

A Book Review of Hedges in Chinese-English Conference Interpreting: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of Interpreters' Role Deviations

ZOU Bing

Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, China

Hedges is widely employed in conference interpreting and can be used to unveil interpreters' role deviation. However, few empirical studies have been made to explore conference interpreters' role deviation through the use of hedges. This piece of book review offers a comprehensive examination of the book on interpreters' role deviation in interpreting at Chinese government press conferences from conceptual, methodological and empirical aspects. With in-depth discussion on some critical aspects covered by the volume, the book review can help readers to gain a more nuanced understanding on the relationship between the use of hedges and interpreters' role deviation.

Keywords: hedges, conference interpreter, role deviation

Since its emergence in the 1970s, hedge has become the spotlight in the research area of linguistics and relevant studies are burgeoning in the last few decades. Conceptualized as fuzzy language, hedges is a commonplace linguistic phenomenon to probe into as it expresses tentativeness, uncertainty and possibility (Hyland, 1996). Considering its pragmatic and semantic functions, hedges are attested in conference interpreting discourse which enable speakers to appropriately modulate their claims and also give room for the audience to engage. It is a much-needed addition to literature on interpreters' role and the use of hedges in linguistic studies since in-depth exploration of interpreters' role is still lacking and has a much narrower focus in previous studies. In response to the call, the book under review particularly sets out the exploration of the relationship between the use of hedges and interpreters' role deviation.

Hedges in Chinese-English Conference Interpreting: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of Interpreters' Role Deviations is a valuable book offering innovative visions into decoding interpreters' role through the use of hedges in conference interpreting. Based on the connections between conference interpreters' role deviation and the use of hedge in conference interpreting, the book under review, authored by Juan Hu, aims to unveil interpreters' role deviation in interpreting at Chinese government press conferences, putting hedges as the intervening point. To do so, the author successfully threads 7 chapters with the emerging themes of interpreters' role deviation consisting of rigorous literature reviews, new and intriguing methodological attempt and

thought-provoking discussions with a fresh and insightful perspective. While the volume embraces an interdisciplinary background which draws upon theories from sociology, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics, it particularly appeals to researchers dedicated to interpreting studies and hedges in linguistic studies.

To briefly outline the contents of the work, the introductory part encapsulates some fundamental considerations in this study concerning research impetuses, significance as well as specific research questions pinpointed by the author, particularly elaborating on why take hedges as the intervening point to delve into interpreters' role and justifying the rationale for role deviation as perceived through the use of hedges in conference interpreting.

By orienting the study in interpreting studies, the book in this chapter first combs the literature on interpreters' role from both the theoretical and empirical perspective. Although community interpreters' role has been widely investigated, a paucity of literature has touched upon conference interpreters' role and they are mostly vague and superficial discussion to some extent. With a timely, engaging, and accessible overview of the literature, the chapter represents an informative preparation for readers to easily establish the link between what has already been confirmed as interpreters' role and the current study.

With theoretical underpins of role theory in sociology, Juan Hu in this chapter demonstrates and untangles the conceptual relations between interpreters' role, role deviation and the use of hedges as well as linguistic functions of hedges which rationalizes how role deviation of conference interpreters can be perceived through the use of hedges. Taking a funnel-approach with hedges as the intervening point, the book addresses the obstacles of conceptualizing role deviation. Role deviation is introduced as divergence between the real performance of interpreters and ideal performance expected or prescribed by others. Specifically, it is also this discrepancy that draws the author's interest to proceed the exploration of interpreters' role. The in-depth vertical and horizontal analysis facilitates similar and further initiatives on interpreters' role, deepening our understanding towards conference interpreters' role deviation.

