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Editorial: Translation and interpreting as communication: necessity and significance of studies about translated and interpreted communication

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Translation and interpreting as communication: necessity and significance of studies about translated and interpreted communication

1. Translation and interpreting as special forms of communication

Translation and interpreting (T&I) are forms of communication because their primary function is to bridge communication for people separated by language barriers. T&I are special forms of communication because the communication has to be conducted across languages and cultures, which means translators and interpreters have to process information and mediate between different linguistic, social and cultural contexts. Therefore, both T&I as communication and communication in T&I are complex forms of communication, which provide a rich venue for interdisciplinary exploration that can be named as "studies about translated and interpreted communication."

2. Necessity of studies about translated and interpreted communication as a new orientation in T&I studies

Despite the shaping role of T&I in mediating communication across languages and cultures since time immemorial, this Research Topic has not been investigated systematically in communication studies. Also, T&I scholars have only relatively recently started to investigate T&I as mediated and socially engaged activities from a communicative perspective. According to Wang (2018), there are different approaches to interpreting and translation in general. These include (1) cognitive approach, (2) linguistic and structural approach, (3) pragmatic and communicative approach, and (4) socio-cultural approach.

The first two approaches attend to the internal mechanism, process, and structure as well as micro-level features of T&I, thus representing a more self-reflective outlook in T&I from within. In comparison, the latter two approaches focus more on the communicative and external aspects and engage with some vital elements of T&I from sociopolitical, historical, communicative, cultural, literary, religious and civilizational planes. Arguably, this hierarchical conceptualization and layered categorization usefully encapsulate the developments of TIS over the past few decades since the genesis of the broader discipline signaled by Holmes (1972).

When we look back at the early days of T&I studies, most studies have explored T&I from within in order to establish a sense of disciplinary identity. Notably, there have been studies galore over the past few decades investigating such Research Topics as "equivalence" between the source text and target text, workflow of the T&I process, and (prescriptivist) strategies and techniques for T&I and their training. In comparison, corresponding to Wang (2018)'s discussions of the different approaches to TIS mentioned above, the external aspects (involving a pragmatic and communicative approach and a socio-cultural approach) have been significantly under-explored so far.

Moving beyond the traditional foci on such source-text-oriented and prescriptivist concepts as "equivalence" and "faithfulness" and the long-standing preoccupations with the various aspects of the T&I processes, quality and features of the T&I product, and their training etc. from within, recently more and more T&I studies are emerging to explore the external (communicative) aspects of T&I against a backdrop of interdisciplinarity from sociopolitical, cultural, discursive, journalistic, institutional, historical, civilizational and literary perspectives.

At the front and center of this more external communicative approach to T&I studies is the focus on communication from an interdisciplinary perspective. This operative word here might be understood in a narrow sense as "communication" (e.g., micro communicative events in different settings and contexts such as schools, hospitals, and police stations) and also in a broader and macro sense as COMMUNICATION (e.g., the communication of knowledge, philosophical ideas, sociopolitical narratives, institutional ideologies, religious beliefs and values, and even human civilization across cultures, societies and nations). Both ways of understanding the word "communication" inevitably involve a more dynamic, situated, contextualized, socially engaged and interdisciplinary perspective that moves beyond a static, unchanging, and decontextualized way of looking at T&I.

As part of this trend of more interdisciplinary and outward-looking research, scholars have examined the role of translators and interpreters in communicating information bilingually and multilingually, disseminating knowledge, (re)constructing discourses and narratives, and indexing sociopolitical identities and enacting realities in various historical (Lung, 2006; Guo, 2015; Wang and Xu, 2016; Wolf, 2016; Cui, 2021; Rodríguez-Espinosa, 2022), institutional (Schäffner, 2012; Wang, 2012; Beaton-Thome, 2013; Li, 2018; Wang and Feng, 2018; Fu and Chen, 2019; Gu, 2019, 2022a; Gu and Tipton, 2020; Gu and Wang, 2021; Li and Hu, 2021; Hu and Li, 2022), cultural (Conway, 2015); sociopolitical (Baker,

2006; Harding, 2011; Munday, 2012), diplomatic (Gao, 2021; Gao and Munday, 2022), media and journalistic (Orengo, 2005; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2009; Kang, 2014; Pan, 2014; Liu, 2017; Gu, 2018; Qin and Zhang, 2018; Filmer, 2019; Riggs, 2019; Valdeón, 2021; Zanettin, 2021; Zeng and Li, 2021; Kamyanets, 2022; Ping, 2022), public services (Wadensjö, 1998; Mason, 2001; Angelelli, 2004; Tipton and Furmanek, 2016), sociolinguistic and urban (Lee, 2022; Lees, 2022), and development (Marais, 2013, 2019; Todorova and Ahrens, 2021; Gu, 2022b) contexts.

3. This volume on T&I as communication

In view of the glaring lack of attention from both communication studies and T&I studies, the Research Topic of T&I as communication merits much-needed research efforts from an interdisciplinary perspective by scholars from different fields, areas and traditions. Aiming to bridge this gap, this themed issue presents a Research Topic on studies about translated and interpreted communication. Yuan presented a symbolic interactionist model of interpreter-facilitated communication. Zhao explored validation issues in assessing the interpreting competence of professional communicators. Yang et al. reported on a survey about the availability and reception of audio description as a communication aid for the deaf and hard of hearing in the Chinese mainland. Cui disclosed the role of ideology, patronage and manipulation in the translation of *Toward the Future* book series. Gao reviewed studies on interpreters' ideological mediation and intervention at international conferences. Ping examined mediation in news translation. Sun highlighted intercultural mediation and communication of meaning in literary translation. Guo and Zou discussed omission of political criticism as a case on translators' intervention in literary translation. Zhang and Zou explored the multi-sign communication system in Peking Opera stage translation.

Author contributions

CG and BW completed drafting of the manuscript jointly and did one round of revision. BW finalized the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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