

Book Review

Corpora in interpreting studies: East Asian perspectives by **Andrew K. F. Cheung, Kanglong Liu and Riccardo Moratto, 2024**, Routledge, pp. xiii + 273, price £145. ISBN 978-1032456270.

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In his seminal work on Translation Studies, Holmes (1972; 2000) proposed a tripartite framework encompassing theoretical, descriptive, and applied branches. Within this framework, Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) occupies a foundational role, marked by its systematic and empirical orientation. Toury (1995/2012) further redefined this framework, advocating for DTS as a methodology-driven approach capable of producing replicable and generalizable research outcomes. This emphasis on empiricism has propelled the evolution of Translation Studies into an “empirical science” (ibid, p. 3). A pivotal catalyst in this transformation was Baker’s (1993) integration of corpus linguistics into translation research, which laid the groundwork for Corpus-Based Translation Studies (CBTS). Recognized by Laviosa (1998) for its ability to uncover patterns in translation universals, translator styles, and pedagogical applications, CBTS has since become a cornerstone of the discipline. However, its counterpart – Corpus-Based Interpreting Studies (CBIS) – has not achieved the same level of maturity. While Shlesinger’s (1998) pioneering paper, *Corpus-based Interpreting Studies as an Offshoot of Corpus-based Translation Studies*, ignited scholarly interest, subsequent research has struggled to achieve the methodological rigor and disciplinary breadth seen in CBTS. Scholars such as Setton (2011) have critiqued CBIS as a “cottage industry,” emphasizing the need for more empirical, corpus-based evidence to enhance understanding of interpreting practices. Hu (2016) acknowledged the progress made in CBIS over decades but noted that there is still a long way to go before it becomes an established discipline. Importantly, existing literature has largely focused on Eurocentric, overlooking

non-European languages and interpreting contexts. This research imbalance has constrained CBIS from achieving a global perspective on interpreting practices.

Against this backdrop, *Corpora in Interpreting Studies: East Asian Perspectives*, edited by Andrew K. F. Cheung, Kanglong Liu, and Riccardo Moratto, presented a timely contribution to the field. As part of the *Routledge Studies in East Asian Interpreting* series, this volume seeks to address the Eurocentric imbalance in CBIS by focusing on the underexplored yet linguistically and culturally rich East Asian context. The editors aim to “push the boundaries of CBIS and make meaningful contributions to its burgeoning scholarship, with a particular focus on the dynamic East Asian sphere” (p. 2). This collection of 15 chapters, authored by a diverse group of scholars, provides a comprehensive overview of CBIS research in East Asia, encompassing a wide range of interpreting settings, language pairs, and sociolinguistic phenomena. Furthermore, the volume aligns with broader developments in the digital humanities, where corpus methodologies are increasingly employed to investigate linguistic diversity and cultural practices (Gu 2024). By engaging with East Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, the volume not only fills a critical gap in CBIS but also expands the methodological and theoretical horizons of the field.

The introductory chapter sets the stage by contextualizing the relatively slow progress of CBIS compared to CBTS. The editors identify key methodological challenges unique to CBIS, such as building spoken corpora, operationalizing indicators for analysis, and accounting for the interpersonal dynamics inherent in interpreting activities. They highlight the urgent need for innovative analytical frameworks to tackle these challenges while advocating for the active involvement of professional interpreters in research endeavors. Significantly, they point out the scarcity of research on East Asian languages – such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean – in CBIS and emphasize the potential of these languages, with their typological and cultural distinctiveness, to uncover novel insights into interpreting practices. This emphasis on East Asian languages and contexts positions the volume as a critical resource for advancing CBIS while addressing its current Eurocentric bias.

The following chapters delve into various topics, offering both empirical and theoretical insights into CBIS. The volume begins with a comprehensive review of CBIS in China from 2013 to 2022, authored by Hao Yin, Han Xu, and Kanglong Liu. This chapter provides a thorough overview of the field in China, highlighting its achievements while also identifying persistent limitations. The authors note the rapid development of corpus techniques and research methodologies, which have broadened the scope of CBIS in areas such as interpreting process analysis and textual analysis. However, they also stress the need to diversify corpus sources, enhance technological capabilities, and improve the accessibility of interpreting corpora to propel the field further forward.

