A corpus-based study of stance-taking as seen from critical points in interpreted political discourse

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Abstract: Interpreted political discourse has remained an under-explored field in spite of the significant role interpreting plays in the re-contextualisation of political discourse across languages and cultures. The present study, based on a corpus of interpreted political discourse from China, examines how the attitudes of the Chinese government are interpreted and re-contextualised from Chinese to English. The parallel bilingual corpus comprises 15 transcribed press conferences of two Premiers of the Chinese government between 1998 and 2012 that were interpreted into English by seven institutional interpreters. Some attitudinal and ideology-laden words that are high in frequency are identified with corpus tools and patterns of their translations are analysed. 'Critical points' of decision-making in interpreting are discussed using the framework of stance-taking and the way that Chinese ideology is re-contextualised is revealed. It is found that the interpreters' lexical choices reflect the government's attitude and stance on different political and social issues. The investigation of lexical choices in interpreting (and translation) can provide valuable insight into a nation's stance, which might not be achieved by looking at the monolingual text alone. The study also informs empirical approaches to critical translation studies, which integrates the methodological strengths of (critical) discourse analysis and descriptive corpus-based studies.

Keywords: interpreted political discourse; corpus-based study; critical points in translation; stance-taking

1. Introduction: The role of T&I in the re-contextualisation of discourse across languages and cultures

The role of translation and interpreting (T&I), in particular the process of re-contextualisation across languages and cultures, has remained under-explored in political discourse studies. There have been only a few relevant studies, including those by Schäffner (2004; 2012), who

highlights the role of translators (and interpreters) as 'unknown agents in translated political discourse', and by Munday (2012), who analyses the interpretation of Obama's 2009 inaugural speech from the perspective of appraisal theory.

As Bielsa (2009, p. 14) points out, 'the important role played by translation in the production and circulation of global information flows has been fundamentally neglected, and this has led to the assumption that information can circulate unaltered across different linguistic communities and cultures'. The reasons behind such a false assumption are twofold: on the one hand, the tendency of global media concentrating on the advantages of the monolingual strategy adopted by powerful Anglophone media corporations (Pérez-González 2012, p. 176) has 'obscured the complexities involved in overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers, and made the role of translation in global communications invisible' (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009, p. 18). On the other hand, there are widespread social misconceptions about translation and interpreting, which are summarized by Pérez-González (2012, p. 172) as follows:

> Firstly, the society's widely held perception that translation and interpreting involve (only) a search for semantic equivalence across languages and that this meaning-matching exercise constitutes a routinised, uncritical process. Secondly, the assumption that the contexts surrounding translators and interpreters, often shaped by power differentials between the parties involved in the production and negotiation of meaning, can and should remain invariable as translation or interpreting are conducted. The third reason, which follows as a corollary to the previous two, pertains to the denial of agency and a fully ratified participatory role to translators and interpreters.

Meanwhile, in the field of translation and interpreting studies, a noteworthy development is the conceptualisation of translation and interpreting as socially situated activities and translators and interpreters as agents of not only linguistic and communicative but also cultural and ideological mediation (e.g. Inghilleri, 2007). In the past decade the discipline has shown increasing awareness of the need to adopt a more critical stance towards the relationship between discursive practices and their social embedding, which is labelled by some scholars as the 'social turn' or 'sociological turn' (e.g. Wolf, 2006; Pöchhacker, 2009; Angelelli, 2012). Such a perspective is also articulated by Baker (2006, p. 322) that 'it is far more productive to examine contextualisation as a dynamic process of negotiation and one

that is constrained by the uneven distribution of power which characterizes all exchanges in society, including those that are mediated by translators and interpreters'.

Translation also 'presents a fertile research area for comparative or *multilingual* critical discourse analysis (CDA)' (Al-Hejin, 2012, p. 312). Chilton (2004, p. xii) alluded to that potential, pointing out that translation 'pose[s] more intriguing, and politically urgent, challenges for scholars in a world that is both more global and more fragmented'. Schäffner (2004, p. 145) also suggested that translations can function as part of wider strategic functions of political language, which she identifies as: *coercion*, *resistance*, *dissimulation* and *(de)legitimation*. As a common approach to analysis of political discourse, critical discourse analysis focuses on the critical reflection on the strategic use of political concepts, or keywords, for achieving specific political aims (e.g. Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997). While the CDA approach has been used effectively in the analysis of media and political discourse, some analysis has been criticised as being anecdotal due to the small size of data analysed, which are more often than not a few randomly selected fragmentary texts or excerpts of a text (Chilton, 2005). That insufficiency can be complemented with corpus tools that have become increasingly available in recent years. Compared with previous methods of political discourse analysis, the corpus-based approach (e.g. Baker et al., 2008) can be more effective in investigating attitude-rich and ideology-laden political terms, style, rhetoric and phraseology systematically.

