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MENG, Ji and OAKES, Michael, eds. (2019): *Advances in Empirical Translation Studies: Developing Translation Resources and Technologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 270 p.

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variety is remarkable – ranging from historiography, textual analysis of authentic data, controlled experiments, to interview-based research, all of which greatly enrich the methodological inventory of previously ethnography-dominated community interpreting research.

Nonetheless, the first word in the title for the volume – *Interpreting* – seems overarching, unnecessarily calling up expectations of all types of interpreting. Scholars with a keen interest in sign language interpreting, or community interpreting for minority groups, are likely to miss such a valuable book in their literature search due to this ambiguity. Probably, a book title with sufficient precision would improve the visibility of this contribution.

Overall, this collected volume is a significant contribution to interpreting studies, particularly to the burgeoning research avenues of interpreting for deaf and ethnic minority groups. Many emerging themes from this book, germane to political contexts, ethics, interpreter functions, language policies, and power relations, have become increasingly relevant in today's multilingual and multicultural world due to the flow of migrants. High in scholarly rigour and practical value, this volume will be of interest not only to practising interpreters, but also to researchers and advanced students in the areas of interpreting and translation studies, cultural studies, and socio-political studies.

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Let me begin by laying my cards on the table, briefly informing readers of my background and the biases that inevitably come with it. Trained as a linguist in the old Chomskyan school of generative linguistics, I joined the machine translation project at the Université de Montréal in 1977. From that point on, almost my entire professional life has been spent in research and development, both in MT and machine-aided translation (MAT), except for the few years when I earned my living as a French-to-English translator at the Canadian federal Translation Bureau. Today, I work as an independent consultant in machine translation, while continuing to translate, both for pay and for pleasure.

Hence, readers will not be too surprised to learn that the chapters that I found most interesting in this collection of articles are those that deal with MT and MAT. Chief among these are two articles by Mark Seligman, one on the evolving treatment of semantics in MT, the other, co-authored with Alex Waibel, on speech-to-speech translation. The first article is a lengthy and impressive historical overview of the role that semantics has (and has not) played in MT. Seligman opens on a philosophical note, picking up John Searle's well-known Chinese room argument in which Searle contends that no computer program (not just MT) can ever operate with anything like a human understanding of the language it processes; all it can do is manipulate symbols. Seligman grudgingly accepts Searle's general point, but only for those programs that operate without any explicit meaning representations. He then goes on to trace the role of semantics throughout MT's long 70-year history, from which we learn that the great majority of MT systems have eschewed explicit semantics. Only at the end of his article does Seligman allude to a form of semantics that could potentially refute Searle's argument: a perceptually grounded semantics in which the classes and categories employed by an MT system would be learned through artificial perception of the real world.

This is indeed an intriguing possibility, and given AI's remarkable progress in recent years, it doesn't appear entirely outlandish or far-fetched. My problem with Seligman's position lies not so much in the feasibility of such an autonomous machine-learned semantics; rather, it has to do with its necessity. Simply put, neural machine translation (NMT) systems have become so good of late that one can't help wonder how much of a difference a perceptually grounded explicit semantics could possibly make to these systems' output quality.

As it turns out, there are several articles dealing with MT and MAT in this collection which, one might argue, appear to have been overtaken by the stunning progress made of late by neural MT[1]. The reordering techniques described by Masaaki Nagata in chapter 9 for MT between Japanese and English apply to the syntactic intermediate structures produced by *statistical* MT systems. As he himself recognizes at the end of his article, neural MT systems make no use of this kind of intermediate structure and have largely resolved the reordering problem that formerly plagued MT between these two very different languages. Even the pertinence of the EXPERT Project (described in Chapter 11), which set out to develop new hybrid data-driven approaches to translation, may need

to be re-evaluated in the light of the quality of the output produced by today's NMT systems. Much of the work in this EC-funded FP7 project focussed on improving what is presented as being the central component of the modern translator's arsenal, that is, translation memories. And the project did propose sensible ways of enhancing the retrieval algorithms at the heart of a TM, as well as tackling the need for effective ways of automatically cleaning large TM databases, particularly those populated by data culled from the Web. However, there is little mention in this chapter of the crucial interplay of between translation memory and machine translation. Traditionally, the division of labour between the two has always been skewed in favour of TM: one resorted to a machine-generated translation only when no exact or approximate match could be found in the TM. Given the general quality of the output produced by previous generations of MT systems, the priority accorded to the human translations in the TM was certainly warranted. With the vastly improved quality of the output generated by current NMT systems, I would contend that that division of labour needs to be reviewed. Translators should be able to see the MT output for every sentence today, and for many texts recourse to the TM output may principally serve to verify or correct parts of the machine version.

Please don't get me wrong. I am not claiming that the language automation problem has finally been solved, or that fully automatic high-quality translation of unrestricted texts—the holy grail—is at last upon us[2]. Nor do I mean to suggest that there is no longer any use for such tried and tested CAT tools like translation memories. What I am saying is this: the best neural MT systems are now capable of producing translations of surprisingly good quality for a wide range of run-of-the-mill texts, as well as for certain specialized texts for which they have been trained. In many situations, the quality of these "raw" translations may be sufficient for their intended use; although whenever that use is in any way potentially dangerous, delicate or compromising, the MT output still needs to be carefully revised by a qualified human translator. In many other situations, a grammatically correct, good-enough machine translation is simply not sufficient; and here, the MT output can serve as a first draft which a qualified translator can post-edit and improve upon. What I'm saying, in short, is that important changes have recently occurred in the translation automation landscape which require us to reassess the conventional view of the computer's role in language translation.

