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

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The role of translation and interpreting (T&I), in particular their role in 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 on the topic, including those by Schäffner (2004; 2012), who highlighted the role of translators (and interpreters) as 'unknown agents in translated political discourse' (Schäffner, 2012, p.1), and by Munday (2012), who analysed the interpretation of President Obama's 2009 inaugural speech from the perspective of appraisal theory.

As Bielsa (2009, p. 14) pointed 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: a) 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); and b) there are widespread social misconceptions about T&I, which were summarised 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. (Pérez-González, 2012, p. 172)

Meanwhile, in the field of T&I studies, a noteworthy development is the conceptualisation of T&I 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, 2003). In the past decade the discipline has shown increasing awareness of adopting a more critical stance towards the relationship between discursive practices in T&I and their social embedding, which has been labelled by some scholars as the 'social turn' or

'sociological turn' (e.g. Wolf, 2006; Pöchhacker, 2009; Angelelli, 2012). Such a perspective was also articulated by Baker (2006, p. 322) in 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 characterises 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 fulfil part of wider strategic functions of political language, which she identified as: *coercion*, *resistance*, *dissimulation* and *(de)legitimation*. As a common approach to analysis of political discourse, CDA has been used effectively in the critical reflection on the strategic use of political concepts, or keywords, for achieving specific political aims (e.g. Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1997); however, some analysis has been criticised as being anecdotal due to the small amount 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 offset by corpus-based studies with corpus tools becoming 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 Chinese political discourse in order to examine how the stance of the Chinese government is interpreted and re-contextualised in English. The linguistic manifestation of attitude and ideology in the interpreted political discourse will be analysed and discussed in relation to the stance of the discourse.

2. Research questions and methodology

2.1 Research questions

As Munday (2012, p. 40) pointed 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 explores the following three questions: 1) How do the interpreters interpret the 'critical points' 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' lexical choices in interpreting?

2.2 Focus of analysis: 'critical points' in translation

'Critical points' is a core concept proposed by Munday (Munday, 2012) in his analysis into the decision-making process of the translator, for which he developed 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 the 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', critical points '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), 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 conducted through the following steps: 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' in interpreting, 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 for analysis; third, the regularity of lexical choices in translating the keywords will be revealed through analysis of 'clusters' of the keywords and their translations.

2.3 Interpretation through the lens of evaluation theory

The regularity of lexical choices in the translation of keywords will be interpreted in a framework of stance-taking inspired by evaluation theory (Martin & White, 2005).

According to Biber & Finegan (1988, p.1), '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 the choice of certain words related to the epistemic or the affective dimension of the speaker's commitment to the discussion.

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 realisation of appraisal: attitude, graduation and engagement. Attitude is the most basic form of evaluation, most archetypally realised 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 evaluation theory, the regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices will be interpreted through a discussion of how the above three types of evaluative resources are used by them.

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). The profile of the interpreted press conferences is 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 topic, 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 1 is a screenshot of the CEIPPC Corpus aligned in the parallel corpus software ParaConc (Barlow, 2002).
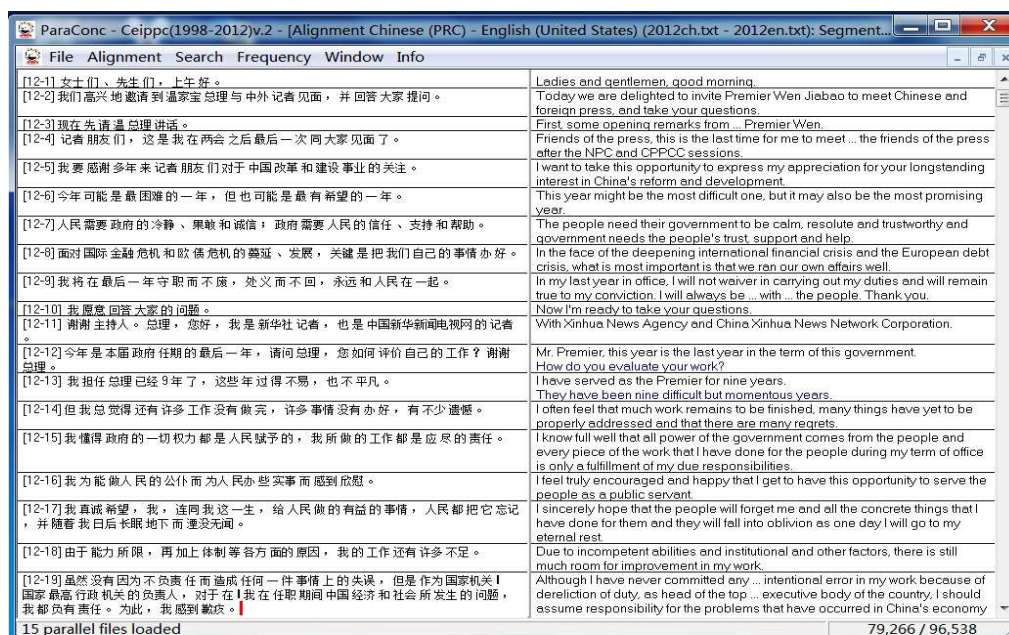