In the present study, we conduct a corpus-based analysis of the critical points in the interpreting of political discourse from China in order to examine how the attitude and ideology of the Chinese government are interpreted and re-contextualised in English. The linguistic manifestation of attitude and ideology in the interpreted political discourse will be analysed.

2. Research questions and methodology

2.1 Research questions

As Munday (2012, p. 40) points out, 'a more pervasive question, more pressing for the understanding of the process of translation or interpreting, is the uncovering of values inserted into the text by the translator, perhaps surreptitiously and not consciously'. The present study will explore the following three questions: 1) How do the interpreters interpret the 'critical points' of translation that imply attitude and ideology in Chinese political discourse? 2) Why are the 'critical points' interpreted and re-contextualised in such a way? 3)

How do the attitude and ideology of the government underlie the interpreters' choices of keywords?

2.2 Focus of analysis: 'Critical points' in translation

'Critical points' is a core concept proposed by Munday (Munday, 2012) in the systematic analysis of the translators' decision-making process. In order to look at it, he develops a framework of evaluation in translation based on the appraisal theory in systemic-functional linguistics (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Martin & White 2005). Evaluation (appraisal) is 'a broad cover term for the expression of the speaker' or writer's stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about' (Hunston & Thompson, 2000, p. 5). It is designed to describe the different components of a speaker's attitude, the strength of that attitude (graduation) and the ways that the speaker aligns him/herself with the sources of attitude and with the receiver (engagement). As translation is a continuous process of evaluation in which the translator needs to assess and select from various possible translation equivalents, evaluative language is 'in many ways the bridge between the central concepts of ideology and axiology' (Munday, 2012, p. 12).

'Critical points' in translation refer to

'those points and lexical features in a text that in translation are most susceptible to value manipulation; those points that most frequently show a shift in translation, and those that generate the most interpretative and evaluative potential; those that may be most revealing of the translator's values' (Munday, 2012, p. 41).

Because they are 'value-rich' and 'sensitive' or 'critical', they 'require interpretation and in some cases substantive intervention from the translator' (Munday, 2012, p. 2).

Drawing upon the methodological concept of 'critical points' from Munday (2012) and the theoretical framework of the appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), the present study will identify and analyse the attitude-rich and ideology-laden 'critical points' in the corpus of interpreted political discourse from China. The analysis will be done in the following procedure: First, the content keywords that are high in frequency in the corpus will be identified with the corpus tool of 'word frequency list' as 'critical points' and their translations will be identified with the tool of 'hot word list'. Second, through the 'parallel search' function, the concordance lines containing the keywords and their translations will be

extracted from the corpus. Third, the regularity of lexical choices in translating the keywords will then be revealed through analysis of 'cluster' of the keywords and their translations.

2.3 Towards an interpretive framework of stance-taking

The attitudinal meanings of the keywords will be analysed and their discourse stance will be explicated through an interpretive framework of stance-taking inspired by the Appraisal system (Martin and White, 2005). According to Biber & Finegan (1988), 'stance' means 'the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message'. 'Stance-taking' is the expression of an attitude, evaluation, or judgement as the speaker's own point of view (Englebretson, 2007). Stance can be expressed through choice of certain words related to the epistemic or the affective dimension of the speaker's commitment to the discussion. For example, Biber (2006) gives a list of lexico-grammatical features a speaker has at his/her disposal to take a stance and explains their functions.

For Martin & White (2005, p. 95)

'[w]hen speakers/writers announce their own attitudinal positions they not only self-expressively 'speak their own mind', but simultaneously invite others to endorse and to share with them the feelings, tastes or normative assessments they are announcing. Thus declarations of attitude are dialogically directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief.'

For instance, *shows* is an example of 'proclaiming' attitude where the textual voice does not permit alternative positions to be adopted by the reader. *Indicates* or *suggests* would reveal more subjectivity ('entertaining' more, voices) and a verb such as *claims* would represent a subjective external voice that would provoke challenge (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95).

