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Tomorrow? *Jayaji!* (자야지)

Translation as Translanguaging in Interviews with the Director of *Parasite*

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Translanguaging refers to the dynamic meaning-making process whereby multilingual language users make full use of their communicative repertoires by crossing the boundaries between named languages and other semiotic and modal resources (García and Li 2014). Director Bong Joon-ho is well-known for utilising such border-crossing practices in his films, specifically, for his strategic and creative use of multiple languages and translation. He also extends this practice to his live interviews where an interpreter is usually present. This article focuses on understanding Director Bong Joon-ho's translanguaging practices in interviews. It first examines how he communicates through translanguaging and for what purposes, and secondly how he and his interpreter collaboratively and strategically make use of translation as translanguaging. Through the study, we wish to make the case for a) approaching translation as collaborative translanguaging practices and an act of democratisation, and b) understanding translanguaging practices in connection with speakers' positioning and experience in navigating values and ways of speaking which may be culturally and linguistically specific. These translanguaging practices provide powerful arguments against any assertion that named languages exist as separate and discrete systems, challenge the default position of English as the lingua franca in global communication, and offer a corrective to the prestige and power associated with English.

Keywords: translanguaging, translation, Korean film, bilingualism, *Parasite*, interview

1. Introduction

In 2020 Bong Joon-ho's film *Parasite* made Oscar history by becoming the first foreign language winner of the prestigious Best Picture Award. The moment signified South Korean (Korean) cinema's shift from a subcultural trend to a global phenomenon - the "Korean Wave" had entered the global mainstream. Among the various strands of Korean pop culture exports (e.g., film, drama, music, etc.), film has been a key player since the Korean Wave's inception. However, it has been through Bong's films that Korean cinema finally has cemented itself in Hollywood, shedding its marginality for good.

Bong's films are characterised by their use of multiple languages. His film *Snowpiercer* (2013) was the first to draw cinephiles' attention for its creative use of different languages and translation and subversive sense of humour. Its comprehensibility is highly dependent upon having a cross-cultural understanding of multiple languages and cultures. Among the mostly American cast, Bong opted for the character Namgoong Minsoo (played by Song Kang-ho) to only speak Korean throughout the film. The cultural clashes between Minsoo and the other American characters, mediated through different languages, not only add to the overall sense of foreignness but also bring an extra layer of humour to viewers who speak both English and Korean (Fyeahsnowpiercer 2015). For instance, in one scene, the American protagonist Curtis keeps calling Minsoo 'Nam' and Minsoo responds "*namgung' kkajiga seongigo minsu ga ireumida i musikhan saekkiya*" (남궁'까지가 성이고 '민수' 가 이름이다 이 무식한 새끼야); 'Namgung' is my surname and 'Minsu' is my first name, you ignorant bastard'. The translation machine that the characters use cannot make sense of Minsoo's rare two-syllable Korean family name and so cannot translate what he is saying, making this insult entirely invisible for both the English-speaking characters on-screen and viewers at home.

Bong made use of a similar strategy in *Okja* (2017). Humour in *Okja* was again constructed so that only viewers who speak both English and Korean can understand (Jung 2017; Pulliam-Moore 2017), and created another dimension of foreignness by writing the Korean American character 'K' into the script, who is played by Steven Yeun. K's use of language and gesture is not entirely Korean nor American and therefore unrelatable to both. In these ways, Bong not only foregrounds and crosses linguistic and cultural borders at the same time but also reassembles them, purposely creating extra layers of meaning and effects that go beyond those made broadly accessible by the translated subtitle.

Bong's artistic endeavours with languages are consistent with the way he speaks in interviews. Because of Bong's global success, he finds himself frequently interviewed by global media outlets. His tactics for communicating with the global audience go entirely against the common practices of resorting to English as the default lingua franca. BBC 5 Radio's Simon Mayo of Kermode and Mayo's film review commented on this after interviewing Bong, stating, "I've never done an interview like that—where he would start off in English then into Korean and then Sharon would translate so that was quite an adventure." (Kermode and Mayo 2020). However, Mayo's comments only partially capture how Bong talks. In fact, Bong translanguages. Like his films, in interviews Bong is also an architect of translanguaging spaces; a space for translanguaging or created through translanguaging (Li 2011), for global communication. He blends different elements of languages while showing sensitivity to the cultural way of speaking; shifting seamlessly and purposefully between the two linguistic repertoires, which, when examined closely, appears to associate with Bong's goals for communication according to who is present and the audience he is communicating to. He does not simply rely upon his interpreter Sharon Choi to translate everything into English. Instead, they perform translation as a collaborative translanguaging practice.

