

In Other Words

A coursebook on translation

Second Edition

Mona Baker

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To Ken

Preface to the second edition

This second edition of *In Other Words* comes at a time of increased visibility for translators and interpreters. We only need to look at the extent of reporting on translation and interpreting in the media to appreciate how visible the profession and the activity have become. News of translation and interpreting now pervades our lives: whether it is the lack of qualified court interpreters in a remote part of Australia or Canada, or the fate of translators and interpreters in zones of military conflict; the launching of a national initiative to encourage translation in one region or another, or the decision by the Turkish government to reinterpret Islam through a new translation of the Prophet's sayings; the impending decision by the European Commission to limit the translation of patents to three languages, or the release of a feminist translation of the Bible. Every aspect of our social and political life is now heavily mediated by translators and interpreters, hence their increased visibility. Translation and interpreting are also now firmly part of the professional and academic landscape, with practically every country in the world boasting at least one association that represents the interests of the profession and numerous universities offering full-blown undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the field. Technological advances in the past two decades have further had a major impact on the profession, resolving old challenges and raising new ones. I have tried to take stock of at least some of these developments in the choice of additional examples and exercises in this new edition. A new chapter on ethics attempts to respond to increased pressures on translators and interpreters to demonstrate accountability and awareness of the tremendous social and political impact of their decisions.

Since the publication of the first edition of *In Other Words*, fortune has continued to favour me with exceptionally gifted and supportive colleagues, students and family whose input into this new edition must be acknowledged. I am grateful to my niece, Hanan Rihan, for support in preparing the text for publication. Colleagues, students and former students at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, University of Manchester, helped me check the analysis of various examples and key in text that I could not type myself. Luis Pérez-González and James St. André helped with Spanish, French and Chinese examples and Morven Beaton-Thome with German examples. Jonathan Bunt provided extensive support with Japanese, Zhao Wenjing with Chinese, and Sofia Malamatidou with Greek.

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John Sinclair's departure in 2007 left a considerable vacuum in the lives of those who were fortunate enough to know him and benefit from his immense experience. This new edition of *In Other Words* remains as indebted to his teachings as the first one.

Mona Baker
June 2010

Preface to the first edition

The idea of this book initially grew out of discussions with a number of colleagues, in particular with Dr Kirsten Malmkjaer, formerly of the University of Birmingham and currently at the Centre of English as an International Language, Cambridge. It has been considerably refined during the course of last year through discussions with postgraduate students at the University of Birmingham and students at the Brass-house Centre and Birmingham Polytechnic.

I am exceptionally lucky to have been able to draw on the outstanding expertise of a number of colleagues, both at the University of Birmingham and at COBUILD, a lexical project run jointly by the University of Birmingham and Collins Publishers. From COBUILD, Stephen Bullon, Alex Collier and Gwyneth Fox provided initial help with Russian, German and Italian texts respectively. From the Shakespeare Institute, Katsuhiko Nogami helped with Japanese and Shen Lin with Chinese texts. From the School of Modern Languages, James Mullen (Russian), Bill Dodd (German), Paula Chicken (French) and Elena Tognini-Bonelli (Italian) helped me work my way through various texts and took the time to explain the structural and stylistic nuances of each language. From the School of English, Tony Dudley-Evans and Sonia Zyngier helped with Brazilian Portuguese and Wu Zu Min with Chinese. Tim Johns read and commented on Chapter 5 ('Thematic and information structures') and kindly allowed me to use much of his own data and report some of his findings on the subject.

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Michael Hoey is an outstanding text linguist. In spite of his many commitments, he managed to find the time to read through the last three chapters and to provide detailed comments on each of them. His help has been invaluable. It is indeed a

privilege to work with so distinguished a scholar who is also extremely generous with his time and expertise.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge a personal debt to John Sinclair. John has taught me, often during informal chats, most of what I know about language, and his own work has always been a source of inspiration. But I am grateful, above all, for his friendship and continued support.

Mona Baker
May 1991

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Do we really know how we translate or what we translate? ... Are we to accept 'naked ideas' as the means of crossing from one language to another? ... Translators know they cross over but do not know by what sort of bridge. They often re-cross by a different bridge to check up again. Sometimes they fall over the parapet into limbo.

(Firth 1957:197)

Translation is a point of contact between peoples, and since it is rare that two peoples have the same access to power, the translator is in a privileged position as mediator, to make explicit the differences between cultures, expose injustices or contribute to diversity in the world.