Translation can be regarded as a continuous process of evaluation in which the translator needs to evaluate various possible expressions in translation and make his/her decision. As to how evaluation is recognised in a text, the system of appraisal, developed by Martin & White (2005) within a Hallidayan framework of interpersonal meaning, offers a very suitable model. According to Martin & White (2005, p. 38), there are three types of resources for the realization of appraisal: attitude, graduation and engagement. Attitude is the most basic form of evaluation, most archetypally realized through attitudinally loaded words, known in

Systemic Functional Linguistics as 'evaluative epithets' (Halliday 1994, p. 184) or 'interpersonal epithets' (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004, p. 318). Graduation can vary in 'force', based on intensity (e.g. extremely unwise, great pleasure, increasingly distant) or 'focus', based on prototypicality (e.g. a true gentleman, an apology of sorts) (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 135-54). These 'soften' or 'sharpen' the amount of evaluation, decreasing or increasing the intensity. Engagement is 'a cover-all term for resources of intersubjective positioning' (Martin & White, 2005, p. 95); that is, the stance adopted by the text producer to a phenomenon or object and the relative position the producer allows to the text receiver.

Based on the appraisal system, we have developed an interpretive framework (Figure 1) to explain the regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices when they interpreted the discourse in the Chinese Premier's press conferences. In the framework, 'engagement' refers to whether the speaker and the interpreter create space for alternative voices. If they do, then it is 'expanded' (allowing for argument); if they do not, it is 'contracted' (restricting other viewpoints). 'Attitude' means emotional, ethical or aesthetic connotation or evaluation, whether it is positive or negative. 'Commitment' refers to the degree of concern over an issue. This framework enables us to elucidate the dimensions of stance in a systematic way. However, it should be pointed out that the framework is necessarily adapted and simplified to suit the data of the study. For example, the sophisticated system of Attitude which involves un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction is irrelevant for our data of interpreted political speeches. In what follows, we will analyse the translation of critical points using this interpretive framework of stance-taking.
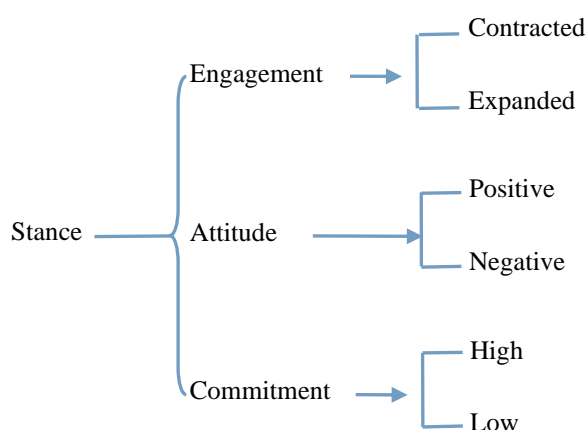

Figure 1. A framework of stance-taking in interpreting

3. Research Data

The research data is an extended version of the bilingual parallel Corpus of CEIPPC (Chinese-English Interpreting for Premier Press Conferences) built by Wang (2009, see also Wang, 2012). Details of the corpus are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the 15 interpreted press conferences

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Speakers	Premier Zhu and journalists					Premier Wen and journalists									
Interpreter	#1			#2			#3	#4	#5			#6			#7

The corpus is composed of 15 interpreted press conferences after the annual 'Two Sessions' of the Chinese congressional bodies (i.e., the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) hosted by Premier Zhu Rongji during his second term in office from 1998 to 2002 and by Premier Wen Jiabao during his two terms in office from 2003 to 2012. They are homogeneous in terms of topics, as they all focus on current national and international affairs ranging from political and economic issues to social and cultural issues. They were interpreted in the consecutive mode by seven institutional interpreters from the Translation & Interpreting Office of the China Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The word count of the transcribed source discourse is 79,266 segmented Chinese words. The transcribed text is 96,538 English words. Figure 2 is a screenshot of the Corpus of CEIPPC aligned in the parallel corpus software ParaConc (Barlow, 2002).
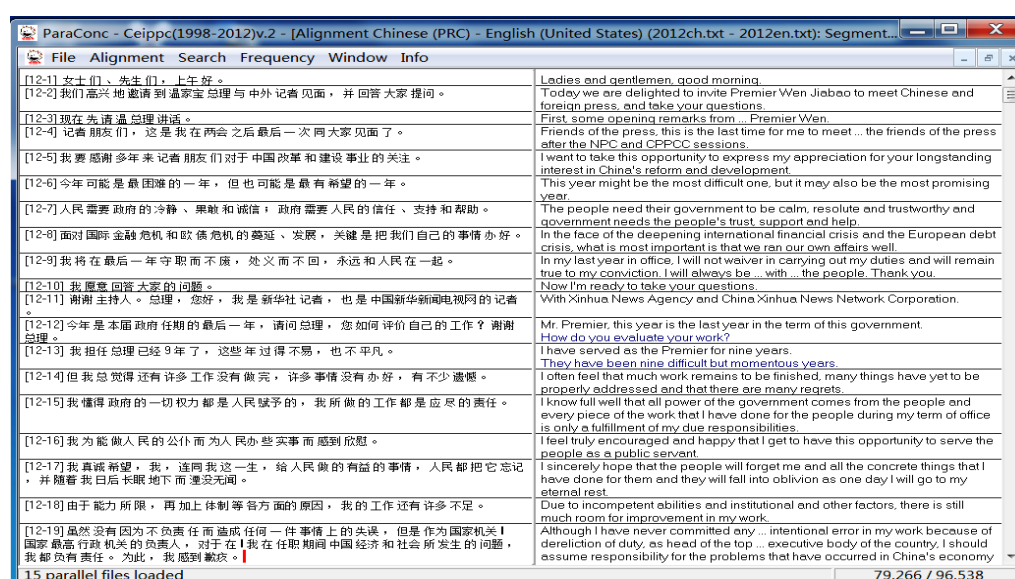