The volume then transitions into chapters focusing on textual features of interpreting output, offering valuable insights into interpreters' cognitive strategies and decision-making processes. Within this context, Xingcheng Ma examines how interpreters address word order asymmetry in simultaneous interpreting with text (SIT) and without text (SI). Drawing on corpus-based analyses, the study reveals that SIT is cognitively less demanding, as evidenced by the more frequent use of reordering strategies. Similarly, Taoyun Qi, and Cheng-shu Yang investigate pausing patterns in English-Chinese SI, demonstrating how professional interpreters strategically use pauses to manage cognitive load. Continuing the exploration of textual-level factors, Ting-hui Wen and Wassim Al-Bekai examine the differences between native English interpreters and non-native ones in terms of their word choice (standardized type-token ratio, STTR) and coherence and cohesion (demonstrative devices, definitive articles, pronominals, nominalization, and fixed expressions). Another noteworthy contribution comes from Han Xu and Kanglong Liu, who explore the lexical simplification hypothesis by comparing interpreted English with native and non-native English speech. Their findings partially confirm the hypothesis, highlighting how interpreters simplify lexical structures to alleviate cognitive constraints. These studies collectively underscore the utility of corpus methodologies in uncovering the cognitive mechanisms underpinning interpreting practices.

Pedagogical issues also receive significant attention in the volume, with several chapters addressing the integration of corpus methodologies into interpreter training. Zi-ying Lee and Min-Hsiu Liao analyze students' reflective journals to gain insights into their learning experiences and perceptions of instructors and peers, combining word frequency analysis with qualitative methods such as thematic and content analysis. Their findings highlight the potential of corpora as tools for fostering reflective practices and improving interpreter education. In an effort to deepen our comprehension of interpreting professionalism, Danni Li and Andrew K. F. Cheung compare the interpreting strategies employed by bilingual domain experts (BDEs) and professional interpreters (PIs) during English-Chinese remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) in the context of medical conferences. This study sheds light on the identity of interpreters, an aspect that has received relatively less attention but holds significance in expanding our comprehension of professionalism within specialized domains. With a keen interest in corpus-assisted interpreting preparation, Ivo Vital and Lili Han contributed a pilot study on the effectiveness of a thematic corpus from the Sketch Engine platform in supporting terminology preparation for conference interpreting. The findings validate the advantages of corpus-based preparation in enhancing Chinese-Portuguese consecutive interpreting (CI), offering inspiration for interpreters seeking to improve their preparation efficiency. Inspiration for interpreting training and learning can also be found in Moonsoon Choi's research, which addresses the importance of

material selection in interpreter training by comparing the English source texts used in Korea and China. The author calls for interpreter training programs to carefully select material selection, with factors such as keyword analysis, lexical features, and text difficulty taken into consideration. Another pedagogically relevant chapter, authored by Masaru Yamada, Kayo Matsushita, and Hiroyuki Ishizuka, critiques the applicability of the Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) framework for assessing English-Japanese remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI). While the MQM framework proves limited in capturing the nuances of interpreting performance, the authors propose modifications to better align it with the unique characteristics of interpreting activities. Collectively, these studies offer valuable guidance to researchers and practitioners in the field of interpreting by incorporating corpus-based insights.

In addition to textual and pedagogical insights, the volume explores the communicative functions of language in use from a pragmatic standpoint. By encoding the clarification dialogues based on speech act analysis, Jennifer L. F. Cheung Pease and Adam Pease delve into the interpreters' strategies in dealing with clarification discourses during court interpreting in Hong Kong. They propose a framework for evaluating "interpreters' performance in terms of its transparency, neutrality, and accuracy" (p. 29) by quantifying the frequency and patterns of clarifications. With a similar focus on the pragmatic function of language in use, Yifan Zhang investigates the use of different fuzzy languages by professional interpreters in the Chinese premier's press conferences. The author uncovers the distribution and pragmatic function of fuzzy languages as well as their interconnections, highlighting their potential to enhance interpreting quality and serve specific communicative purposes. Altogether, these chapters offer practical guidance and strategies for interpreters, furnishing valuable perspectives to enhance communication in interpreter-mediated contexts.

