

Jančaříková, R. (ed.) (2010) *Interpretation of Meaning Across Discourses*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita. 259 pp.

The book represents a collection of studies dealing with matters not only across various discourses (as suggested in the title) but also across various geographical locations since the contributors come from as many as seven countries of Europe and Asia. And yet, they all find a common point of interest, i.e. meaning and its interpretation from different standpoints and within different frameworks.

The patrons of this volume, Dontcheva-Navratilova and Povolná (from the publishing institution), state in their introductory note that today it is "...commonly acknowledged that the use of language for conveying meaning is fundamental to human society" (p. 5). Therefore also the research into the interpretation of meaning, as presented here, reflects the multi-faceted nature of human society and is embedded in a range of spoken and written discourses, namely academic, fictional, learner, legal, media, political and spontaneous/prepared spoken discourse, each dealt with in a separate chapter.

Chapter One offers five contributions on the topic of academic discourse. Ježdíková (University of Hradec Králové), Vogel (Masaryk University, Brno) and Marcinkowski (Chemnitz University of Technology) all work with similar types of text, i.e. textbooks for university students, research articles from a scientific journal and conference papers (Ježdíková), and popular versus theoretical scientific texts (Vogel and Marcinkowski). While Ježdíková and Vogel are investigating aspects of grammatical and lexical cohesion (namely the role and distribution of contrastive and resultive conjuncts, and lexical cohesive devices, respectively), Marcinkowski focuses on the use of epistemic verbs functioning as means of expression of a writer's commitment to the truth value of a proposition.

In terms of the length of an examined text, the following study by Kozáčíková (Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra) comes from the opposite end of the scale compared to the previous ones. She analyses research paper abstracts, these concise miniatures of full-length papers, which despite their brevity offer ample material to examine. The article introduces the results of her research aimed at the use and syntactic properties of non-finite clauses as observed in the corpus of 41 abstracts.

Still within the field of academic discourse, Malášková's paper explores the issue of hedging in literary criticism articles, an area that has been outside the main stream of interest to many linguists. Malášková (Masaryk University, Brno) justifies her choice by the outcomes of her analysis which brings clear evidence

of the presence of various semantic types of hedges and formal means for their realization.

Contemporary fiction was the subject-matter of their research for Kaštovská (University of Technology, Brno) and Šimůnková (Technical University of Liberec) in Chapter Two. The former supports the theory of the importance of lists (enumerating/exemplifying) in terms of their cohesive nature, and does so on a number of samples from an English novel; the latter reports on a comparative analysis of the ways that modal expressions of necessity occurring in an original text may (not) be expressed in the equivalent translation (comprising originals in both Czech and English and their respective translations).

The main topic of the following three articles from Chapter Three could generally be described as ‘linguistic encounters of university students’. Al-Jarf (King Saud University, Riyadh) is looking at the difficulties that Saudi Arabian college students face when interpreting various authentic texts, particularly media reports, from English to Arabic and vice versa. The analysis reveals a number of error sources ranging from auditory discrimination difficulties to the lack of knowledge of socio-cultural context. A different phenomenon is brought to attention in the contribution by Slunečková (University of Economics, Prague); specifically, it is the interference of the mother tongue in Czech students’ translations from/to English, manifested in faulty word order and consequently leading to changes in information structure. In the concluding paper of this chapter, Zafiri (University of Thessaly) provides an insight into the situation in ESP teaching to students of architecture in Greece, covering all four language skills and their specifics.

The issue of judicial argumentation in legal discourse is explored by Gyuró (University of Pécs) and Szczymbak (Jagellonian University, Krakow) in Chapter Four. Gyuró focuses on two forms (global and local) of communicative coherence in forensic arguments and their manifestation in one particular lawsuit at the Supreme Court of the U.S.; Szczymbak then presents the results of her corpus-based research of 25 judgments issued by the European Court of Justice, aimed at the analysis of monologic concessive schemata used in the texts.

Chapter Five, the second most copious in the volume, is concerned with various genres of media discourse, e.g. science news examined by Haupt (Masaryk University, Brno) from three different points of view, or personal advertisements and their characteristic features in terms of lexis, studied by Zouharová (Masaryk University, Brno). English word order, its functions and possible deviations from the “canonical word-order” (p. 175) in relation to the functional sentence perspective are analysed on samples from authentic news

reports and commentaries in Smolka's research (University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice). Finally, the concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction in direct reported forms is under investigation in the study of Urbanová (University of Pardubice). The author offers an overview of different approaches to the topic and attempts a reconciliation of the views, arguing for the necessity to consider genre and communicative intention when dealing with reported language.

The unifying feature of Chapter Six is political discourse, first in the form of interviews and second as presidential speeches. The former is the subject-matter of the paper by Adámková (Silesian University in Opava), who is looking at the use of vague language by interviewers/interviewees in British political interviews and tries to map the communication effects and strategies resulting from this use. Svobodová (Masaryk University, Brno) chose political speeches of two American presidents – G. W. Bush and B. Obama – for the analysis of how threat to the U.S. is perceived and addressed in public speeches.

Spoken discourse is the theme of the last two contributions in Chapter Seven. In her study, Švárová (Masaryk University, Brno) concentrates on the quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the structure and use of compliments in contemporary English; the analysed material comes from five series of British and American sitcoms. Zmrzlá (Brno University of Technology) presents the findings of a research carried out on spontaneous private conversations and prepared radio debates; the focus of her work is the discourse marker *now* – the frequency of its occurrence and possible functions.

To conclude, one cannot but recommend *Interpretation of Meaning Across Discourses* as a thought-provoking and inspiring collection of studies, a book which – in the words of Jančaříková, the editor – “reflects the diversity of the current research into the intriguing area [of the study of meaning]” (p. 254) and which has the potential to cater for the needs of most linguist readers.

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