The movement between and across languages is fundamental to the flows of global media (Maree 2019). It is a timely issue, increasingly reflected in discussions surrounding divides between East Asian and English language films and what is 'foreign' (Kiaer and Kim 2021), as seen in the recent controversy over the categorisation of East Asian films in America. The 2021 Golden Globes winner *Minari* (2020) is just one example of a Korean American film that was categorised as a "foreign language film" by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, despite it being argued by many in Hollywood as encapsulating what it is to be an American. At the centre of the debate is a monolingual mindset, or a kind of lingualism (e.g., Ndhlovu 2015; Makoni and Pennycook 2012), which assumes monolingualism as the norm for individuals and societies and that boundaries between named

languages are stable, clear-cut and predictable; a notion that increasingly “superdiverse and translanguaging societies” are moving away from, towards a “more fluid, dynamic and multiple interchange of repertoires and resources that people access in multi-varied and multi-functional ways” (Runcieman 2021). Bong’s communicative practices in his engagement with the global media and his films champion translanguaging practices and demonstrate its transgressing potential in departing from the monolingual mindset or lingualism. This article aims to analyse examples of Bong’s translanguaging practices and their effects. But before that, we shall provide a brief review on translanguaging and translation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Translanguaging and translanguaging space

Translanguaging refers to the dynamic meaning-making process whereby multilingual speakers go beyond conventional divides between named languages and between modalities to act, to know and to be (García and Li 2014). Originated from two rather different but complementary fields of enquiry, bilingual education and distributed cognition and language, the conceptualisation and application of translanguaging provide a new lens through which to understand human social interaction and the role of languages in communication.

Firstly, it foregrounds the multilingual language user’s capacity to create an apparently seamless flow between languages and language varieties to achieve effective and meaningful communication, echoing the arguments from other alternative terms such as flexible multilingualism (Blackledge and Creese 2010), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010), and translanguaging practices (Canagarajah 2013). Second, it emphasises human social interaction as the interaction of multiple linguistic and semiotic systems including objects, senses, materials, embodied repertoires, and space. The special issue edited by Zhu et al. (2017) on the theme of multilingual, multisensory and multimodal repertoires in corner shops, streets and markets demonstrates the semiotic complexity of interactions and crucially that the linguistic repertoire is only one of a range of multisensory and multimodal semiotic possibilities that make and communicate meaning. Thirdly, studies have probed how such multiple semiotic possibilities work together. Pennycook and Otsuji (2017) propose the term *semiotic assemblage* to describe the way that the ‘ad hoc’ and momentary grouping arrangements of many kinds of materials and semiotic activities intersect at a given place and time. Zhu et al. (2017) opt for the notion of *orchestration* to draw out the collaborative and coordinated effort in communication, in the same way as an orchestra: different semiotic systems contribute to the overall meaning-making and players in social interactions listen out and coordinate each other’s employment of semiotic systems.

Translanguaging is not just about semiotic possibilities working together. The assemblage or orchestration takes place in a translanguaging space where speakers’ subjectivities, histories, attitudes, values, and experiences come into contact together with different semiotic repertoires (Li 2011). One of the added values of the term, *translanguaging space*, is that it situates the act of translanguaging in connection with values, identities, and relationships. Zhu and Li (in press), in their attempt to understand the role and impact of translanguaging in shaping human relationships and constructing identities, investigated translanguaging practices from the perspective of performance as theorised in anthropological and sociological studies which argue that every facet of social reality is a performance and social interaction is based on (in) tacit agreement among all the participants. The notion of performance is particularly useful to our analysis in the paper, not least because of the apparent transposition between Bong’s characters and himself in front of the camera in the interviews.

It also offers a way to see how players in the translanguaging space work together, and in the case of this paper, how Bong and his interpreter collaborate and perform as a team.

One of the under-explored aspects of research on translanguaging, however, is how multilinguals perform translanguaging to construct and articulate one's cultural values and negotiate cultural expectations on ways of speaking the languages and utilising the semiotic repertoires concerned. In this paper, we will investigate how Bong does translanguaging and for what purposes. The Korean language, one of the languages used by Bong and also his stronger language, is sensitive to the relationship between speaker and hearer. It marks social relationships according to factors such as, hierarchy, power, intimacy, and distance, through a variety of linguistic and semiotic means such as speech styles, address terms, and deferential body language. We will pay attention to how he negotiates cultural values and related culturally-specific ways of speaking in and through translanguaging.

2.2. Translation as translanguaging

Translation is conventionally attributed as interlingual translation (i.e., interpretation of verbal signs by means of other languages) as opposed to the other two types of translation, intralingual and intersemiotic translation, as envisaged by Jakobson (1959/2012). Baynham and Lee (2019) critiqued the tension between translanguaging and translation with regard to the issue of language borders. For them, translation in its conventional sense recognises borders and aims to bridge them by offering a reiteration, whereas translanguaging does not see languages as separate entities and instead strategically destabilises language borders to make new meanings. Though, even in translation, notions of collaboration and recently translaboration seem to conceptualise translation in-part as translanguaging without using the term. Alfer (2021), for example, refers to how translations “perpetually shape” the way a source text “*is*” in the world, which can largely be argued as due to the making of new meanings within the text.

Despite these technical tensions, Zhu and Li (2021) propose to approach translation as translanguaging. They argue that ‘acts of distinction’ in marking linguistic boundaries is as significant as acts of blending and mixing named languages and they should be considered together in the overall context of speakers’ intentions, attitudes, and beliefs. For them, translation is an important means of meaning- and sense-making that the participants are engaged in. The process of translation always involves gauging differences in codes and meaning *in situ*. And as such, they are part of the translanguaging process that engages with multilingual and multicultural recourses to act, to know and to be. It would be important, therefore, for us to understand not only how individuals make use of the semiotic resources available to them in creating meaning but also when and why speakers evoke the boundaries between languages. We will extend the discussion along these lines in this paper. What we are primarily interested in is how Bong make uses of translation as translanguaging and equally importantly how he and his interpreter work together to achieve this.