Figure 2. Screenshot of the Corpus of CEIPPC

4. Analysis

4.1 Identifying 'critical points' in interpreting

The first step of analysis in the present study is to identify the attitude and ideology-laden 'critical points' in interpreting. A word frequency list of the corpus is generated using the corpus tool of AntConc. As can be seen in Figure 3, among the top ten most frequently used words in the source discourse, there are two content words: '中国' (*zhongguo*, literally meaning 'China' or 'Chinese'), with a frequency of 700; '问题' (*wenti*, literally meaning 'question' or 'problem'), with a frequency of 568.
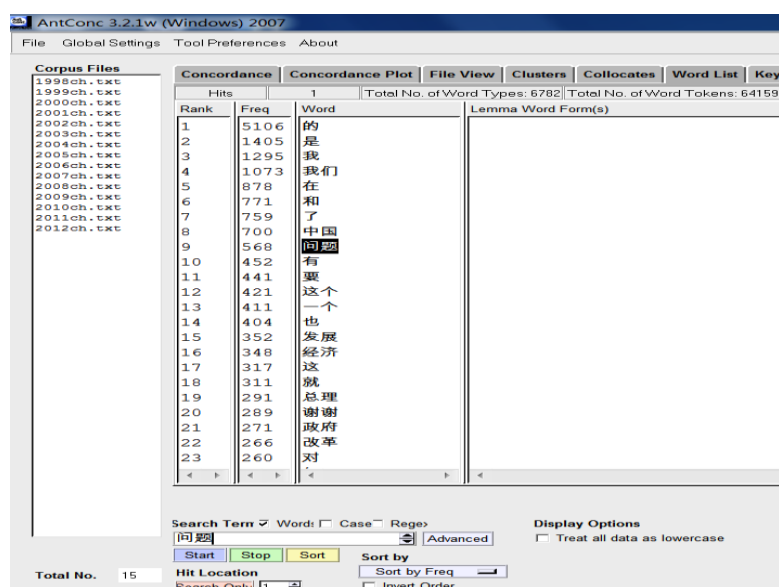

Figure 3. Word frequency list of the corpus

A search for possible translations of the two keywords with the ParaConc corpus tool of 'hot word list' reveals that, while the translation of the top keyword '中国' ('China' or 'Chinese') is straightforward and definite, the next keyword '问题' has much more varied translations ('issue(s)', 'problem(s)', or 'question(s)') (see Figure 4), which is much more susceptible to attitude manipulation. Because it has much interpretative and evaluative potential, the interpreters need to assess various possible equivalents in translation and then make their decisions. As Schäffner (2012, p. 121) points out, lexical choice can be a useful tool in the analysis of political discourse and its translation. Munday also confirms that 'in some cases it is an individual keyword that may be so sensitive it becomes a critical