Figure 1. Screenshot of the CEIPPC Corpus

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 2, among the top 10 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.
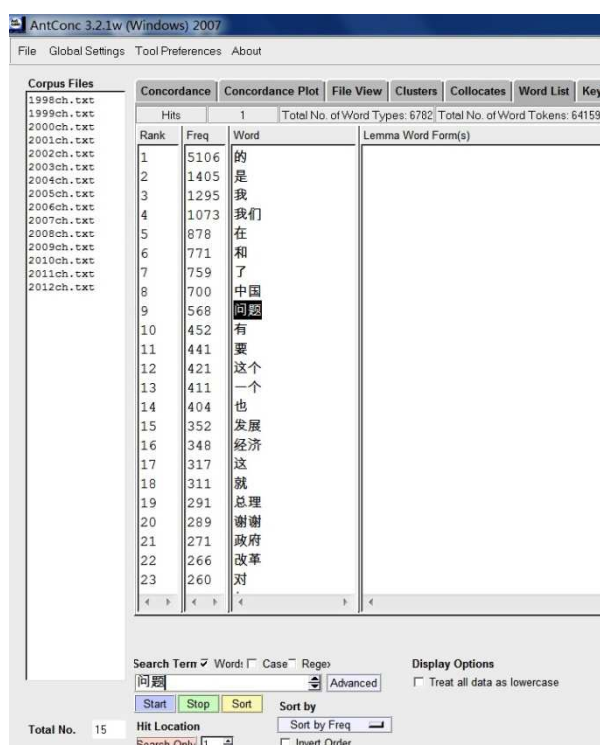

Figure 2. Word frequency list of the corpus

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 3), 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 make decisions about lexical choices. As Schäffner (2012, p. 121) pointed 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.
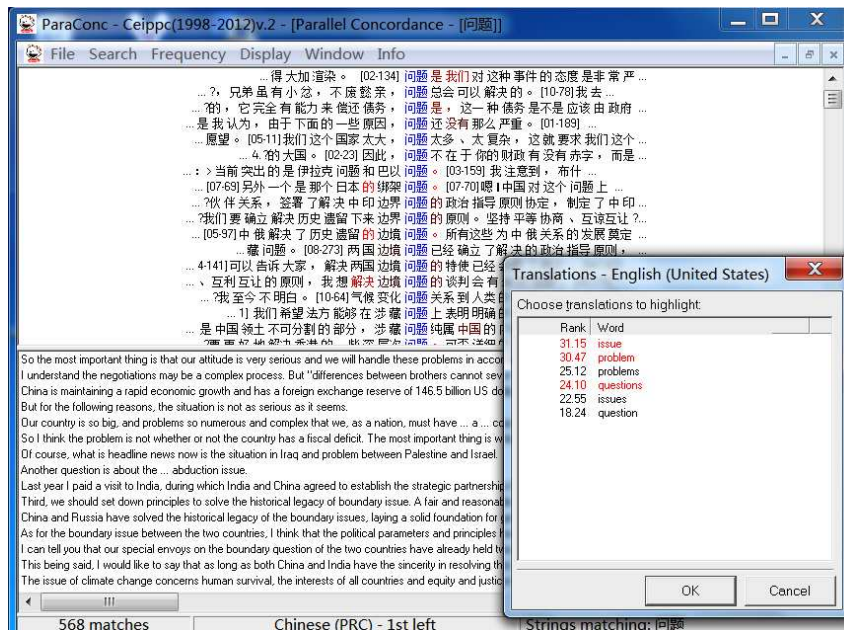
Figure 3. 'Hot word list' of the keyword in the corpus

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 of '问题' and of its translations 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. Following manual removal of the repeated search results, 441 extracts remain.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of different lexical choices made by the interpreters in interpreting the keyword '问题'.