3. Sample Description

To examine Bong’s translanguaging practices across a variety of contexts, we include in our analysis eight of Bong’s interviews during and following the 2020 Oscars together with Bong’s Oscar award speech. The interviews cover both radio and television media with British,

American, and Canadian broadcasters, with and without Bong's interpreter or cast. All quotes from the interviews are reported verbatim. The sources are provided in Appendix 1.

4. Research methodology

The interviews and the speech were transcribed (transcription conventions and abbreviations can be found in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively) and examples of translanguaging were first identified by the first two co-authors who speak Korean and English and have extensive research experience in the field of Korean media, *Konglish* (a Korean-style English featuring terms such as *haendeupon* (핸드폰) 'hand phone', which is a replacement for the English term 'mobile phone'; see Kiaer and Ahn, forthcoming), and translingual words incorporating English and Korean elements. These examples were then discussed with the other two co-authors who have extensive research experience in fields of translanguaging and intercultural communication.

The examples include the excerpts in which elements from different languages are used either in the same turn or across several turns or those in which semiotic resources other than linguistic ones contribute to the meaning and sense-marking. Attention is paid to the cases when Bong alternates between and crosses languages and modality *in situ* and when he shows sensitivity to the cultural ways of speaking in Korean, for example, politeness features in Korean. We will focus on how Bong communicates through translanguaging practices and for what purposes in Section 5, and how he and his interpreter collaboratively and strategically make use of translation as a translanguaging practice in Section 6.

5. Analysis and Results

5.1. Translanguaging for different purposes and effects

As discussed in the Introduction, Bong's communication style is characterised by translanguaging practices. He strategically blends different (elements of) languages to achieve various interactional goals. In this section, we provide a close analysis of five examples, focusing on how Bong communicates through translanguaging and for what purposes.

5.1.1. Translanguaging as a means of creating layers of meaning

As mentioned before, Bong tends to start off with English and then switches into Korean, which is often then translated into English by Sharon. Such translanguaging practices often create extra layers of meaning and address interactional goals such as humour, rapport-building or identity-marking. The following example (Excerpt 1) is from Bong's interview on the red carpet immediately after his Oscar wins on US television. In the interview, Bong is asked what he is going to do the next day. Bong could have easily responded by saying "sleep". But he starts with the English word *tomorrow* and then switches to the Korean word *jayaji* (자야지, 'I am going to sleep'). *Jayaji* works differently from the English word for *sleep*. Firstly, it has a layer of interpersonal meaning, which the English word *sleep* does not have. In Korean, words with a *-ji* ending are used when speaking to one's equal or junior, but never to a senior. *-ji* sounds cute and affectionate and brings a personal feel to Bong's response. Secondly, *-ji* also carries a rhetoric meaning. Therefore, rather than simply meaning "I am going to sleep", the expression contains nuance. It is equivalent to saying "Are you joking? I'm going to sleep!". The intimacy and teasing expressed by Bong's use of *jayaji* are humorous for the Korean-speaking audience, and so its use subsequently creates an additional layer of meaning only for them within an otherwise English environment. This demonstrates that Bong does not simply

choose to use English or Korean words on a whim but does so intentionally for particular communicative purposes. In this case, his word choice serves to create humour for Korean speakers even though he is speaking to an English-speaking interviewer.

Excerpt 1: Jayaji!

Context: Oscars red carpet

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi; IN: Interviewer

Source: vii.

IN: What are you going to do tomorrow to relax?

BJH: Tomorrow? *Jayaji!* (자야지)

SC: Sleep.

5.1.2. Translanguaging as a means of communicating emotions

On some occasions, Bong uses translanguaging to communicate emotions, to tell a story and to perform. In Excerpt 2, selected from Bong’s Interview with Kermode and Mayo on UK BBC 5 radio, halfway through a turn Bong switches from English to Korean. This occurs precisely when he begins to recount a personal anecdote. However, despite a clear preference for Korean at this point in the conversation, Bong does not separate these two languages entirely. Instead, Bong embeds English nouns in otherwise predominantly Korean utterances. What is particularly interesting here is that, within these utterances, there is a ‘back translation’. When telling the story, Bong offers a translated version of British actor John Hurt’s words to him while on the set of his film *Snowpiercer* (2013), from English into Korean, and then this is translated back into English by Sharon in the next turn. The conversation comes through as a polished performance in which Bong weaves the two linguistic repertoires on his own terms.