ideological point of translation' (Munday, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, the keyword '问题' is identified as a critical point of translation in the Corpus.
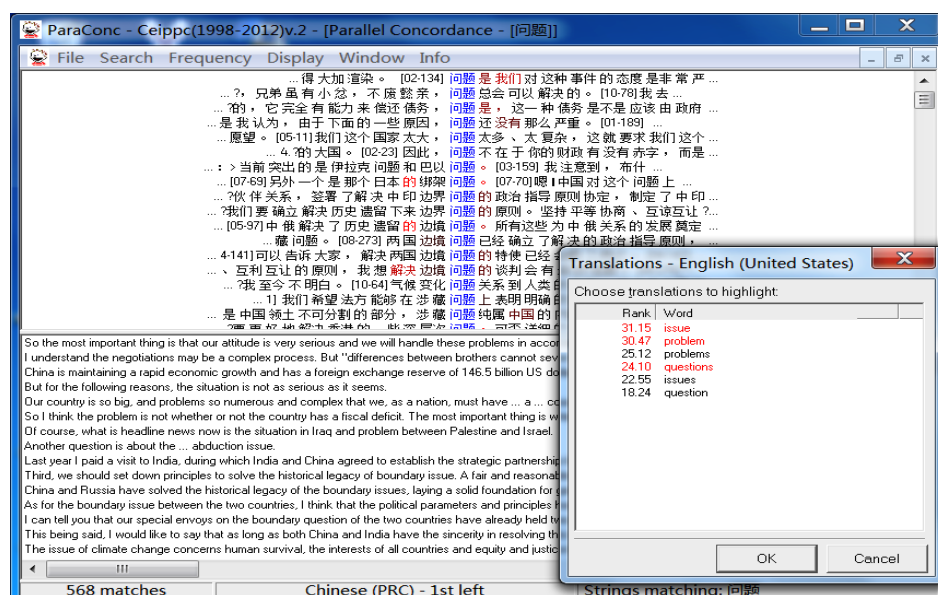

Figure 4. 'Hot word list' of the keyword in the corpus

4.2 Lexical choices in translating the keyword

In order to thoroughly examine how the keyword of '问题' was translated in the corpus, a 'parallel search' for concordance is conducted in the corpus with ParaConc. Based on the results of the 'hot word list' of '问题' as shown in Figure 3, four sets of keywords were searched: '问题+question*', '问题+problem*', '问题+issue*' and '问题+matter*'. With the 'parallel search', 482 sentences containing the above four sets of keywords are extracted. After manual verification to remove the repeated search results, there remain 441 extracts.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of different lexical choices made by the interpreters in translating the keyword '问题'.
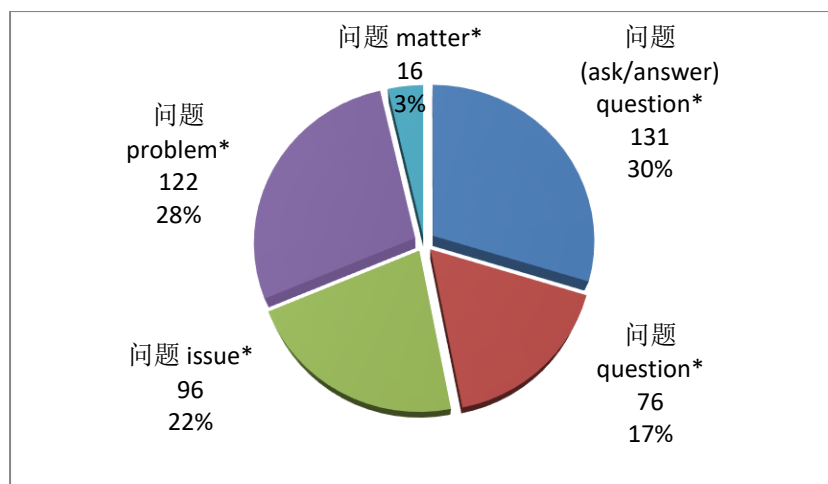
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Figure 5. Distribution of lexical choices in interpreting the keyword

As can be seen from Figure 4, 30% of the choices are related to the collocation 'ask/answer questions', which can be accounted for by the Q&A format of press conferences, while the other 70% choices generally require interpretation of attitude and, in some cases, substantive intervention by the interpreters. Examples of the different lexical choices are listed below:

Example 1: 问题 → (ask/answer) question

[98-14] 朱： 我们 愿意 回答 诸位 所 提出 的 任何 问题 。

Interpretation: We are prepared to answer any question that you may ask.

Example 2: 问题 → issue

[01-64] 记者：我 想 就 日本 历史 教科书 问题 提 一个 问题 。

Interpretation: I'd like to pose a question relating to the textbook issue.

Example 3: 问题 → problem

[12-258] 温： 关于 缓解 收入 分配 差距 的 问题， 我 想 着重 从 四 个 方面 入手 。

Interpretation: To address the problem of income disparities, I believe it is important that we take steps in the following four areas.

Example 4: 问题 → question

[99-49] 朱： 所以， 所谓 中国 盗窃 美国 的 军事 机密 的 问题， 可以 认为 是 一种 天方夜谭 。

Interpretation: So I think the question of so-called China's theft of military secrecy from the United States is

sheer fancy eh ... is real fallacy.

