

Book Review: *Translation and Neoliberalism*, by Jalalian Daghigh, Ali and Mark Shuttleworth (eds.), Cham, Springer, 2025. pp. 318. ISBN 978-3-031-73829-6; ISBN 978-3-031-73830-2 (eBook)

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Translation studies are actively searching for new topics and methodological tools, entering domains and debating themes that many would have considered improbable some decades ago. Neoliberalism is one of these areas. Neoliberalism connects ideas of freedom, privacy, and deregulation, providing a socioeconomic framework that contributes to the in-depth re-evaluation of translation praxis – its history and criticism. The editors, though, focus on the significance of neoliberalism for teaching translation and interpreting, community interpreting, technology and similar topics. In an incredibly substantial preface, the editors include an explanation of the essence of the theoretical debate, key terms, a description of the investigation in the present volume, and an extensive topical bibliography.

Based on the preface, the principles of interdependency between translation and neoliberalism can be summarised into the following statements:

1) Education is commodified, focusing on producing “market-ready” human capital. As universities have align with market demands, it is often implemented at the expense of critical thinking and cultural or social values. However, translation students are increasingly encouraged to gain professional credentials and marketable skills (pp. 8-9);

2) As neoliberalism drives a cost-efficiency mindset, sometimes compromising translation quality and ethical standards, the translation profession is reshaped by outsourcing, gig economy models, and precarious labour (pp. 9, 10);

3) Language services, including translation, are increasingly influenced by market logic and economic efficiency, and utilitarian, managerial approaches are prioritized over cultural sensitivity or linguistic richness (pp. 10, 12).

4) Gradually, neoliberal narratives are reflected and reproduced in translation products, and translation becomes a vehicle for disseminating neoliberal values, such as individualism, competitiveness, and consumerism (p. 9);

5) Since machine translation and automation are transforming the translation industry, increasing pressure on human translators, there is a shift from professional autonomy to market-dependent roles, with translators required to adapt to new tech-centric workflows (pp. 10-11).

Part I of the volume aims to describe neoliberalism tendencies in translation didactics through the prism of universities and students. Inspired by a market-driven transformation in higher education, Wan Hu (“Translator Training in the Context of Neoliberalism: Integrating Market Forces Through a Global Perspective”) reveals how translation and interpreting programmes implement the relevant priorities in order to increase professional elements in the training of future translators and interpreters. Yuezeng Niu (“Translation (Non)entrepreneurial Tendencies Among Master of Translation and Interpreting Students in China”) conducts and summarizes a number of interviews with translation and interpreting students for understanding how deregulation, commodification, competition, and individual responsibility are able to change and shaped today’s education. The experience from South Korea is presented in the paper by Jinhyun Cho (“Neoliberalism as (De)motivation Behind Pursuits of Interpreting”) who offers a detailed account of how the interpreting profession has been transformed into a commodity and portrayed as a model of neoliberal individualism.

The authors included in Part II of the book explore neoliberal policies in language services. Anne Beinchet and Mustapha Taibi (“Community Translation and Interpreting Under Neoliberal Agendas: The Cases of Australia and Canada”) analyse community translation and interpreting in Australia and Canada by assessing productivity and cost as well as judging over service quality and working conditions. The ‘Canadian’ topic is continued by Brian Mossop (“Impact of Neoliberalism on Public-Sector Translation in Canada”) who deals with the issues of the economic effect on the policies and practices of individual translators, translation agencies and the translation departments of public or private bodies and raises the problems of outsourcing, less quality control and precarious work. James Chonglong Gu (“Linguistic Landscaping the Discourse of Neoliberalism and Globalisation in Dubai’s Posh JBR and Dubai Marina Areas: Official Policy, Translation, Juggernaut of English, ‘Fake’ Arabic”) characterizes general translation-connected official policies and sociolinguistic reality in Dubai and the United Arab Emirates.

Part III prioritizes technology and labour market transformation in the translation and interpreting profession. AI-based machine translation stimulates digital translation technologies, and Stefan Baumgarten (“Welcome to the Translation Machine! Translation Labour in Times of Techno-

Triumphalism”) has aimed at discursive and social repercussions of translation technologies, which finally impacts larger translation workflows. Oliver Carreira (“Neoliberal Practices Endangering the Sustainability of the Translation Profession: Non-standard Forms of Work, Labor Monopsonies, and Technology as a Catalyst for Precarization”) brings the concept of labour market to translation profession and professionals. In the vibrant landscape of interpreting, Deborah Giustini (“Interpreting One’s Way Through the Gig Economy: Neoliberal Shifts and the Platformisation of Interpretation Work”) substantiates the introduction of such concepts as platformisation, gig economy and digital labour. Qi Pan (“Addressing Neoliberal Risks in Online Collaborative Literary Translation: A Case Study on Translators’ Self-Efficacy and Risk Management in the Chinese Context”) appraises the concept of self-efficacy which is accompanied by outer factors, such as translators’ cooperation and negotiations, and risks caused by networks and digital technologies.

Although Part IV is to be bound to neoliberal discourses in translation, its authors specifically study children’s literature and educational news discourses as well as neoliberal ideologies across borders and global audiences. The research groups – Markella Rutherford, Alexandra Cahn, Enya Chi, and Lucia Gurrieri (“Children as Global Subjects: A Comparison of Translated Picture Books in the United States and China”) – dedicate their efforts to the identification of the neoliberal construction of children as global subjects and to the depiction of priorities in selecting texts for translation, prioritizing either appreciation for diversity in the United States or competitive academic knowledge in China. Kiana Salehian (“The Discourse of Neoliberalism in Translated and Domestically Produced Children’s Literature in Iran”) attempts to find various values and ideologies within translated and domestically produced literature for 6-12-year-old children in Iran. Mingce Huang and Ali Jalalian Daghigh (“(De)emphasization of Neoliberal Discourse in Translated and Domestic News on Education in China”) attests the application of the Discourse Historical Approach (part of Critical Discourse) for contrasting and examining education-themed translated news and domestically produced news in China.

The book ends with the subject index which is a ready glossary of the neoliberal theory of translation. The relationship between translation and neoliberalism is shaped by economic, social, and ideological shifts that are transforming both the translation profession and the broader role of language in society. This volume is an impressive contribution to the ongoing exploration of new research topics – and potentially new methodologies – in translation scholarship. This research approach will promote translation sociology, bordering on translation quality assessment, activism, and standardization.