Excerpt 2: Personal anecdote

Context: BBC 5 Interview with Kermode and Mayo on UK radio

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi

Source: i

BJH: On set between the shootings, we had great conversations—we talked a lot. He was a cinephile, you know, he (John Hurt) did many legendary works—Heaven’s Gate and Elephant Man and Alien—he was the first human to have an alien burst from his chest. And we always *neomu jaemiinneun yaegireul nanuji geureongeo gwanhaeseo chwaryeong hal ttae nau storyboardna chwaryeong bangsigeul bogo bong, neoneun doege Hitchcockianiya! Mwo geureon yaegireul haejusyeotdeon jeok indae geu comment jeohante doege gippeun yeonggwangseureoun geoyo. maneun gieokdeul isseoyo...*

(너무 재미있는 얘기를 나누지 그런거에 관해서 촬영 할 때 나의 스토리보드(storyboard)나 촬영 방식을 보고 봉(Bong), 너는 되게 히치콕(Hitchcockian) 이인이야! 뭐 그런 얘기를 해주셨던 적 인대 그 코멘트(Comment) 저한테 되게 기쁜 영광스러운 거요. 많은 기억들 있었어요...)

SC: So, we had many phone conversations and during shooting he would look at my process and my storyboards and he would tell me “Bong you are Hitchcockian” and for me that comment was such a joy and honour to hear.

5.1.3. Translanguaging as a means of engaging with both Korean and international audiences

Bong is very aware of the need to keep English-speaking audiences engaged when he operates in Korean. For this, Bong makes use of additional semiotic resources to complement his Korean utterances. For example, in his Oscar's acceptance speech, Bong uses a cutting gesture when referring to "Texas *jeongitobeuro* (Texas chainsaw)", while continuing to speak in Korean. His combination of the phrase 'Texas *jeongitobeuro*' with the mime of cutting his trophy (Figure 1) contains intertextuality, strategically tailored for his English-speaking film industry audience. He is making a reference to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), a horror film-turned franchise assumedly well known to the audience and impactful enough for achieving what he wants to communicate – cutting the trophy into pieces. By communicating this way – maintaining Korean while clueing the English-speaking audience in through references to popular culture – Bong is able to properly convey his gratitude to his Korean colleagues who are present, and to directly communicate with Koreans for whom *Parasite*'s global success marked an important moment in their cinema's history, while still engaging with the English-speaking audience who are honouring him at that moment.



Figure 1. Bong mimes a chainsaw with his hand gesture when saying "Texas *jeongitobeuro*" (Texas chainsaw).

Bong also uses both the English and Korean pronunciation for English words, and alternates between these equivalents to ensure maximum clarity and keep both international and Korean audiences engaged. The following extract (Excerpt 3) offers such an example. Bong is talking about his surprise at seeing a sauna in a friend's house. He pronounces the word sauna firstly in Korean English sa-u-na (사우나) and then a few words later, mentions 'private sauna' using the English pronunciation. The purpose behind the use of these variations of the same word and their multiplicity is consistent with the practice of the cutting hand gesture

made simultaneously with the English word “Texas” in his Oscars speech – to maximise clarity and ensure some level of understanding among both Korean and English-speaking audiences.

Excerpt 3: Pronunciations of sauna

Context: Academy conversations (US).

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi; IN: Interviewer.

Source: v.

BJH: *Cheoeum geu jibe gasseulttae geu yeonghwaeseo cheoreom geu jeoreul icheungeuro naeryeogaseo jagi jibe saunareul boyeojwosseoyo. Jibane ‘private sauna’ ga itdeorago doege nollatdeon gieoginneunde yeonghwa nawaitjyo*

(처음 그 집에 갔을때 그 영화에서 처럼 그 저를 이층으로 내려가서 자기 집에 사우나를 보여줬어요. 집안에 ‘private sauna’가 있더라고 되게 놀랐던 기억있는데 영화에 나와있죠.)

SC: So, when I first went to their home, the boy took me to the second floor and showed me their private sauna and I vividly remember being very surprised for one in a private home.

5.1.4. Translanguaging as a means of marking social relations cross- and inter-culturally

The Korean language has a complex system of honorifics to mark social relations between the speaker and the addressee. These honorifics are very sensitive to factors such as role, status, degree of intimacy and familiarity, age, gender and situational contexts. When Bong refers to someone by their name in English, he sometimes follows the convention of Korean honorifics and adds Korean honorifics to their names. Such a translanguaging practice offers him a means of being interculturally sensitive and indexes his Koreanness among his multiple identities. Bong’s Oscar’s acceptance speech (Excerpt 4) is a prime example, in which he blends Korean honorifics with English ways of address according to the social dynamics and intensity of his affection.

Excerpt 4: Honorifics

Context: Best Director Oscar’s award speech.

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi.

Source: viii

BJH: *Eoryeosseul ttae jega hangsang gaseume saegyeotdeon mariyeonneunde yeonghwa gongbuhalttae tegajang gaein jeogin geosi gagang changuijeogin geosida.te geu mareul hasyeotdeon buni nuguyeonnamyeoneun jeo chaegeseo ilgeotjiman geumareun, that quote was from our great Martin Scorsese. Ildan jega hakgyoeseo Martin yeonghwareul bomyeonseongongbuhaetdeon geureon saraminde gachi hubo ollatdeon geonmando neomu yeonggwanginde sangeul badeul jul mollasseotgoyo. Geu jeohi yeonghwareul ajik miguk gwangaekdeul ina saramdeuri moreul ttae hangsang je yeonghwareul liste pohamhaetdeon Quentin hyeongnim gyesinde jeongmal saranghamnida. Quentin, I love you!*

(어렸을 때 제가 항상 가슴에 새겼던 말이었는데 영화 공부할때 “가장 개인 적인 것이 가장 창의적인 것이다.” 그 말을 하셨던 분이 누구였나면은 저 책에서 읽었지만 그말은 that quote was from our great Martin Scorsese. 일단 제가 학교에서 Martin 영화를 보면서 공부했던 그런 사람인데 같이 후보 올랐던 것만도 너무 영광인데 상을 받을 줄 몰랐었고요. 그 저희 영화를 아직 미국 관객들 이나 사람들이 모를 때 항상 제 영화를 list 에 포함했던 Quentin 형님이 제신데 정말 사랑합니다.)

