Sidiropoulou, Maria. *Understanding im/politeness through translation: the English-Greek paradigm (advances in (im)politeness studies).* **Berlin: Springer, 2021. 180 p.**

Maria Lueuda Pereira Alves

Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Tradução – UFC

lueuda@gmail.com

Introduction

There are many studies in the sphere of social interaction that aim to further understand the process of language mediation, all considering the multiple contexts of communication. In the same way, studies on discursive politeness and impoliteness have approached various pragmatic aspects over the years. However, few studies have addressed translation as a branch of investigation on face construction phenomena and impoliteness.

Understanding Im/politeness Through Translation: The English-Greek Paradigm is a book from a series of works called *Advances in Im/politeness Studies.* These studies investigate the impoliteness events in human interaction, considering it as a complex system in which individuals must make choices to maintain successful communication, all based on invisible rules, such as verbal and/or nonverbal acts. (Goffman,1967).

Written by Maria Sidiropoulou, a Professor of Translation Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, who is part of the department of English language and Literature and specializes in translation studies and intercultural communication. This book investigates how translation and impoliteness can be complementary studies, which would potentially bring great contribution to both research areas. It explores intercultural variation across oriented translations of English/Greek in different genres and it is divided into two parts. Part one (first three chapters) deals with non-fictional (press and academic texts), and part two (chapter four to seven) examines fictional texts (novel, theater, and film).

Part 1 - Non-fictional (press and academic texts)

This part, called *Im/politeness in Translated Non-fiction,* covers chapters one to three. Here, the author emphasizes the parallel between translation and impoliteness as two areas that can complement each other, sharing similar perceptions. Sidiropoulou also argues about the importance of 'face-saving' during social interactions, which is a term used to describe the practice of

preserving someone's image or reputation, in social and communicative situations. She reinforces the translation effort to reach a target audience and reveals the fundamental role of impoliteness as a model of adjustment, attempting for a socially accepted coherence into intercultural aspects of communication.

The first chapter covers theories and methods regarding impoliteness and a discussion of whether researchers can identify what is or what is not impolite. As impoliteness can vary cross-culturally, there are several notions about what can be considered polite or impolite. All interaction must consider the relation translator/work in the process of intercultural conveying of meaning because there is no universal standard for politeness or impoliteness and that applies to all cultures and situations. Politeness norms are socially constructed and can vary widely. Therefore, what may be considered polite in one cultural context might be perceived as impolite or even offensive in another. The author finishes chapter one by talking about the methodology, the motivation of the book and the research question.

In chapter two, a model of im/politeness called T-im/po model is applied, to explore press discourse. Sidiropoulou analyzes data from the English-Greek press and observes how mediated translation can interfere with the final product, modifying or balancing the discourse of the authors, according to its objectives and the target audience. The author emphasizes that the discourse can be changed or adapted as part of the autonomy of the translator, and it can be done using im/politeness and 'negotiation' considering some aspects such as cross-cultural values, practices, and gender. She justifies this process of interference as a 'face-saving' activity.

The last chapter of the first part of the book explores the balance between negative and positive politeness phenomena in academic discourse, specifically focusing on Greek academic writing and considering unique textual features. The author focuses on texts from science and humanities and analyzes the forms of negotiations adopted by the translator to engage the target audience effectively. She also mentions that reaching an audience through an academic text can be more difficult due to the hierarchy commonly present in these environments. Factors such as distance and lack of what is appropriate politeness in academic discourse can compromise the effectiveness of the text and, consequently, the intended transmission of the knowledge.

Overall, the current findings in the first part of this book underscore the interwoven nature of impoliteness and translation. The adjusting capacity of translations is highlighted, showing their ability to reshape discourse to communicate effectively with a specific audience. The use of asynchronous data, such as press and academic discourse, has proven valuable, enabling

interactants to measure audience considerations through questionnaires despite the absence of real-time interactions.

Part 2 – Fictional texts (novel, theater, and film)

This part begins in the fourth chapter: *Translation im/politeness and fiction*. It encompasses studies of im/politeness and face parameters reconstruction. In this chapter, translators use different versions of fictional Greek texts from a common source to shape how readers and audiences perceive them. The process includes translating and retranslating the Greek text to explore how translations comprehend the communication context and take social factors into consideration. This approach changes the narrative across different versions as the translator must choose from polite and impolite models, adjusting to different contexts and providing alternatives to fit the needs of the audience.

Chapter five considers translation studies and the impact of (im)politeness choices in Greek versions of a drama text. Considering the translator as a receiver, the study emphasizes which impolite strategies can vary within different translations of the same text and how these alterations can directly affect the author's intention. Two translated versions of the same Greek text were presented for public review and opinions regarding which impoliteness strategy would be most effective within the given context, the message conveyed, and the target audience of the characters. This study considers previous conclusions regarding cultural and social patterns towards Greek audiences and texts. It becomes clear that patterns of impoliteness may vary within a drama text, but these variations strongly consider intercultural and intracultural circumstances.

The next chapter, *Impoliteness, fiction, and AVT,* discusses film translation and focuses on studying impoliteness in the views of audiovisual context. It examines dubbed and subtitled data from children's films focusing on the receiver's point of view. The difference presented in this corpus is that it relates to multimodal context, where visual aids may complement or interfere with the assumptions regarding impoliteness and how the discourse is interpreted. In this study, it was understood that dubbing input was more effective in demonstrating sociocultural aspects present in films and fictional characters, as visual aids contribute to the audience's view and engagement.

Within the concluding chapter, the author articulates her viewpoints, addresses the research questions that guided her study, and outlines the conclusions drawn from the extensive exploration. This chapter serves as a synthesis, summarizing each preceding section. Sidiropoulou provides a

reflective overview of the entire study, underscoring its contribution to translation and impoliteness studies.

In summary, part two shows how characters are reconstructed in speeches. Translators carefully consider various aspects, such as social and cultural, and even use strategic impolite methods to connect with the target audience. The interaction between these complex processes is particularly interesting during the translation negotiation phase because to engage in character reconstruction, the translator must deeply understand the social and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

The book undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to the studies of translation and politeness theory, as it underscores impoliteness as something socioculturally recognized. It presents the challenges and complexities of translating politeness and impoliteness across two different languages and cultures and discusses how cultural norms, linguistic structures, and pragmatic elements influence the translation process and affect the perceived levels of politeness in interlingual communication. It also brings a unique view in the context of translation studies and impoliteness as interdisciplinary areas.

The evidence presented in this book directly contrasts with the theory of the universal politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), which aimed to prevent face-threatening acts. It is impossible to follow a universal model when we interact with individuals who think differently, with multiple backgrounds, and living in different societies. Thinking about the best strategy to modify or adapt a text plays an important role in translator mediation due to all the cultural and social variables involved in this process.

References

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