(Gill and Guzmán 2010:126)

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of tables</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>Preface to the second edition</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Preface to the first edition</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xvii</i>
1 Introduction	1
1.1 About the organization of this book	4
1.2 Examples, back-translations and the languages of illustration	6
Suggestions for further reading	8
Note	8
2 Equivalence at word level	9
2.1 The word in different languages	9
2.1.1 What is a word?	9
2.1.2 Is there a one-to-one relationship between word and meaning?	10
2.1.3 Introducing morphemes	10
2.2 Lexical meaning	11
2.2.1 Propositional vs expressive meaning	11
2.2.2 Presupposed meaning	12
2.2.3 Evoked meaning	13
2.3 The problem of non-equivalence	15
2.3.1 Semantic fields and lexical sets – the segmentation of experience	16
2.3.2 Non-equivalence at word level and some common strategies for dealing with it	18
Exercises	44
Suggestions for further reading	47
Notes	49

3	Equivalence above word level	51
3.1	Collocation	52
3.1.1	Collocational range and collocational markedness	54
3.1.2	Collocation and register	56
3.1.3	Collocational meaning	57
3.1.4	Some collocation-related pitfalls and problems in translation	58
3.2	Idioms and fixed expressions	67
3.2.1	Idioms, fixed expressions and the direction of translation	68
3.2.2	The interpretation of idioms	69
3.2.3	The translation of idioms: difficulties	71
3.2.4	The translation of idioms: strategies	75
	Exercises	86
	Suggestions for further reading	90
	Notes	91
4	Grammatical equivalence	92
4.1	Grammatical vs lexical categories	93
4.2	The diversity of grammatical categories across languages	95
4.2.1	Number	96
4.2.2	Gender	99
4.2.3	Person	104
4.2.4	Tense and aspect	108
4.2.5	Voice	112
4.3	A brief note on word order	120
4.4	Introducing text	121
4.4.1	Text vs non-text	121
4.4.2	Features of text organization	123
	Exercises	124
	Suggestions for further reading	127
	Notes	129
5	Textual equivalence: thematic and information structures	131
5.1	A Hallidayan overview of information flow	133
5.1.1	Thematic structure: theme and rheme	133
5.1.2	Information structure: given and new	156
5.2	The Prague School position on information flow: functional sentence perspective	170
5.2.1	Linear arrangement and thematic status in FSP	173
5.2.2	Linear arrangement and marked structures in FSP	174

5.2.3 The tension between word order and communicative function: a problem in translation?	175
5.2.4 Suggested strategies for minimizing linear dislocation	176
Exercises	181
Suggestions for further reading	186
Notes	187
6 Textual equivalence: cohesion	190
6.1 Reference	190
6.2 Substitution and ellipsis	196
6.3 Conjunction	200
6.4 Lexical cohesion	210
Exercises	223
Suggestions for further reading	227
Notes	228
7 Pragmatic equivalence	230
7.1 Coherence	230
7.1.1 Coherence vs cohesion	230
7.1.2 Is coherence a feature of text or situation?	231
7.2 Coherence and processes of interpretation: implicature	234
7.3 Coherence, implicature and translation strategies	239
7.3.1 The conventional meanings of words and structures and the identity of references	240
7.3.2 The Co-operative Principle and its maxims	244
7.3.3 The context, linguistic or otherwise, of the utterance	249
7.3.4 Other items of background knowledge	255
7.3.5 The availability of all relevant items falling under the previous headings	259
Exercises	263
Suggestions for further reading	270
Notes	271
8 Beyond equivalence: ethics and morality	274
8.1 Ethics and morality	275
8.2 Professionalism, codes of ethics and the law	283
8.3 The ethical implications of linguistic choices	286
8.4 Concluding remarks	290
Exercises	290
Suggestions for further reading	296
Notes	298

x IN OTHER WORDS

<i>Glossary</i>	300
<i>References</i>	305
<i>Name index</i>	323
<i>Language index</i>	327
<i>Subject index</i>	329

Figures

Figure 1, Chapter 2	Panel from Tronchet's <i>Jean-Claude Tergal</i> and its Italian translation, <i>Domenico Tergazzi</i>	32
Figure 2, Chapter 2	Lipton Yellow Label tea packet for Arab market	44
Figure 3, Chapter 2	Trados advertisement	45
Figure 4, Chapter 2	Screen shot from Sizism Awareness Campaign video	46
Figure 5, Chapter 3	Title of article in <i>New Scientist</i>	74
Figure 6, Chapter 3	Original version of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	79
Figure 7, Chapter 3	French translation of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	80
Figure 8, Chapter 3	Italian translation of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	80
Figure 9, Chapter 3	Spanish translation of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	80
Figure 10, Chapter 3	German translation of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	80
Figure 11, Chapter 3	Japanese translation of Manchester Museum of Science and Industry leaflet	81
Figure 12, Chapter 3	Original version of Wedgwood leaflet	84
Figure 13, Chapter 3	Japanese translation of Wedgwood leaflet	85
Figure 14, Chapter 6	Caption of article in Wonderlust Guide to Jordan 2010	87
Figure 15, Chapter 6	'Not Beyond Compare', <i>National Geographic Magazine</i> , 1 March 2010, p. 26	215
Figure 16, Chapter 6	Homepage of Katha	226
Figure 17, Chapter 6	Sub-page of Katha web site	227

Tables

Table 1, Chapter 3	Unpredictability of collocational patterning	53
Table 2, Chapter 6	Recurrence and collocational cohesion (adapted from Mason 1994/2010:88)	222