SC: When I was young and starting in cinema there was a saying that I carved deep into my heart which is, ‘The most personal is the most creative’. That quote was from our great Martin Scorsese... when people were not familiar with my film, Quentin always put my film in the list. He is here. Thank you so much.

BJH: Quentin, I love you! *geurigo gachi huboe oreun Todd na Sam ina da jega neomuna jongyeonghaneun meotjin gamdokdeurinde i trophy reul jeongmal Oscar cheugeseo heorakandamyeon Texas jeongitobeuro ireoke 5 gaero jallaseo nanugosipeun maeumimnida.* Thank you! I will drink until next morning! Thank you!

그리고 같이 후보에 오른 Todd 나 Sam 이나 다 제가 너무나 존경하는 멋진 감독들인데 이 trophy 를 정말 Oscar 측에서 허락한다면 Texas 전기톱으로 이렇게 5 개로 잘라서 나누고싶은 마음입니다.

SC: Todd and Sam are great directors I admire. If the academy allows, I want to get a Texas Chainsaw to cut the trophy into five and share it with you.

Bong addresses Martin Scorsese as “our great Martin Scorsese”, and it is clear that he wishes to express respect and affection towards him. Amid his speech, he switches from Korean to English and makes a specific reference to Scorsese. By choosing the first-person plural pronoun, ‘our’, he creates different layers of meaning while being interculturally sensitive. In Korean, how to refer to oneself or one’s addressee depends upon one’s specific relationship with the individual, as well as the situation of the speech or writing. The Korean word for ‘our’ is *uri*, which is often used instead of ‘my’ by Koreans when speaking possessively in front of others. It conveys humility and shows respect, as it speaks from a collective perspective. For instance, ‘my mum’ in English is usually translated as *uri eomma* ‘our mum’ in Korean rather than *nae eomma* (‘my mother’) or *jeohi eomma* (‘my mother’, polite). Therefore, Bong’s use of “our” can be understood by English-speakers, who consider ‘our’ to represent an inclusivity, as akin to saying ‘the world’s’, and yet at the same time this expresses Bong’s humility in Korean; both English and Korean speaking audiences understand, grasp a similar feeling, and yet the actual effects of the expression are different for each group respectively unbeknownst to each other.

Whereas, when Bong refers to Quentin Tarantino, he does so with intimacy, respect, and affection by calling him Quentin *hyungnim*. In doing so, he firstly shows intimacy in a manner comprehensible for Western members of the audience, by using Quentin’s first name alone, and for Koreans also by using the address term *hyungnim* (my dear older brother). *Hyungnim* is used between siblings or friends and so, as is the case with being ‘on a first name basis’ in the West, this address term also works as an expression of intimacy (Brown 2017). There is also potential for this expression of intimacy to be interpreted further as boastful, since Bong is telling the world, in both Western and Korean forms of communication, that he and Quentin are good friends. At the same time, because *hyung* is used to call an ‘older’ brother or male friend and *-nim* is an honorific suffix used to address one of higher rank or someone revered and admired, Bong also expresses respect for Quentin and treats him as a senior. This respect, expressed to both Quentin Tarantino and also Martin Scorsese, is then magnified in contrast to Bong’s use of first names alone, without attaching anything further, when he refers to directors Todd and Sam – in this case he appears to treat the directors as his equals.

When speaking Korean to English speakers, the power dynamics are thus entirely in Bong’s hands. Similar to how Bong’s feelings of intimacy, respect, and equality are reflected

in his choice of address terms, when he wants to behave as though he knows someone well, he uses an intimate speech (*panmal*) style whereas when he wants to create distance or to act formally, he uses a polite speech style (*jeondaenmal*). When Bong uses *panmal*, in Korean linguistic convention, he is assuming the most senior, powerful position in the setting without the consent or awareness of non-Korean audience members and interviewers. In this regard, non-Korean speakers are not entirely equal players in their interactions with Bong.

5.1.5. Translanguaging practices as a means of engaging with specific addressees

In the IMDb Interview (Canada), Bong is interviewed along with *Parasite* cast members Song Kang-ho and Choi Woo-sik (Figure 2). In the conversation, Bong speaks in English from the start without the aid of an interpreter, proving that he does not actually need a translator. Song Kang-ho remains in Korean throughout, except for a few words in English. Bong's use of Korean seems to be purposeful, beyond merely providing a means of answering with ease, since he provides a highly insightful and philosophical answer to a question posed to him about *Parasite*. This is recognisable in his use of philosophical words of Sino Korean origin, the use of which create a philosophical space. An English subtitle is provided by the program when the interviewees speak in Korean.