Figure 4. Percentage of different lexical choices in interpreting the keyword
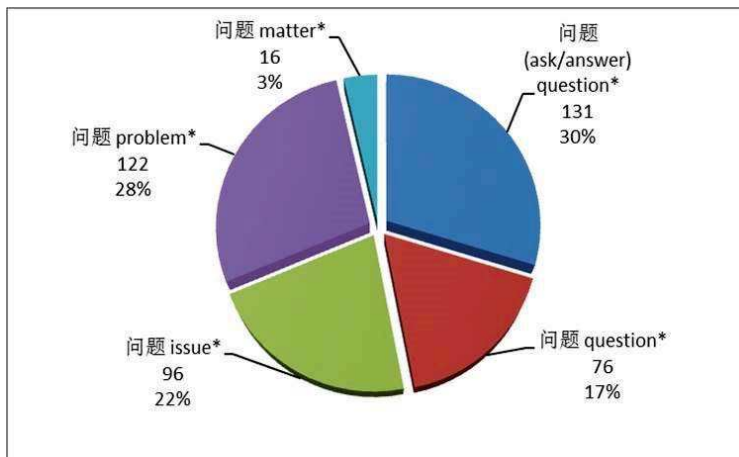
As can be seen from Figure 4, 30% of the lexical choices are related to the collocation 'ask/answer questions', which can be accounted for by the question and answer format of the press conferences, while the other 70% of choices generally require interpretation of attitude and, in some cases, substantive 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), the Chinese word of '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); or 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, which creates a variety of choices for the interpreters to make and leaves much space for their intervention and decision-making.

4.3 Regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices

Through a parallel concordance search in the corpus, it is revealed that there is a regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices, which is best exemplified by translation of the collocation '台湾 问题' (the Taiwan issue/problem). As shown in Figure 5, it is found that in all the 19 sentences containing the collocation in the corpus, '问题' was translated unanimously into 'question' by all the different interpreters over the years. For example:

Example 5

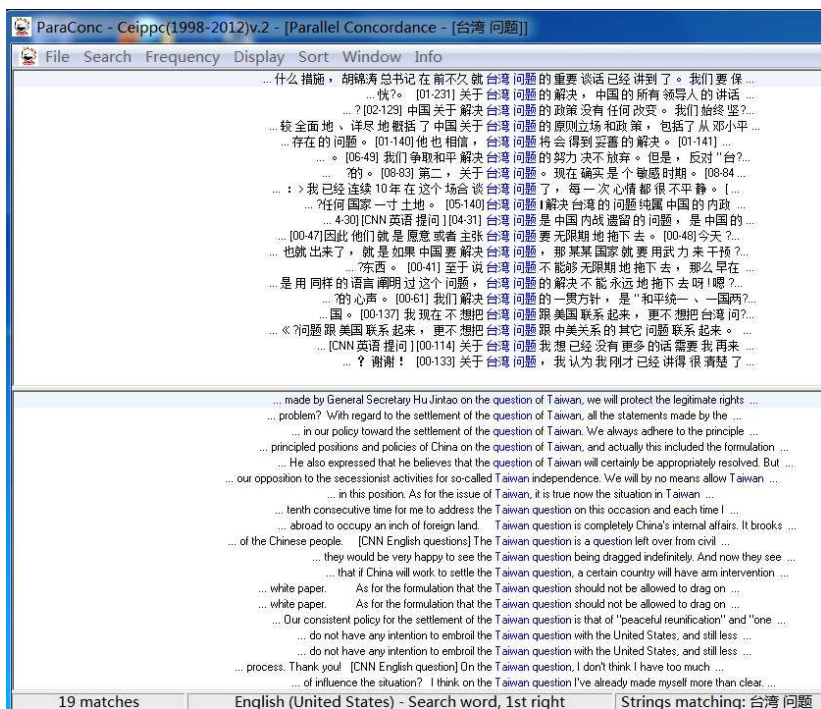| |
|---|
| [12-63] 温 ： 我 已经 连续 10 年 在 这个 场合 谈 台湾 问题 了 ， 每 一 次 心情 都 很 不平 静 。 |
| Interpretation: This is the tenth consecutive time for me to address the Taiwan **question** on this occasion and each time I do so, strong emotions would well up inside me. |

Figure 5. 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' according to different translations the keyword 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 translating '问题'	Implied meaning and attitude
贸易(trade)问题；气候变化(climate change)问题；教科书(textbook)问题；国际(international)问题；叙利亚(Syria)问题；边境(border)问题；边界 (borderline) 问题；重大 (major) 问题；最重要的(most important)问题；最困难的(most difficult)问题；艰巨的(challenging)问题；复杂(complex)问题；核心(core)问题；关键的(crucial)问题；热点(heated)问题；根本性(fundamental)问题；最关心的(most concerned) 问题；失业 (unemployment) 问题；民生 (people's livelihood)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 an **important, serious, tough** or **complex** problem.
改革中的(in reform)问题；经济中的(in economy)问题；社会(social)问题；深层次的(deep-rooted)问题；就业人口(employed population)问题；三农(agriculture; farmers and rural areas)问题；吃饭 (feeding) 问题；住房安全 (housing safety) 问题；环境污染(environmental pollution)问题；物价(commodity price)问题；外汇储备如何使用的(how to use foreign exchange reserve)问题；经济运行中的(economic operation)问题；不平衡、不协调和不可持续的(imbalanced and unsustainable development)问题；房地产市场的(housing market)问题；分配不公、诚信缺失、贪污腐败等(income	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.**

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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.

disparity, lack of credibility and corruption)问题; 贫富差距(gap between the rich and the poor)问题; 地方债务的(local government debt)问题		
台湾(Taiwan)问题; 两岸的(cross-strait)问题; 人权(human rights)问题; 反腐败的(anti-corruption)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**.