According to the *New China Dictionary* (新华字典), '问题' can refer to: 1) 要求解答的 题目 (question to be answered); 2) 需要解决的疑难和矛盾 (problem or issue to be solved); 3) 关键, 重点 (the key point); 4) 意外事故 (trouble or mishap).

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2003), 'question', 'problem' and 'issue' have different implied meanings as follows:

1) 'question': a) a sentence worded or expressed so as to elicit information; b) a matter or topic that needs to be discussed or dealt with;

2) 'problem': a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome;

3) 'issue': an important topic or problem for debate or discussion.

It can be seen from the above that in Chinese the word '问题' has a variety of semantic references that call for different interpretations when translated into English, as the possible English translations of the word imply different attitudes. This creates a variety of choices for the interpreters to make and leaves much space for their decision-making.

4.3 Pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices

Through parallel concordance search in ParaConc, it is revealed that there is a regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices, which is best represented by translation of the collocation '台湾 问题' (the Taiwan issue/problem). As shown in Figure 6, it is found that in all the 19 sentences containing the collocation, '问题' was translated unanimously into 'question' by the different interpreters over the years. For example:

Example 5

[12-63] 温 ： 我 已经 连续 10 年 在 这个 场合 谈 台湾 问题 了 ， 每 一 次 心情 都 很 不平 静 。

Interpretation: This is the tenth consecutive time for me to address the Taiwan question on this occasion and each time I do so, strong emotions would well up inside me.
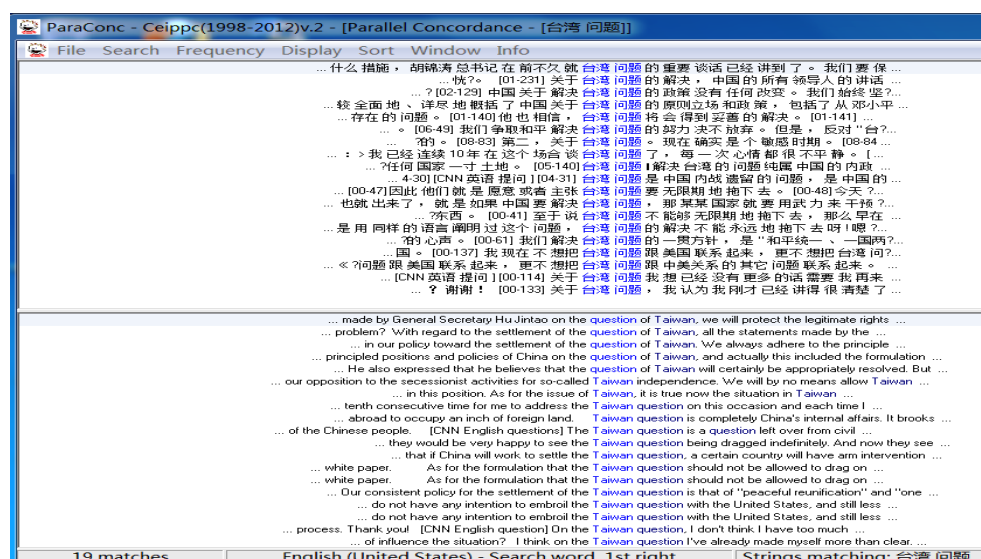
Figure 6. Regular pattern of lexical choices as exemplified by the translation of '台湾问题'

Categorisation of the search results for the 'clusters'[1] of '问题' as related to its translations reveals the regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Clusters of the keyword '问题' as related to its translations

Clusters	Lexical choices in translation	Implied meaning and attitudes
贸易 问题、气候 变化 问题；教科书 问题；国际 问题、叙利亚 问题；边境 问题 边界 问题、重大（的）问题、最 重要 的 问题；最 困难 的 问题、艰巨的 问题、复杂 问题；核心 问题、关键（的）问题、热点 问题；根本性 问题、最 关心 的 问题；失业 问题、民生 问题	issue	1) Mainly used to refer to **international matters**; It implies the meaning of a matter that is **open for debate or discussion.** 2) When referring to **domestic matters**, it implies the meaning of **important, serious, tough** or **complex** problem.
改革 中 的 问题、经济 中 的 问题、社会 问题；深层 次 的 问题、就业 人口 问题；三农 问题、吃饭 问题、住房 、 安全 问题；环境 污染 问题、物价 问题；外汇 储备 如何 使用 的 问题；经济 运行 中 的 一些 问题；不 平衡 、 不 协调 和 不可持续 的 问题；房地产 市场 存在 的 问题；分配 不公 、 诚信 缺失 、 贪污 腐败 等 问题；贫富 差距 问题、地方 债务 的 问题	problem	Mainly used to refer to **domestic matters**; It implies the meaning of a matter or situation that **needs to be dealt with and can be overcome and solved.**
台湾 问题、两岸 的 问题；人权 问题；反腐败 的 问题	question	Mainly used to refer to a matter or topic that **needs to be discussed or dealt with**; It implies the matter or topic is **beyond debate or discussion**.