Figure 2. IMDb Interview (Canada) with Bong and some of the cast from *Parasite*, Song Kang-ho and Choi Woo-sik.

At times, Bong fluidly switches between Korean and English to get his point across on the subject of his filmmaking. On another occasion, he does so in order to express the respect that he has for his colleagues. For instance, at one point the interviewer asks, “Song what was your reaction when you first read the script? What was your reaction to all of the plot twists?”. After Song gives his response in Korean, the interviewer turns to Bong, “does that sound right to you?”. Bong’s response involves fluid switches between Korean and English, which we show in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5: Fluid switching when expressing respect or anxiety

Context: IMDb Interview (Canada) with Bong, Song Kang-ho and Choi Woo-sik from *Parasite*.
BJH: Bong Joon-ho; IN: Interviewer; ES: English subtitle translation provided with Korean
Source: iii.

BJH: Yeah, I was very nervous whenever I show him my script. He is a great actor so, *naega sseun seukeuripteuga maeume deureoya doeltendetraneun burangameun jom isseoyo* (내가 쓴 스크립트가 마음에 들어야 될 텐데'라는 불안감은 좀 있어요) . If he rejects the script, I will quit everything. So, there is no alternative. Only he can do this role.

ES: I was nervous about whether or not he would like the script I wrote.

IN: Has that ever happened? Where you show him something and he didn't like it, so it didn't get made?

BJH: So far, *dahaenghi jigeumkkajineun da joahaesseoyo. geuraeseo jigeum yeogi torontoe wa inneun geojyo* (다행히 지금까지는 다 좋아했어요. 그래서 지금 여기 토론토에 와 있는 거죠.)

ES: Thankfully he liked all of my scripts so far. That's why we are here in Toronto right now.

Switching into Korean potentially serves the purpose of expressing Bong's respect for Song. This is indicated by Bong's use of a polite speech style, and that the switches take place on both of Bong's turns when speaking about anxiety related to Song liking or agreeing to take part in Bong's films. Also, given that Song appears more comfortable in Korean during this interview, using Korean to speak when complimenting him could be taken as a considerate gesture.

The examples in this section focus on understanding Bong's translanguaging practices and the purposes behind them. The next section will turn its attention to translation as translanguaging.

5.2. Translation as translanguaging

Bong often speaks with the aid of Sharon Choi, his interpreter. This may give the impression that Bong's English is inadequate. Simon Mayo once commented on this when describing his interview with Bong and Sharon:

“What you should know is that a lot of this interview is—I speak in English and Director Bong speaks sometimes in *English, when he feels confident enough*, but a lot of the time he speaks in Korean and his translator, Sharon Choi, who goes everywhere with him, speaks as well. So, in this conversation there's me, there's director Bong, and then there's *Sharon Choi who explains all the bits that Director Bong is not so assured about.*” (Kermode and Mayo, 2020)

Bong's choices, as to what to translate and when, demonstrate his skill as a communicator and as an architect of the translanguaging space where he and Sharon work collaboratively. In fact, their collaboration and co-production of translation as translanguaging can be seen as an impromptu performance. The examples that will follow demonstrate how Bong and Sharon work together effectively to practise translation as translanguaging.

5.2.1. Co-construction of humour

Bong often shares personal, humorous stories during his interviews, for which he often speaks in Korean. Excerpt 6 features an excerpt from Bong's interview on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. During the excerpt, Bong tells the story of the 8-minute standing ovation he and

the cast of *Parasite* received at the Oscars and how due to this, although they were very hungry, they were unable to go and eat dinner. Bong starts off his anecdote with background (non-humorous) information, which he provides in English. He then switches to Korean when he begins to tell the humorous part of the anecdote. There is a clear distinction between what English and Korean are used for here. Especially, since Bong uses polite forms when speaking, proving that he is not speaking Korean to create an informal or playful space as he appeared to be in Excerpt 1. It is also likely that the purpose of using Korean here is not to create a personal space, as we demonstrated in Excerpt 2, since the content of his anecdote is not of an intimate or emotional moment. While it is possible that speaking Korean allows him to communicate Korean interpersonal meanings, and that he wishes to show respect to the interviewer, however it is important to note that he makes this shift into Korean specifically at the humorous point in the anecdote. Further, shifting into Korean when telling jokes is a repeated practice of Bong's (see Excerpt 7). It is therefore likely that Korean provides Bong with a means of achieving accuracy in his telling of jokes, and that this is important to him when he communicates with English speakers.

Excerpt 6: Humorous anecdote.

Context: The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi; IN: Interviewer (Jimmy Fallon)

Source: i.

BJH: Actually, the screening was actually very late night, it was almost midnight and the—
Girip baksuga doege gireojineunde jeorang baeudeuri doege baega gopasseoyo. Jeonyeogeul mot meogeo gajigo...

(기립 박수가 되게 길어지는데 저랑 배우들이 되게 배가 고팠어요. 저녁을 못 먹어 가지고...)

SC: So, the standing ovation lasted very long, but the actors and I were very hungry because we couldn't eat dinner.

BJH: So actually, me and the actors *neomu baegopa rago jamage kkaji nawasseoyo* "I'm so hungry (*rago*)..."

