

## RESEÑA / REVIEW

### **Fang Tang: *Explicitation in Consecutive Interpreting***

(Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2018. 237 pages)

#### **Jiaqi Tan**

Ningbo University  
China  
iristjq@126.com

#### **Rongbo Fu**

Ningbo University  
China  
frbjoe@126.com

ONOMÁZEIN 43 (marzo de 2019): 176-180  
DOI: 10.7764/onomazein.43.12  
ISSN: 0718-5758



The study of “explicitation” has been a classical area of academic research since its coinage by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958, but it is not until the advent of computerized translational corpora that the concept begins to receive more scholarly attention. Yet, while a considerable body of research output—the bulk of which are empirical—is generated to examine its occurrence as a so-called Translation Universal (Baker, 1993), few attempts have been dedicated to its existence in interpreting, a research area “whose volume and degree of specialization demand separate coverage” (Venuti, 2012). Very recently, Ewa Gumul noted that, in the activity of interpreting, explicitation may appear most likely in consecutive mode whose final products basically rely on the retrieval from memory and notes (Gumul, 2015). In this regard, Fang Tang’s volume *Explicitation in Consecutive Interpreting* is a commendable endeavor in which she explores the interplay between explicitation patterns and two independent variables in Chinese/English consecutive interpreting (hereinafter abbreviated as “CI”), i.e. professional experience and interpreting direction, bringing new insights to the discussion of translation universals.

Aiming at a thorough investigation of explicitation patterns in bidirectional Chinese/English CI, this volume is organized into 10 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory part, presenting justifications and motivations of the study, research questions as well as the main content of each chapter. By taking stock of literature in both written translation and interpreting, Tang presents a comprehensive review of previous studies on explicitation, covering its definition, typology, motivations, effects of directionality on explicitation, etc., thus setting the scene for her establishment of a theoretical framework applicable to the collected data in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 gives a general overview of methodological issues in this study, including subjects, variables, materials, procedure and data analysis.

Chapters 5-8 are the main body of this volume. Based on the theoretical framework erected in Chapter 3, in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses of three explicitation patterns—experiential explicitations, interpersonal explicitations, and textual explicitations—are conducted respectively in Chapters 5-7. Analysis in each chapter not only validates but also quantifies the discrepancy of specific explicitation pattern between professional and student interpreters as well as between interpreting from Chinese to English and vice versa. Due to some obvious overlaps between note-related explicitation and the three explicitation patterns, Chapter 8 on note-related explicitation is singled out to offer a process-based perspective on the relationship between the two independent variables and explicitation patterns in CI.

Chapter 9 focuses on findings and subsequent discussion. With a series of minute tables of data, this chapter provides in-depth discussions on possible motivations behind different explicitation patterns between professional and student interpreters in bidirectional Chinese/English CI as well as that between the two interpreting directions. Noteworthy findings include: in both directions professional interpreters tend to add more modifier, circumstantial adjuncts, conjunctive adjuncts, and elliptical information for clarifying than their student counterparts, indicating that professional interpreters are more reader-oriented and more

apt to retrieve associated frame knowledge to accommodate the information they received/heard. As for the motivation of subjectivity reinforcement, more graduation-based additions can be observed in professional groups in bidirectional interpreting tasks. That means that, with the increase of interpreting experience, interpreters are more inclined to reinforce the speakers' attitude during interpreting. Moreover, students tend to compensate their inadequate interpreting competence by virtue of making explicitation in both directions. And there is also a general tendency to clarify in bidirectional Chinese/English CI. More substitutions tend to occur in Chinese-to-English CI, due to the interpreters' preference to rephrase the original information, while more additions are observed in English-to-Chinese CI, attributed to the difficulties they encountered in listening and comprehending the high-load inducing input.

In the concluding chapter, Tang summarizes the major findings of her empirical study and discusses its implications on four levels: theoretical, methodological, empirical, and pedagogical. The former three aspects, which can be further applied to the ensuing similar studies, are of practical meaning to the scholars, advanced graduate students and anyone interested in empirical studies on explicitation patterns in language-mediated activities. As for the pedagogical enlightenment, the author gives advice for interpreting trainers to arrange their students to take more practices in identifying inter-clause relationships and memory training on account of the influence exerted by the tendencies of cohesion enhancement and deverbalising. The discrepancy caused by interpreting directionality also unveils that more terminology exercises should be conducted in Chinese-to-English CI, while more process-based retelling training should be included in the other direction. All the pedagogical suggestions shed light on the right directions for which both trainers and trainees should aim.