From a sociological perspective, the volume also probes into interpreting activity within a broader social context. Centering on court interpreting, Jiaqi Xue investigates the roles interpreters assume in courtrooms, drawing on Goffman's participation framework to analyze their visibility and neutrality. The analysis reveals that interpreters often act as "animators" (p. 137) who adhere to literal renditions, although their roles vary depending on interpreting directions. Cecilia Lok Yee Wong extends this discussion by examining how interpreters exercise power through non-renditions, challenging the traditional notion of interpreter invisibility. The results imply that court interpreters, previously perceived as invisible, actually exert power, control, and influence in the courtrooms, as evidenced by their diversified use of non-renditions in different social contexts. The sociological perspective is further exemplified through a product-oriented investigation, where Chonglong Gu and Feng Wang underscore the inherent value of the interpreting

product while de-throning the primacy of source texts. Their research illustrates that a collection of interpreted texts is “an invaluable source of political, socioeconomic, historical, diplomatic, and institutional knowledge in its own right”; thus, the substantial meaning and conceptual components conveyed within interpreted texts should be given greater importance.

This volume is a noteworthy addition to the field of CBIS, particularly in its effort to address the research imbalance by emphasizing the inclusion of East Asian perspectives. It opens avenues for uncovering distinctive linguistic expression and usage patterns, broadening our understanding of interpreting practices within East Asian contexts by applying corpus linguistic theories and methodologies. Another notable strength of the book lies in its extensive coverage of interpreting settings and language pairs. This diversity exemplifies the effective use of corpora to probe a myriad of interpreting instances, which not only augments our comprehension of the complexities inherent in diverse professional interpreting areas but also offers practical insights for interpreters operating in these specialized sectors. Additionally, the collective expertise of contributors from various East Asian countries and regions infuses the work with a rich mosaic of perspectives, providing readers with a nuanced understanding of interpreting practices shaped by distinct cultural and contextual factors.

Despite its significant contribution, this volume is not devoid of limitations. Firstly, there appears to be insufficient engagement with emerging topics that are becoming increasingly central to the field. For instance, while the volume covers a range of interpreting issues, it overlooks the rapid advancements in interpreting technologies and the evolving multimodality of interpreting modes. As Fantinuoli (2018) observes, the “technological turn” in interpreting heralds profound changes, “yet not enough research and discussion is devoted to the actual consequences for the profession (*ibid.* p. 10).” This signifies a substantial lacuna in research, calling for inquiries into areas such as AI-assisted interpreting, machine interpreting, and interpreter training in the era of AI. Moreover, while the volume touches on RSI, the focus remains predominantly on traditional modalities such as SI and CI. Expanding the scope to include alternative modes, such as audiovisual interpreting, computer-assisted interpreting, and sign language interpreting, would have offered a more comprehensive view of contemporary interpreting practices. Another area for improvement lies in the depth of analysis regarding the unique contributions of East Asian linguistic features to CBIS. While the volume highlights the importance of East Asian languages, it could delve further into how their distinctive characteristics influence interpreting processes and outputs. Taking Chinese as an instance, typical sentence constructions – such as the BA construction, running sentences, and serial verb constructions – could lead to unique patterns in the interpreting process and outcomes. A thorough examination of these linguistic phenomena

within the context of interpreting could potentially yield invaluable insights into the field.

In addition, the organization of chapters could be refined to enhance coherence and accessibility. Grouping the chapters thematically – such as introductory overview (Chapter 1), textual features (Chapters 5, 6, 9, 12), pedagogical approaches (Chapters 3, 7, 13, 14, 15), sociological perspectives (Chapters 8, 10, 11), and pragmatic strategies (Chapters 2, 4) – would facilitate a more structured reading experience and better align the content with readers' disciplinary interests. Lastly, the pedagogic impact of the volume could have been amplified by incorporating end-of-chapter enhancements such as “To-Read Lists” and “Food for Thought” sections. These additions would serve as pedagogically substantive tools, fostering academic interchange and stimulating thoughtful reflection and profound engagement with the subject matter. They would provide readers, particularly students and early-career researchers, with guidance for further study and encourage critical thinking about the topics discussed.

In summary, this book emerges as an indispensable compendium for scholars vested in corpus linguistics, interpreting studies, and practical interpreting endeavors. Diverging from the prevalent Eurocentric orientations of existing literature, it embarks on a path less trodden through its rigorous examination of CBIS within the East Asian context. The robust compilation of methodological innovations and empirical investigations not only enriches scholarly landscapes but also exerts profound pedagogical implications. Overall, this thought-provoking work is poised to captivate and invigorate translation scholars, researchers, students, and practitioners alike, serving as a catalyst for inspiring future studies in this burgeoning area of research, so as to establish “a full-fledged paradigm of corpus-based interpreting studies” (Shlesinger 1998, p. 2).

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