. Subsequently, the history of community interpreting research is presented by reviewing the collection of papers from the Critical Link International conferences. The author then explains a new research paradigm generated by studies on community interpreting, represented by Wadensjö (1998a) and Roy (2000): the dialogue discourse-based interaction paradigm (Pöchhacker, 2004). Based on the literature reviewed, Wang then summarizes three perspectives and correspondingly proposes three dimensions for research in community interpreting: participant framework, discourse management and power, and face and cross-cultural communication. The rest of this chapter illustrates representative research on community interpreting in different settings and modalities, including court interpreting (e.g., Berk-Seligson, 1990; Hale, 1997; Zhao & Zhang, 2011), healthcare interpreting (e.g., Angelelli, 2004; Leanza, 2005; Wadensjö, 1998b) and signed language interpreting (e.g., Metzger, 1999; Roy, 2000), clearly mapping the field of community interpreting for the reader. The author concludes this chapter by summarizing research on community interpreting from different perspectives, such as research approaches and research methods. At the same time, he offers suggestions for improvement in such areas as data analysis.

Chapter 5 reviews studies of interpreting as a sociocultural activity from four perspectives: roles and ethics, norms, sociocultural nature, and history. Studies by Anderson (1978), Kirchoff (1976, 2002), Shlesinger (1991), Wande (1994), Wadensjö (1998b), and Angelelli (2001) and five models of codes of conduct by Chesterman (2001) are brought to the forefront to indicate the complexity of the interpreter’s roles and the necessity to enhance studies on ethics of interpreters, as “research dedicated to this topic is rare” (p. 111). As for studies on norms, besides definition and early studies, Wang reviews his own 2009 research, in which he develops a research framework to describe norms in interpreting. The author then emphasizes the importance of norms in the teaching and practice of interpreting, as it depicts interpreting in a real socio-cultural context. Against the backdrop of the social turn in IS (Pöchhacker, 2006), research on interpreting from a sociocultural perspective is investigated by the author. More and more researchers, such as Inghilleri (2003) and Ren and Xu (2013), are borrowing concepts from sociological theories, such as field, habitus, and capital, to analyze community interpreting. At the same time, other scholars (Wang and Feng, 2018) are borrowing analysis instruments from sociolinguistics to analyze interpreting from a sociocultural perspective. With regards to the history of interpreting, the author highlights studies on interpreting as a profession, major interpreting events, and famous interpreters in history as well as roles played by interpreters in historical events from a sociological perspective.

Chapter 6 concludes the book by first reviewing progress in IS in China in terms of published journal articles, theoretical and methodological frameworks, and outstanding achievements in education and corpus-based IS. However, the author points out that despite progress, topics and approaches toward IS need to be broadened and expanded. One solution proposed by most scholars (e.g., Mu and Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2012) is the interdisciplinary approach. The author further explains that interpreting researchers can reexamine the approaches in IS by reviewing the development and changes that research on translation has undergone in the past 3 decades (p. 140), echoing the appeal of Western scholars for more interaction between interpreting research and translation research at the beginning of the 21st century (Gile, 2004; Pöchhacker, 2004). Subsequently, four potential interdisciplinary approaches are explored for furthering interpreting research. With the approach, the author raises questions and possible research topics for researchers to dig into. Based on the previous review, the author develops a comprehensive framework for IS in the last section of this chapter that includes five perspectives and seven research approaches. For each approach, possible research topics are also listed and explained. With a focus on IS in China, the author also points out difficulties or problems that might arise in IS in this particular context. Therefore, he suggests that more attention should be paid to differences between studies on interpreting and on translation, linguistic and paralinguistic information, emerging community interpreting in China, and integration of interpreting theories and practices. The author believes that the interaction and communication between the two subdisciplines of TS will create an impetus to further develop TS as a whole. This chapter will be invaluable, particularly to researchers in this field, as the author points out research gaps in IS and offers insights into approaches that can be considered and adopted for future studies.

Theorising Interpreting Studies offers a systematic and theme-based overview of the field. The work provides a clear roadmap for interpreting researchers, novice and experienced. Each chapter begins with a lead-in that sets the background, outlines the main points, and concludes with a summary. Wang gives a detailed explanation for studies that he reviews and engages in a conversation among different scholars. The book also recommends, in the end, references for further research to expand the reader's knowledge in this field.

Furthermore, the biggest strength of this work lies in possible approaches and topics suggested by the author for future studies, which will help the reader, especially early-career researchers, better identify research gaps and position their research in the broader field. Historical research, for instance, is one of the approaches highlighted. The author emphasizes the importance of using first-hand materials and analyzing historical facts to further IS and even TS (p. 149).

In particular, the author should be credited for developing and proposing the multidimensional and multimodal framework for analyzing interpreted language and the comprehensive research framework that includes multiple perspectives, dimensions, and approaches, all of which are significant in guiding future research.

However, the book is not without limitations. Although the author has tried to cover as many research topics as possible, he fails to touch on some problems and emerging topics. In the last chapter, the author stresses that researchers should closely follow the latest developments in the industry. Unfortunately, this book overlooks recent trends, such as remote interpreting. In Pöchhacker's (2016) view, the role of technology is no less a long-standing issue in interpreting than is globalization. "The most visible manifestation of 'the technologizing of interpreting,' to adapt Ong's (1982) phrase, is remote interpreting" (Pöchhacker, 2016: 217). Given the effects brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is foreseeable that the increasing use of technology in interpreting will trigger more studies in this area. This opinion is supported by the research project of Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (ESIT).¹ A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, ESIT surveyed 946 experienced professional interpreters from seven regions and 19 countries, 78% of whom are members of an interpreter professional association. The findings show that 64% would like to keep working on remote simultaneous interpreting assignments. However, the author fails to review important studies in remote interpreting (e.g., Braun, 2013) or to call attention to the significance of studying the relationship between new technologies, translation, and interpreting (Carl & Braun, 2017). In addition, the book might be theory-heavy for those new to this field or those who do not read academic texts regularly. This volume is probably suited to an experienced readership.

Potential for improvement notwithstanding, on the whole, not only is *Theorising Interpreting Studies* essential reading for anyone wishing to pursue research in IS; it is also certainly bound to appeal to all those involved in this field, whether as trainers, practitioners, or researchers. It represents an outstanding contribution to this field of research and doubtlessly will play a role in systemizing IS in its own right.

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Endnotes

- 1 https://ec.europa.eu/education/knowledge-centre-interpretation/news/esit-research-project-remote-simultaneous-interpreting_en