An important feature in this volume is linked with the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 3, in particular, the process-oriented explanatory framework of explicitation in CI. Drawing on Halliday's tripartite conception of three metafunctions of language, Tang first puts forth a typology framework of explicitation in CI. With that she is able to operationalize 'explicitation' proper in her study and exclude irrelevant shifts and overlaps. Taking in the cognitive constraints faced by interpreters, Tang justifiably classifies a tentative five-point category of motivations behind explicitation and uses it a step towards more nuanced analysis of explicitation patterns in CI. Indeed, as each empirical study often deals with dataset different from others, it is imperative to establish a theoretical framework applicable to its objectives and questions. More often than not, tailoring existing models or postulates to research at hand is necessary. Tang's efforts in building on prevailing categorization of explicitation in written translation and modifying it for interpreting is commendable because it provides the foundation for further studies on explicitation in similar language-mediated activities, such as simultaneous interpreting.

Another major feature relates to the use of triangulation in this largely corpus-based study, which is largely reflected in the process paradigm explored in Chapter 3 and Chapter

4. Although the idea of triangulation is increasingly popular in the academia of translation studies, there have been hitherto few attempts which actually use combined corpus data and methods (Malamatidou, 2018). In this regard, Tang's research is a timely contribution. Specifically, to guarantee the reliability of the data collected by Think-aloud Protocol (TAP) in interpreting, Tang adopts post-hoc interviews for complementary purpose. Also, the subjects' notes are exhaustively exploited to validate the motivations behind explicitations in CI along with the transcription of the subjects' products and immediate retrospection. In this way, the data collected can be cross-checked to render more trustworthy results. Furthermore, Tang also conducts statistical analyses to measure the differences between explicitation patterns and interpreting experience/direction, thus further establishing the validity of her quantitative findings.

As a whole, *Explicitation in Consecutive Interpreting* fulfills precisely its intended purpose: to examine the characteristics of explicitations in CI and the effects of interpreting experience and interpreting direction on interpreters' explicitation patterns. This book is clearly written and structured with a great number of illustrative examples in which specific points of discussion are easily found in bold type. And the wide array of reference books it touches upon can be regarded as precious deposits for further reading.

However, there is still some room for improvement in this volume, such as the selection of subjects. Although each participant recruited seems to share a common label with his/her counterparts as either a student interpreter or a professional interpreter, they were not asked to take proficiency tests before the empirical study, which may leave their actual English level remain unknown. Besides, taking a close look at the appendix 1 titled "Information about the subjects", we can find that there is a huge discrepancy of working experience among several professional interpreters. For example, one interpreter boasts 10-year working experience while the other only has one. Given the limited number of subjects the author recruits, the possible impact of varied working experiences on interpreting performance could be a potential variable that may affect the outcome of the study. A narrower spectrum of working experience is perhaps a better solution to similar research endeavors.

Other blemishes of this volume lie in the few ambiguities left in some places. For instance, the volume ends with the conclusion that the study, which only takes optional explicitations into consideration, provides empirical evidence for the existence of interpreting-inherent explicitations in CI. The author, however, never specifies the differences between optional explicitations and translation-inherent explicitations in her writing. Moreover, the conclusion drawn in subsection 5.3.2 (p. 110) turns out to be exactly contrary to that in subsection 6.3.2 (p. 143), and each subsection claims that interpreters tend to lose more information in the interpreting direction it analyses (subsection 5.3.2 analyzes C-E CI; subsection 6.3.2 explores E-C CI). Actually, none of them commits a mistake. The mutually conflicting statements here stand for a deficiency of ambiguity in the presentation, and the correct statement is supposed to

be that interpreters tend to lose more participant-based information in Chinese-to-English CI, while they are more likely to miss more process-oriented information in English-to-Chinese CI. Besides, some clerical errors, typos and mistakes in classification of explicitation patterns and motivations can be found in the volume. For example in Example 7.1.3-4 (p. 157), the classification result of “to improve education” comes to  $EE_1M_3$ , which should be  $EE_2M_3$ . And in Example 6.2.2-5 (p. 133), “我们的”(our) is classified to be  $TE_1M_3$ , which ought to be  $EE_1M_3$ .

Overall, this volume is no doubt an exciting work that fills the gap in our understanding of the effect of professional experience and interpreting direction on interpreters' explicitation patterns in CI. Given that the search of translational universals continues to be one of the dominant interests in corpus-based translation studies, the book is believed to serve as a useful reference for scholars, practitioners, graduate students, etc., whoever might take an interest in studies as such.

## References

- BAKER, Mona, 1993: “Corpus linguistics and translation studies: implications and applications” in M. BAKER et al. (eds.): *Text and Technology*, Philadelphia and Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 233-250.
- GUMUL, Ewa, 2015: “Explicitation” in F. PÖCHHACKER (ed.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*, London and New York: Routledge, 156.
- MALAMATIDOU, Sofia, 2018: *Corpus Triangulation: Combining Data and Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge
- VENUTI, Lawrence, 2012: “Introduction” in L. VENUTI (ed.): *Translation Studies Reader (3rd edition)*, London and New York: Routledge, 1-9.