BOOK REVIEW

Diplomatic and Political Interpreting Explained

Xinqiao Cen

The University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China
Email: Xinqiao.cen@nottingham.edu.cn

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Broadly speaking, diplomatic interpreting refers to interactions among diplomats, politicians, interpreters and audiences in interpreted communicative situations. It may also indicate interpreting in fulfilling a diplomatic mission in a narrow sense (Kadrić et al., 2021). In Diplomatic and Political Interpreting Explained, the authors conceptualize diplomatic interpreting in a face-to-face form as a major object of research. Echoing Mason's (1999) words, they think that diplomatic interpreting has a sensitive and 'face-threatening' nature compared with other forms of interpreting. Hence why it has particular research significance.

The book has both theoretical and practical significance, providing a systematic view of the theory and practice of face-to-face diplomatic and political interpreting. It also delineates the intricacies and subtleties of information management. Focus is placed "on interpreting at official and high-level bilateral meetings, and in multilateral diplomatic negotiations between representatives of several countries" (p. viii). The book examines the theoretical background to diplomatic interpreting, including models and theories for interpreting performance evaluation, ethics and norms. Data presented are collected from 14 interviews with diplomats, politicians and interpreters, six of which were published in a German-language manual. These different voices, experiences and reflections offer not only a guide for students and educators of interpreting studies, but also a manual for professional practitioners and scholars. The book includes tactics for improved rendition and appropriate degree of involvement in information, expressiveness and interaction management. The findings of the book in relation to the diplomatic interpreting strategies and skills have practical implications for the evaluation of interpreting quality and interpreting studies.

In Chapter 1, Krois introduces politics and diplomacy throughout history in the global landscape. Even with the international laws and international organizations, Krois acknowledges the existence of ever-complicated security and financial-economic challenges. Politicians and diplomats should shoulder more responsibility in establishing sound global connectivity.

Chapter 2 covers types and contexts of diplomatic interpreting. Diplomatic communication is characteristically "tactful, sensitive and circumspect" (p. 30). The chapter's most prominent feature is recognizing the multimodal nature of face-to-face interpreting communication. Nonverbal communication is an essential part of dialogue; however, it elaborates little on how nonverbal communication plays a role in meaning-making.

Chapter 3 encapsulates how political speeches serve three main purposes: informative, expressive and appellative in the first half whilst the second half explains meaning comprehension and meaning-making process from the interpreter's standpoint. To render meaning precisely, an interpreter should: (1) comprehend its content and situated context; (2) correspond the target text precisely to the source text; (3) accommodate the meaning into the target culture; (4) keep the target language intact; (5) accommodate different strategic goals among different parties. In this way, interpreters can have more scope to explain, omit or correct information, and coordinate or moderate communication.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer a thorough explanation of the strategies and techniques used in information, expressiveness and interaction management. They provide guidelines for interpreting trainees and professionals based on 14 interviews with diplomats, politicians and interpreters. The authors include real-life examples, experiences and reflections from these interviewees. In Chapter 4, the authors offer detailed strategies for rendition and degrees of involvement in managing information. Pragmatically, these strategies in their target languages can be used to meet the communicative needs of all parties.

For interpreting services, basic requirements, including interpreting protocols and code of conduct, are formulated in many standards (e.g., ISO 18841:2018, ISO 23155). Diplomats or politicians expect more than literal interpretation. More specifically, when an original utterance is not clear, the interpreter clarifies the content. If the original utterances have obvious mistakes, the target text can be modified. Reduction occurs when interpreters leave out repetitions and redundancies in the source text. Sometimes, interpreters may disrupt the conversation with questions to avoid misunderstandings and adopt these "intervention strategies" (p. 105) in case of misunderstandings when necessary. Instead of limiting to approaches to information management, the authors highlight the importance of problem-solving in-situ, i.e., unless it is necessary, interpreters should keep fidelity a top priority.

The dichotomy of the prescribed norm of "no intervention" and interpreter's creativity can be traced back to the Roman system when a debate arose concerning word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation (Bassnett, 2013). The word-for-word approach is rooted in linguistics and philosophy, namely in structural and semantic correspondences. On the other hand, the sense-for-sense approach frees itself from linguistic constraints involving form and denotation. It favors a more functional perspective that has its roots in sociology and psychology (mainly viewing language as psycho-social behavior)" (Farghal, 2013, p. 39). If we scrutinize academic research on translation studies, we find that these terms appear in many theoretical frameworks. It seems there is no consensus on the degree of linguistic equivalence in translation or interpreting practice. According to Li, Lui and Fung (2020), political interpreting is a goal-oriented social activity in a particular situation. Hence, the interpreter's rendering of meaning should focus on the function served in discourse, a point embraced by the authors of the book. No matter what strategies the interpreter adopts, interpretation should always aim to fulfil the communicative goal.