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[1] Cluster refers to a lexical bundle or multi-word unit. The search for clusters of a keyword is a typical way to identify recurrent expressions in corpus linguistics.

The regular pattern in the institutional interpreters' lexical choices for the translation of '问题' can be summarised as follows:

1) Interpreters tend to choose 'issue' when '问题' was used by the speaker in concordances with words related to international matters, which implies the meaning of a matter that is open for debate or discussion. They also use 'issue' sometimes to refer to domestic matters in China, but it is used only when the speaker implies the meaning of important, serious, tough or complex problems.

2) Interpreters tend to choose 'problem' when '问题' was used to refer to domestic matters in China, which implies the meaning of a matter or situation that needs to be dealt with and can be overcome and solved.

3) Interpreters tend to choose 'question' when '问题' was used to refer to a matter or topic that needs to be discussed or dealt with, which implies that the matter or topic is beyond debate or discussion, as the words in concordance are always related to sensitive issues in China's politics.

5. Discussion

Why do the interpreters choose different expressions for the same word '问题' in their interpreting of Chinese political discourse? How might the pattern in their lexical choices be explained? These questions are addressed in this section in the framework of stance-taking developed in Section 2.3.

5.1 Stance-taking as seen from the interpreters' lexical choices

5.1.1 Engagement: Expanded or contracted?

The lexical choices in the translation of the keyword '问题' made by the interpreters indicate the degree of engagement in stance-taking. The interpreters translated it into 'issue' to show expanded engagement, i.e. to imply that the issue allows for argument. They used the equivalent 'question' to show contracted engagement so as to restrict other viewpoints. As can be observed in Examples 6-7, the interpreters tend to use 'issue' when '问题' was used by the speaker in collocation with words related to international affairs and 'question' when the collocates are related to sensitive issues in China's politics. While 'issue' is used to imply

the space for alternative voices, 'question' is used to connote that the matter or topic is beyond debate or discussion.

Example 6

[05-116] 温：为此， 我 还 想 提出 三点 建议： 第一、 积极 创造条件， 促进 中日 高层 的 互访 。 第二、 由 双边 的 外交部 门 共同 着手 进行 加强 中日 友好 的 战略性 研究 。 第三 、 妥善处理 历史 遗留 问题 。

Interpretation: In addition, I wish to make three suggestions. First, conditions should be created in order to promote high-level exchange of visits. Second, the foreign ministries of the two countries should work together to launch strategic studies concerning ways and means to promote friendship between the two countries. Third, the historical issue should be appropriately handled.

Example 7

[00-137] 朱： 我 现在 不 想把 台湾 问题 跟 美国 联系 起来， 更不 想把 台湾 问题 跟 中美关系 的 其它 问题 联系 起来 。

Interpretation: For now I do not have any intention to embroil the Taiwan question with the United States, and still less do I want to embroil the Taiwan question with other issues related to China-US relations.

5.1.2 Attitude: Negative or positive?

The lexical choices in translation also show the interpreters' attitudinal connotation, either being positive or negative. As can be seen in Example 8, the interpreters tend to use 'problem' when '问题' was used to refer to domestic matters in China. It is used in a positive or neutral way implying that the matter or situation can be settled. In contrast, 'issue' is used to convey negative connotation, as in Example 9. Although they use 'issue' also to refer to domestic matters in China, it is used only when the speaker implies the meaning of important, serious, tough or complex problems, as in Example 10.

Example 8

[05-27] 温：第三， 中国 经济 发生 的 问题， 说到底， 是 结构性 问题、 经济 增长 方式 问题 和 体制 问题， 而解 决 这些 深层次 的 问题 需要 时间 。

Interpretation: Third, the problems we face in China's economy can all boil down to structural problems, the mode of growth pattern and institutional problems. All these deep-rooted and underlying problems take time to be addressed.

Example 9

[06-114] 温：这个 问题 得不到 解决 的话， 中日关系 就 很难 顺利发展 。

Interpretation: Pending a solution to this issue, the China-Japan relationship could hardly develop in a smooth manner.