What of the other articles in this collection? Space limitations do not allow me to comment on all of them, but I do want to consider the three case studies that are included in the volume, which the editors consider to be particularly important in that they exemplify what they call the "social turn" in empirical translation studies.

> These chapters explored and demonstrated how advanced statistical methods can be deployed to construct empirical analytical instruments in order to enable socially oriented empirical translation research. (p. 255)

And earlier on the same page:

> Translation studies, especially the descriptive, empirical research branch, no longer needs to be limited to the documentation or description of the production, process and function of translation, when it can offer translation-based innovative, effective solutions to help address practical, pressing social issues. (p. 255)

The pressing social issues addressed in the three case studies involve the communication of environmental information, the dissemination of drinking-water guidelines and the assessment of the readability of translated health-related documentation among "non-native" populations. No one would question the worthiness of these efforts. My problem with these three chapters has to do with the claims that are being made for their import to the field of translation studies. The proposed solutions are said to be "translation-based," but in the first case study, only a cursory description is provided of the terminological data that is employed in the methodology, and that terminology in no way evolves in the course of its application[3]. On the other hand, pages and pages are devoted to describing the complex statistical mechanisms that are marshalled to arrive at conclusions that are (I'm sorry to say) not exactly earth-shattering. In one case, the country-based ranking of environmental performance derived from counts of environmental terms in various publications is found to generally correspond to the widely endorsed *Environmental Performance Index*[4]. In the second case, the authors discover that the mass media play a significant role in determining how drinking-water guidelines are disseminated in different industrial sectors. And in the third case study the authors conclude that the program they develop to automatically assess whether translated health notices are more or less difficult to read applies nearly as well to original health notices that aren't translated. My problem, in a nutshell, is this: none of these three studies makes any contribution to our understanding of translation; nor does the sophisticated statistical machinery they describe contribute to facilitating the production of translations. Call me old-fash-

ioned, but I still believe that the principal goal of any scientific field—and presumably that includes translation studies—is to push back the limits of our knowledge and increase our understanding of that field, not primarily to put itself at the service of various social causes, regardless of how worthy those may be.

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NOTES

1. This also includes the detailed overview provided by Seligman and Waibel (in Chapter 12) of all the impressive work done in speech-to-speech translation over the years. Witness the *Google Assistant*, which now offers an interpreter mode on smartphones that can recognize and translate speech between forty-four languages; this, in addition to the well-known *Skype Translator*. Here too, just as in MT, the remarkable progress of late is largely due to the adoption of deep neural nets.
2. No one would deny that even the best NMT systems today occasionally produce incorrect translations. Not infrequently they will omit elements of the source sentence's content and every once in a while generate output that is flat-out bizarre.
3. A total of 450 English environmental terms are employed in the case study described in Chapter 2, a modest number compared to other empirical work in corpus-based linguistics. Their Chinese and Spanish equivalents were extracted from the UN Term Portal; the Portuguese equivalents, from IATE. The case study in chapter 5 does provide a more detailed description of how the Japanese equivalents to the English terms on water safety were derived, through a far more lengthy and elaborate description of structural equation modelling, "a powerful statistical technique used widely in the social sciences" (p. 81).
4. It strikes me as something of a stretch to claim, as the author does on page 18, that "strong multi-sectoral interaction within a society," as gauged by these counts of environmental terms, "may effectively enhance the environmental performance of the country." At best, a correlation may exist between the two; but to assert a causal connection, for instance that the publication of environmental terms can actually bring about lower green house gas emissions, seems highly dubious, to say the least.

Bassnett, Susan, ed. (2018): *Translation and World Literature*. London/New York: Routledge, 202 p.

In the era of accelerated globalization and a "multicultural turn" in comparative literature, much attention has been paid to world literature, a field in which translation plays a constructive, complex, and crucial role. Just as Venuti (2013) claims, world literature cannot be conceptualized apart from translation. Although the same thought has been echoed by other scholars (for example, Brodzki 2007; Gentzler 2017), translation has been, until very recently, given an inferior status in the literary field as it has historically been stigmatized as a form of reproduction, imitation, a "second-order representation" (Venuti 1995/2008: 6). Against this backdrop, Susan Bassnett's *Translation and World Literature*, a new volume in the *New Perspectives in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series dedicated to translation and interpreting studies, has been timely planned and published since it affirms and legitimizes the value of translation in forging the field of world literature.

This volume under review consists of an introduction and 11 separate chapters, probing into diverse issues and topics pertinent to translation and world literature. Susan Bassnett opens the eleven-chapter collection with an overview of the "rocky" relationship between translation studies and world literature, as well as a concise description of the main content of each chapter, setting the stage for the following chapters. As Susan Bassnett acknowledges in the Introduction, it is a shared belief of the contributors to this volume, regardless of their starting point, that "translation matters" (p. 7) in the dissemination of literatures around the world and that "the time has come for literary and cultural studies to acknowledge the significance of translation" (p. 6). With this common contention, the following chapters were written from a vast and varied range of perspectives.

Placing the issue of translation and world literature in the Anglophone and Francophone contexts, respectively, the authors of Chapters 1 and 2, Harish Trivedi and Charles Forsdick, share a concern about monolingualism in world literature. Based on the investigation of Indian formulations of world literature, which is mainly written in or translated into English, Trivedi argues that the term *world literature* is already "somewhat contaminated" (p. 16) by the global dominance of English, which involves colonial and neocolonial overtones. In Chapter 2, Forsdick first traces the emergence and evolution of the notion of littérature-monde en français (*world literature in French*), then reveals the inherent contradiction in juxtaposing *world literature* with *in French*