([...] 너무 배고파라고 자막에까지 나왔어요 [...] 라고...)

SC: We all were saying to each other, "we're so hungry!" and they ended up subtitled it in the video that was later.

IN: No! No!

BJH: But applause never stopped! Finally, I said "let's go home!"

In another interview with the Academy (US) Bong told another anecdote about his time working as a tutor when he was younger, when asked whether the experience was the inspiration behind *Parasite*. Again, when Bong gets to the humorous part of the anecdote – the punchline – he switches into Korean (Excerpt 7). He also uses polite forms again when speaking Korean. Both practices appear to characterise Bong's joke-telling.

Excerpt 7: Humorous anecdote.

Context: Academy conversations (US)

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi; IN: Interviewer

Source v.

IN: Director Bong, I heard a story that you were a tutor when you were younger, you taught a kid in a very nice house. Is that part of where this film comes from?

BJH: Yeah, partially true. Um, he was a middle school boy, and he was a good boy and *mwo gongbu bodaneun duri daehwareul mani haetjyo. geuraeseo dudalman jjilliginhaetjiman...*
(뭐 공부 보다는 둘이 대화를 많이 했죠. 그래서 두 달만에 잘리긴 했지만...)

SC: Instead of teaching, we just talked a lot, and I was fired only after 2 months.

5.2.2. Translation for clarity

In his BBC Radio 5 interview with Simon Mayo, Bong turns to Sharon for clarification at one point —not because he didn't understand the interviewer's English, but because the question was vague (Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8: Scholar stone

Context: BBC Radio 5 interview.

BJH: Bong Joon-ho; SC: Sharon Choi; IN: Interviewer (Simon Mayo).

Source: i.

IN: Can you tell us about the gift and its significance in the film?

BJH: **Looks at Sharon.** *Ku* (ㄱ) 'scholar stone' *Malhan geoji?*
(Did they mean the scholar stone, right [intimacy style]? (말한 거지?))

SC: *Ne* (네). (Yes [polite style])

In the conversation, Mayo asks a question about the 'gift'. To respond to this question, Bong turns to Sharon and initiates a clarification question, checking whether the gift refers to the scholar stone. However, he does not use the Korean term *Suseok* (수석). Instead, he uses the English term *scholar stone*. By embedding the English equivalent in his question of clarification, Bong in effect signals to Mayo that he believes his question to potentially be related to the scholar stone. The use of this English word instantly bridges the gap in understanding with the interviewer and the audience, despite his clarification being addressed to Sharon. What this demonstrates is both the collaborative and performative nature of Bong's interactions with Sharon.

Meanwhile, the collaboration is also marked by a particular kind of interpersonal dynamic, as conveyed by Korean discourse markers of formality and politeness. Bong uses a *-ji* ending in the phrase *Malhan geoji* (말한 거지) when he turns to Sharon. As explained previously in Excerpt 1, *-ji* serves to create an informal and personal space. It also shows that Bong positions himself as the senior in the interaction. The hierarchy is confirmed by Sharon's answer *ne* (네), a marker showing deference towards the addressee. This hierarchical dynamic may be invisible for English-speaking audiences, but it is carefully orchestrated between Bong and Sharon, which we are going to demonstrate further in the following example.

5.2.3. Playing with power dynamics

Bong plays with power dynamics through his choice of language and non-verbal gestures. For example, he directs his eye gaze toward the interviewer most of the time in the interview, even when he speaks in Korean (Figure 3). Bong's periods of eye gaze while speaking in Korean

last for 11 seconds, 16 seconds, and 12 respectively, with each of these periods of direct eye gaze followed by Bong looking away either at the events happening on the red carpet or briefly towards Sharon. This is particularly interesting when considered from a Korean socio-pragmatic perspective, since direct eye contact is a behaviour regarded only acceptable from senior to junior in the Korean culture. There are two possible interpretations. One is that he simply follows the convention in English where direct eye contact is encouraged irrespective of the status of the speaker and addressee. The other possibility is that he may be asserting his authority.



Figure 3. Bong making direct eye gaze with the interviewer, without looking at his interpreter Sharon Choi at all during the interaction.

5.2.4. Embodying the hierarchical interpersonal dynamics behind collaboration

Whatever motives Bong may have with the way he uses his body language when speaking with the media, it often serves to negotiate hierarchical interpersonal dynamics between Bong and the interviewer. Even Bong's method of switching from English to Korean serves the purpose of modulating and controlling power, intimacy, and distance in each given dynamic (examples presented already prior). When he utilises Korean interpersonal dynamics, while speaking to English-speakers, what he achieves is freedom and control over his position in the dynamic. He can't be censored or put into a lower rank, and he might well be in a dynamic with Koreans who understand what he is doing. These interpersonal expressions remain untranslated even by Sharon Choi, because usually there is no need to express these meanings when speaking English.