Example 10

[06-21] 温： 农业 、 农村 和 农民 问题 是 关系 现代化 建设 全局 的 根本性 问题 。

Interpretation: The issues concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers are fundamental ones bearing on the overall interests of China's modernization drive.

5.1.3 Commitment: High or low?

We can also observe 'commitment' or different degrees of concern over the matter under discussion from the lexical choices made by the interpreters. As is shown in Examples 11-13, even when the speaker talks about international issues in the same region, '问题' has been translated into different equivalents in line with the change of political stance by the Chinese government in different periods. The word 'issue' is often used to show a higher degree of concern than 'problem' and 'question'.

Example 11

[12-212] 温： 在 叙利亚 问题 上 ， 中国 没有 私利， 不会 偏袒 任何 一方 ， 包括 叙利亚 政府 。

Interpretation: On the issue of Syria, China has no personal interests and China does not seek to protect any party including the government of Syria.

Example 12

[03-158] 温： 当前 突出 的 是 伊拉克 问题 和 巴以 问题 。

Interpretation: Of course, what is headline news now is the situation in Iraq and problem between Palestine and Israel.

Example 13

[03-140] 温： 关于 伊拉克 问题 ， 中国 的 立场 一贯 是 … 嗯 这个 中国 的 立场 是 一贯 的 … 负责任 的 。

Interpretation: On the question of Iraq, China's position has been consistent, and we adopt a responsible position.

5.2 Explanation of the motivation of the Chinese interpreters' stance-taking

The motivation for the stance-taking of the Chinese interpreters can be attributed mainly to their compliance with the institutional norm of interpreting, i.e. to align with the stance of ideology of the Chinese government (Wang, 2012). As in-house interpreters of the Chinese government, they interpret the voices of the government and thus act as their 'spokespersons'. The existence of such an institutional norm of interpreting can be verified by Guo Jiading (过家鼎, 2002), former director of the Translation & Interpreting Office, China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who stated explicitly that '台湾问题' should be translated as 'Taiwan question' instead of 'Taiwan issue'. He also explained the reason as follows:

'Taiwan is an inseparable part of China's territory, which will be united with the motherland in the end. Besides, settling the Taiwan question is China' internal affair that allows no interference from any outsiders. As the Taiwan question is a question left behind by history, we should use the word of 'question', but not 'issue', which means 'a matter that is in dispute between two or more Parties''. (Translated by the author)

 Further evidence of the existence of such an institutional norm can also be found in China's Anti-Secession Law, which stipulates in Article 3 as follows:

'The Taiwan **question** is one that is left over from China's civil war of the late 1940s. Solving the Taiwan **question** and achieving national reunification is China's internal affair, which subjects to no interference by any outside forces.' (*Anti-Secession Law*, People's Publishing House, 2005, translated by the author)

6. Conclusion

Utilising corpus tools, this article has conducted a systematic description of a critical point in the interpreted political discourse of Chinese leaders. The attitude-laden keyword '问题' has been analysed with both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative analysis reveals the regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices and the qualitative analysis explains the hidden attitude and ideology behind their decision making. It is found that the interpreter's lexical choices, or rather, of the stipulated translations of '问题', reflects the government's stance and attitude on different issues. We can therefore argue that the investigation of the lexical choices provides valuable insight into a nation's stance, which cannot be achieved by looking at the source texts or the translated texts alone. Moreover, it

also confirms previous findings that interpreters more often than not play the role of 'mediator' in the interpreting and re-contextualising process instead of merely assuming the prescribed role of 'translation machine' (Wang, 2012).

The study may also inform the exploration of empirical approaches to critical translation studies, which integrates the methodological strengths of critical discourse and descriptive corpus-based studies. The integration of corpus tools and CDA frameworks provides a new paradigm for interpreting studies. As Schäffner (2012, p. 136) rightly points out:

> 'Modern Translation Studies is no longer concerned with examining whether a translation has been 'faithful' to a source text. Instead, the focus is on social, cultural, and communicative practices, on the cultural and ideological significance of translating and of translations, on the external politics of translation, on the relationship between translation behaviour and socio-cultural factors [...]. It is the interest in human communicative activity in socio-cultural settings, especially the interest in texts and discourses as products of this activity, that Translation Studies and Critical/Political Discourse Analysis have in common. There is thus much to gain from disciplinary interaction.

The present study may serve as an exploration of the beneficial interaction between interpreting studies and (Critical) Discourse Analysis as well as the integration of corpus tools into the systematic analysis of political discourse.

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