

Matsushita, K. (2019). *When news travels east. Translation practices by Japanese newspapers*. Leuven University Press. ISBN 978 94 6270 194 6. e-ISBN 978 94 6166 304 7.

This book of about 200 pages, the first in the new Translation, Interpreting and Transfer collection at Leuven University Press, is the published version of Matsushita's doctoral dissertation completed in 2016 at Rikkyo University, Tokyo, where she is now an Associate Professor. Matsushita is a Japanese conference interpreter and a former journalist, who covered domestic news for 9 years and then international news for 4 years, including three years as a foreign correspondent in New York. In the world of journalism, she is a well-connected insider. She is therefore particularly qualified to ask the right questions and interpret her data on the basis of solid, intimate knowledge of the field.

Matsushita explains that translating is a regular part of the foreign correspondents' work and that they do the task without having undergone translator-training and without guidelines from the media they report for. This opens up a first attractive avenue for investigators who wish to explore the features of the translation process and product when practiced by untrained professionals with good writing skills. Matsushita's focus is different; she directs her attention to the role of risk management in their practice.

After a general introduction, the author devotes a chapter to a review of existing research on news translation. This is followed by a presentation of the history and the present landscape of Japanese journalism – which is interesting in itself – including the news translation process. The next two chapters introduce Pym's ideas about risk management, including his categorization of risks. Matsushita explains that in news translation, the product is (by definition) highly accessible and therefore open to scrutiny and possible criticism by anyone from the public at large. Governments are particularly sensitive to what journalists write, and much of it is based on translation. Hence the salience of the risk aspect in some of the "journalators" work, and perhaps the reason why risk management was selected as the theoretical framework of her analysis.

Having presented factual background information and the theoretical framework she chose, the author reports on the method she used in the main empirical part of her study: from a corpus of 45 articles published by 6 top-selling newspapers in Japan around Obama's second election victory speech and inaugural address, she extracted 150 Japanese translations of direct quotations and compared the originals to the Japanese versions to identify shifts. She found omissions in 80 translations (more than half of them), substitutions in 47, and additions in 15, which suggests that such shifts are not rare incidents in the translation of direct quotations by Japanese journalators. She also interviewed 8 journalators about their translation practices. Three of them were able to make comments on their own translations. The method is solid and the complementarity of textual analysis and interviews is welcome.

Matsushita's explanations suggest that the shifts can be understood as serving the purpose of making the quotations clearer and linguistically more acceptable to the readers (reader-oriented loyalty), more concise (a professional requirement in journalistic writing), and more catchy. This last objective serves the journalators' 'client' (the newspaper they work for), but also, arguably, their own interest as journalists, who can thus 'score' professionally by writing articles with headlines and quotations that catch the attention. This is another avenue for


reflection which the book opens up, especially in view of the fact that these shifts violate a journalistic norm: the author stresses that direct quotations are supposed to reflect accurately what their author said or wrote.

Setting aside the loyalty aspect, Matsushita's data and explanations thus offer an attractive opportunity to explore a conflict between a strong professional norm and the quest for target text readability and impact, which could be discussed in terms of a combination of Skopos theory and norm theory. Matsushita's choice of risk management theory to guide her work directs her towards another path, namely an exploration of the phenomenon in terms of risk: journalists feel they can afford to manipulate direct quotations of Obama's statements because their translation is not likely to be checked and criticized, while they could not afford to do the same with statements by Japanese speakers. In her analysis, she also follows Pym's lead about higher 'risk' being associated with higher effort, and ranks omission as requiring the least effort, followed by addition and then by substitution, her criterion being the time their implementation takes. This would be more convincing if she factored in the time it takes to consider the options before deciding it will be one or the other.

The author is on firmer ground when she reports on what journalists she interviewed told her about journalistic norms, text manipulations and the readers' reactions, and about the determining influence of time and space limitations in their translatorial decisions. The final chapter also presents problems encountered by interpreters who interpret important political speeches and are then criticized for their choices, with extracts of speeches and interpretations. She discusses inter alia the case of a Mayor's press conference where the interpreter was put under high pressure and opted for giving several translations for sensitive source interpreting segments (e.g. "can check or curb or put restraints on State power" for the single Japanese *chekku suru*), or explanations (e.g. "*fugori* is the word that the mayor is using... perhaps irrational, or unreasonable...", or "So excuse me, this is a very, very delicate and sensitive issue. The original word that is being used is *kanri*, which can be translated as... but it can also be used as..."). In an interview with Matsushita, this interpreter says that being "very, very aware" of the risk, she "throws out" many different translations to "satisfy everybody who might be listening". Matsushita comments that it is difficult to tell which category of risk management the interpreter was applying in the situation, but that it is clear from her retrospection that "extra effort in some form is invested when interpreters (and translators) feel the pressure of a high-risk situation" (p. 154). Indeed, unsurprisingly. In the same chapter, the author reports on two other strategies used by Japanese newspapers to counter the risk of being criticized for their Japanese translations of utterances made in a foreign language: "double presentation" (the English original is shown alongside the Japanese translation at the cost of some space, a precious commodity in journalism), and what could be considered disclaimers through what Matsushita calls "increased visibility", for instance through a warning such as "Translated by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* International News Department".

Through all these examples, the author links convincingly some decisions and actions in news translation and interpreting to perceived risk. Less convincing are the use of the construct of risk management theory as theorized by Pym, and in particular the demonstration about the correlation between risk and effort as regards specific news translation strategies.

Summing up, this book, which is written in a clear and pleasant style, offers a substantial contribution to the field of news translation research, but also provides readers who are not particularly interested in this specialized area intriguing evidence on translation practices and food for thought about translation norms and fidelity. Recommended reading for all.

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