A major strength of the work is that the authors advance their arguments by presenting examples gathered in interviews; each argument is backed by the views collected from interviews with diplomatic interpreters and diplomats, who, in my view, have the ultimate authority in evaluating service quality. However, qualitative case studies based on data collected from interviews have several potential issues: (1) The examples are collected from individuals. Diplomats and interpreters inevitably have their own bias, which might influence the results. (2) Data may be selected according to the research questions. Opinions toward a specific question may differ but are still selected to accommodate the research

purpose. (3) A small sample of 14 interviews may be insufficient to represent the voices of all diplomatic interpreting participants, especially the general public who access the meetings through media. These issues may affect the conclusions in information management and relationship management.

Chapter 5 offers strategies and methods to manage participants' relations during communication. Sometimes, even when interpreters transfer information in the source text into the target context precisely, communication barriers still occur if the relations among participants are not adequately addressed. In the authors' opinion, a message should fulfil three interpersonal goals: (1) to be comprehensible to all potential recipients; (2) to be effective for listeners; (3) to connect with experiences and emotions. To achieve these goals, interpreters can adopt various strategies including expression, moderation, coordination and mediation. These are available to interpreters to convey source information and manage interpersonal relations in interpreting activity. As for when and how one ought to use them depends upon the individuals' creativity.

The most controversial argument in Chapter 5 is that interpreters should act as "multipartial" (p. 128) mediators and shoulder the responsibility of settling existing or emerging conflicts. The term "multipartial" or "impartial" in an interpreting setting refers to interpreter neutrality. The authors emphasize two notions in Chapter 7. This particularly concerns me because not all interpreters have multilateral interests. "Previous research suggests that, in conflict and war, there is no room for neutrality because everyone is forced to choose sides" (e.g., Baker, 2010; Kahane, 2007, as cited in Snellman, 2016, p. 261). Snellman (2016) argues that the concept of neutrality is itself complex and highly subjective, including loyalty, trust and identity. In the section "Possibilities and limits", the authors recognize there is always a dilemma between "impartiality" and "distancing themselves from expressed content". Such concerns may arise from differences in understanding the notion of "multipartial". The authors emphasize the invisibility of interpreters and argue they are inconspicuous actors in a communicative relationship. They should support neither side in a conflict.

Chapters 6 and 7 address the practicalities of real-life diplomatic interpreting missions. Buri (2015) emphasizes the importance of interpreters' language skills whilst maintaining the notion that interpreters have a dual role as language-mediators and diplomats. Hence, apart from providing language services, interpreters are also expected to have diplomatic skills, political awareness, and working ethics. Community interpreting (ad hoc interpreting) is an emerging discipline, more and more academics and scholars emphasize "professionalism" and explore its definition – a culture-bound social practice (Rudvin, 2007), a systematic body of knowledge exclusive to the profession (Tseng, 1992, as cited in Mikkelson, 1996), extralinguistic and world knowledge, interpreting techniques (Janzen & Korpiniski, 2005), a code of ethics (Gonzalez, 2013). It is reasonable to extrapolate that "professionalism" is indispensable in any field of community interpreting, even more so in diplomatic interpreting where the communicative purpose is to avoid or mitigate conflict and strengthen international relations.

Trust and confidentiality are other crucial issues highlighted in Chapter 6. Trust ties the interpreter and the speaker together in serving the same communicative goal. Hence, diplomats bring a delegated institutional interpreter to ensure confidentiality and loyalty in major diplomatic meetings. Furthermore, no matter what approaches or methods interpreters employ, it is always necessary to balance ethics of

responsibility against ethics of conviction. This is discussed further in Chapter 7, which compares interpreting to walking a tightrope.

Chapter 7 draws a big picture of development in political and diplomatic interpreting. Here, the authors articulate the qualities that a diplomatic interpreter should possess, including accurate rendering of the semantic content, emotions, style of speech, register and the speakers' intention. In an ever-changing global landscape, interpreters play important roles in state relations. The professional qualities of interpreters are essential to successful political and diplomatic meetings.

Overall, this book offers an in-depth guide to diplomatic and political interpreters, educators and trainees. The most prominent feature is the use of data collected from experienced diplomats and interpreters of various backgrounds. The presentations of the findings are similar to case studies that focus on real-life individuals' experiences. Though there are some disadvantages in hypothesis testing, the data give strong support to theoretical arguments. As for the organization of content, some concepts are repeated several times in different chapters. For example, the authors discuss interpreting qualities many times in the book, which seem to be dispersed and arbitrary. Throughout the book, the authors devote most attention to the stages of interpretation production while leaving much space for researchers to think what to do as interpreting preparation or post-interpretation tasks. Moreover, as sensitive as political interpreting is, further investigation is called for on diplomatic identity, innuendo and nuances of meaning and interpreter's mental work during the political interaction.

Declarations and acknowledgment

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About the author:

Xinqiao Cen is currently a Ph.D. student in the School of English at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo China. She holds a Master's Degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies from Renmin University of China. Her current research interests include systemic functional linguistics, multimodal translation and interpreting, and diplomatic interpreting. She also engages actively in several government-level translation and interpreting projects.