Individual case or example is far beyond possible to observe while discerning linguistic regularities in interpreters' translational behavior and corpus-based method is the most powerful approach allowing researchers to identify recurring patterns in interpreting practice (Fovo, 2018). In chapter 4, Juan Hu carefully presents the process of self-built corpus, namely, Chinese-English Conference Interpreting Corpus (CECIC) and its basic information including the interpreting setting, duration and the topics. Consisting of 14 instances of Chinese Foreign Minister Meets the Press and 16 instances of Chinese Prime Minister Meets the Press, the CECIC involves a high density of hedges in diplomatic discourse and homogeneity of interpreting materials to straighten out empirical data on hedges in the corpus. Particularly worthy of note in the research is that the integration of and interplay between corpus and Python is a new technical breakthrough in corpus interpreting studies, particularly the researches in interpreters' role. Her/The author's courageous attempt offers visions to consider new technologies such as big data and intelligent automation in further studies.

The following two chapters proceed to deal with corpus-based quantitative and qualitative analysis on hedges shifting and role deviation by horizon observation from Chinese to English. By integrating empirical data with qualitative discourse analysis, it proves that conference interpreters, far from being "non-person", mechanical information conveyors, and "non-agents", often performs four roles while using hedges, namely, keepers of semantic information, regulators of pragmatic tone, distributors of discourse responsibility, and

controllers of cognitive resources. With a fresh and insightful perspective, the author breaks the stereotype of conference interpreters being passive by illustrating with tangible examples, contributing to emancipating the conceptualization of conference interpreters' roles. As a frame of reference, role expectations from authoritative professional organizations like AIIC, AUSIT, and ATA etc. are taken to perceive and discern role deviation. The findings and reflections in these two chapters refresh our understanding, urging us to break away from rigid ways of thinking in an easy-to-follow and logical way.

The last chapter winds up the book by recapping the previous chapters and hopefully sketched the future directions for studies on interpreters' role. The author calls attention to interdisciplinary cooperation among brain science, corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics and behavioral science to shed light on interpreting studies while eye tracker and functional magnetic resonance image (fMRI) are specifically pointed out for inquiry into simultaneous interpreting process. With a potentially wide-reaching reflection on interpreters' role, the concluding chapter prepares researchers with a window to further dig into the fascinating process of interpreting.

Being of great value to Interpreting Studies, *Hedges in Chinese-English Conference Interpreting: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of Interpreters' Role Deviations*, this book distinguishes itself with the following three merits. Firstly, at an empirical level, the exploratory set of data reporting hedges frequency, hedges distribution and hedges shifting regularities with corpus-supported discourse analysis offer valuable reference and multiple material for reflection of research on interpreters' role from other dimensions, yielding convincing evidence and innovative insights into further exploration of interpreters' role. Secondly, apart from its contribution to scientific research, this book serves as a forerunner in the area of interpreting as it can emancipate studies of conference interpreters' role against from the controversy of visibility and invisibility and improve our understanding of interpreters' role from the vantage point of behavioral science. Thirdly, the author takes a quite different route in approaching from previous studies in which the powerfully-built program language Python is incorporated into corpus for the very first time, offering an alternative angle to retrieve and extract data. Additionally, the work is well-organized in a lucid structure, explicitly and logically unfolded from research inspiration to enlightening discussions, appealing to the readers in an intriguing and thought-provoking way.

In all, by bring a creative attempt on dealing with obstacles of numerous data, this book spurs new interests that cover conference interpreters' patterns of behavior and their role deviation that can be used for both academics and practitioners. Such a remarkable book that embraces an interdisciplinary background from sociology, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics with updated and emerging ideas is strongly recommended for students and researchers interested in interpreting and linguistic studies.

Conclusion

Overall, this volume offers a unique perspective on the explanation of conference interpreters' role deviation in a comprehensive but easy-to-read way. With updated and emerging ideas on conference interpreters' role, it certainly fulfills the author's aim of providing a relatively good knowledge base and understanding of conference interpreters' behavior.

References

- Fovo, E. (2018). European union politics interpreted on screen: a corpus-based investigation on the interpretation of the third 2014 EU presidential debate.

Ken, H. (1996). Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles. *Applied Linguistics*, (4), 433-454.