

***Ut interpretes* : the linguistic influence of interpreters on MEPs**

Abstract

The topic of this paper is the recently proposed hypothesis that Members of the European Parliament (MEP) and interpreters influence each other linguistically because they share the same working environment and pertain to the same discourse community (Defrancq 2018). To investigate the potential linguistic influence between interpreters and MEP's, we take a theoretical perspective on the one hand and an empirical perspective on the other. The theoretical perspective applies Swales' (1990) criteria in an attempt to investigate whether EP interpreters and MEPs can be seen as forming one single discourse community. The analysis will adopt Defrancq's (2018) view that it is in fact more likely that interpreters influence MEPs' linguistic behavior than it is the other way around. The empirical perspective will endeavor to corroborate this analysis by a corpus-based study. Using a 250,000 word corpus of interpreted EP plenary sessions, compiled at Ghent University (Bernardini et al. 2018), the investigation focusses on the distribution of various formulaic sequences, i.e. n-grams, excluding all n-grams containing context-bound terminology (*the European Commission*) and speech acts (*Thank you mister president*). The data are analyzed by means of Correspondence Analysis and Linear (Mixed) Models (Plevoets & Defrancq 2018). Data for two EP booths (Dutch and English) is compared with data produced by MEPs in the European Parliament and with data produced by members of the respective national parliaments (BE, NL and UK), showing the language varieties produced by members of national parliaments and EP booths are farthest apart, while MEPs' language varieties place themselves between the two ends of the spectrum. This seems to confirm the idea that MEPs adopt formulaic sequences uttered by interpreters in the booths they listen to. In addition, for the Dutch-speaking MEPs at least, their stay in the European Parliament seems to blur to some extent differences between regional variants as Dutch and Belgian MEPs draw closer to one another in terms of formulaic expressions than the members of their respective national parliaments.

(word count: 324)

Keywords: simultaneous interpreting, discourse community, European Parliament, linguistic convergence

References

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