Bong and Sharon also carefully orchestrate the hierarchical interpersonal dynamics between themselves – a dynamic, again, which is primarily visible for Korean viewers. Sharon Choi constantly and clearly marks her position as an interpreter and facilitator of the conversation, someone peripheral, through embodiment. For instance, in an interview on the red carpet at the Oscars with Ben Mulroney, when it is time for Sharon Choi to interpret, she shows her deference to Bong through the way she interacts with both him and the interviewer. She maintains compactly shaped posture, with her hands clasped in her lap, nodding throughout, only looking at Bong while he is speaking, and not speaking to Bong while translating for him (Figure 4). Sharon's behaviours are consistent, and do not change even when she is invited to

answer a question directed to her (Figures 5-6). These semiotic expressions are Korean embodied expressions of deference, politeness, and subordination (Kiaer and Kim 2021), and are culturally conditioned so that those who are familiar with Korean culture would recognise them as such. By following the culture-specific conventions on embodied deference and subordination, Sharon plays no small part in the translanguaging space that Bong and she co-construct.



Figure 4. Sharon Choi clasps her hands in her lap while listening to Bong. Also, note her compact posture.



Figure 5. Sharon Choi's hands remain clasped in her lap even when answering a question directly posed to her and not to Bong.



Figure 6. Sharon Choi lowers her eye gaze, hands still clasped in her lap, and with her posture remaining compact when complimented by the interviewer to Bong.

6. Discussion

Known for his strategic and creative use of multiple languages and translation in his films, Bong is a master of translanguaging practices and an architect of translanguaging space in his media interviews, as our analysis show in this paper. He blends different (elements of) linguistic and semiotic repertoires seamlessly, strategically switching between English and Korean to achieve interactional effects beyond words, whether this be creating layers of meaning, engaging with multiple communities of audiences and specific addressees simultaneously, or marking social relations cross-culturally. What is equally remarkable is the way that he and his interpreter collaboratively and strategically work together to produce translation as translanguaging.

These translanguaging practices from the influential director under the spotlight of the global media provide powerful arguments against any assertion that named languages exist as separate and discrete systems. They challenge the default position of English as the lingua franca in global communication, and precisely what “foreign” and “global” really are in today’s superdiverse societies. By creating space for the Korean language and its associated cultural ways of speaking on the Oscars red carpet and by speaking words or phrases inaccessible to non-Korean speaker, Bong transgresses the *status quo* of foreign vs. global languages and demystifies Koreanness on a global stage. What we have learned from his strategic use of translation as translanguaging is that translation itself is a political act of democratisation. It gives equal status, time and space to the languages concerned and gives exposure to the lesser-known language. Thus, it provides a corrective to the prestige and power associated with English these days.

Bong also demonstrates the creative potential in translation. In fact, for him and his interpreter, translation is a performance. They use translation to prepare the audience for jokes and give clarification. Through marking language borders intentionally and bridging the gaps subsequently, translation becomes an important means of meaning and sense-marking; a technique Bong also employs in his films.

7. Conclusion

Translanguaging is not just about crossing linguistic borders. Our analysis shows that in crossing linguistic borders, Bong thrives at navigating differences in cultural values and ways of speaking between English and Korean and manages interpersonal relations cross- and inter-culturally. His switch to Korean mid-sentence, embellishing his English utterances with Korean words or suffixes and embodiment are closely related to his intention to mark social relationships in the ways specific to the Korean language and culture and make his communication accessible for his Korean colleagues or audiences – they are the addressees he is constantly mindful of even if they may not be immediately present in the interviews. His strategies of marking social relationships in the Korean way are echoed by his interpreter through her self-positioning and embodied behaviours as an auxiliary and subordinate partner in interviews. Their collaborative and coordinated performance are subsequently brought together in the translanguage space in which Bong is the director.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sources

- i. **BBC 5 Interview with Kermode and Mayo (UK - Radio)**
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000f0pc>
- ii. **Bong Joon Ho Talks Parasite and that Eight-Minute Standing Ovation Jimmy Fallon (US – TV)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TtC5JKip00>
- iii. **IMDb interview: Bong Joon-Ho Reveals Where He Got the Idea for ‘Parasite’ (Canada – YouTube)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaYIjZj2VHI>
- iv. **Academy Conversations: ‘Parasite’ (US – YouTube)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57kbSBLahU0>
- v. **Interview with Ben Mulroney on the red carpet at the Oscars (US – TV)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1rAKUEyhw0>
- vi. **Interview on the red carpet at the *Oscars*: Bong talks about his plans for after the awards ceremony (US – YouTube)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3sI59LMQQzM>
- vii. **Bong Joon Ho *Oscars* Acceptance Speech for Best Directing (US – TV)**
https://youtu.be/hCPg_Q_rhmk
- viii. **Bong and cast of Parasite are interviewed at the 26th Annual SAG Awards (US – TV)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBEgU-2Of1o>
- ix. **Interview with *Extra*’s Billy Bush on the red carpet at the Oscars (US – TV)**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjRZWoYeV98>

Appendix 2. Transcription conventions

Convention	Meaning
<i>Text in italics</i>	Romanised Korean language
Hangeul in brackets	Hangeul translation of Romanisation
Text in plain with single quotation marks	English language
...	A pause or not ending one sentence clearly before beginning another
Text in plain and in brackets	English translation
Text in bold	Non-verbal expression

Appendix 3. List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
BJH	Bong Joon-ho
SC	Sharon Choi, interpreter
IN	Interviewer
ES	English subtitle translation provided for Korean speech