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' in rendering '问题' when the keyword in Chinese is used in concordance with words about international matters, which implies that the matter is open for debate or discussion. They also use 'issue' in some other cases to refer to domestic matters in China, but it is used only when the speaker refers to important, serious, tough or complex problems.

2) Interpreters tend to choose 'problem' in rendering '问题' when the keyword in Chinese is used to refer to domestic matters in China, which implies that the matter or problem needs to be dealt with and can be overcome and solved.

3) Interpreters tend to choose 'question' in rendering '问题' when the keyword in Chinese is 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

5.1 A framework of stance-taking in interpreting

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

The framework of stance-taking in interpreting (Figure 6) is developed based on evaluation theory (Martin & White 2005). In the framework, 'engagement' refers to whether the speaker and the interpreter create space for alternative voices. If they do, it is 'expanded' (allowing for argument); if they do not, it is 'contracted' (restricting other viewpoints). 'Attitude' means emotional, ethical and aesthetic connotation or evaluation (whether it is positive or negative). 'Commitment' refers to the degree of concern over an issue. For

example, 'issue' shows a higher degree of concern than 'question' and 'matter'. This interpretive framework of stance-taking enables us to elucidate the dimensions of stance in a systematic way. In what follows, we will analyse the translation of '问题' using this framework.
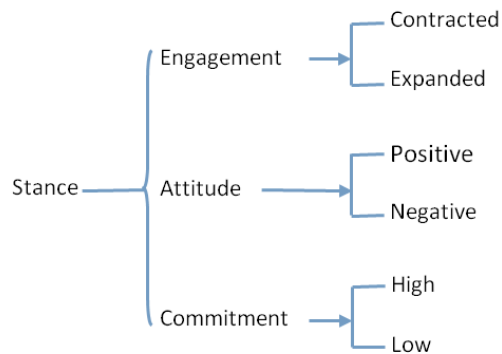

Figure 6. A framework of stance-taking in interpreting

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

5.2.1 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 translated it into 'question' to show contracted engagement, i.e. to imply that the matter does not allow alternative interpretation or viewpoints. As can be observed in Examples 6 and 7, the interpreters tend to use 'issue' when '问题' was used by the speaker in collocation with words related to international affairs but use 'question' when the collocates are related to sensitive issues in China's politics. While 'issue' is used to imply that there allows 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

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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.

5.2.2 Attitude: Negative or positive?

The lexical choices in translation also express the interpreters' attitudinal connotation, being either positive or negative. As can be seen in Example 8, the interpreters tend to use 'problem' when '问题' is 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 would also use 'issue' in some cases 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 modernisation drive.

5.2.3 Commitment: High or low?

We can also observe different degrees of 'commitment' about the matter under discussion in the lexical choices made by the interpreters. As is shown in Examples 11 and 13, even when the speaker talks about international issues in the same region, the same keyword '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.

5.3 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 (c.f. 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 (Guo, 2002), former director of the Translation & Interpreting Office, China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who stated explicitly in his article that '台湾问题' should be translated as 'Taiwan question' instead of 'Taiwan issue'. He explained the reason for this as follows (Guo, 2002, p.60):

'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's 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 authors)

Further evidence of the existence of such an institutional norm can also be found in the translation of 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.' (National People's Congress, 2005, p.12)

6. Conclusion

Utilising corpus tools, we have conducted an analysis into critical points in the interpreted political discourse of Chinese government leaders. The attitude-laden keyword '问题' has been analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative analysis reveals the regular pattern in the interpreters' lexical choices and the qualitative analysis explicates the hidden attitude and ideology behind their decision making. It is found that the interpreter's lexical choices, or the translations of the keyword '问题', reflects the government's stance and attitude on different political and social issues.

Though the present study has focused on the lexical choices of only one keyword with high frequency, investigations of 'critical points' along the same line can provide valuable insights into the stance of the discourse, which cannot be achieved by looking at the source texts or the translated texts alone. Moreover, it 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 have implications for the exploration of empirical approaches to critical translation studies, which integrates the methodological strengths of critical discourse analysis and descriptive corpus-based studies. As Schäffner (2012, p. 136) rightly pointed 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. (Schäffner, 2012, p. 136)

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