

Translation as an ideological interface: English translations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

Stefan Baumgarten
Aston University, Birmingham, UK
baumgars(a)aston.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The present thesis is located within the framework of descriptive translation studies and critical discourse analysis. Modern translation studies has increasingly taken into account the complexities of power relations and ideological management involved in the production of translations. Paradoxically, persuasive political discourse has not been much touched upon, except for studies following functional (e.g. Schäffner 2002) or systemic-linguistic approaches (e.g. Calzada-Pérez 2001). By taking eleven English translations of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as prime examples, the thesis aims to contribute to a better understanding of the translation of politically sensitive texts.

Actors involved in political discourse are usually more concerned with the emotional appeal of their message than they are with its factual content. When such political discourse becomes the locus of translation, it may equally be crafted rhetorically, being used as a tool to persuade. Therefore, translation producers may activate *strategic functions* (Chilton 2004: 45-47) by employing rhetorical moves which ultimately serve to place readers into specific ideological positions. It is thus the purpose of the thesis to describe subtle persuasion strategies in institutionally translated political discourse. The subject of the analysis is an illustrative corpus of four full-text translations, two abridgments, and five extract translations of *Mein Kampf*.

Methodologically, the thesis pursues a top-down approach. It begins by delineating sociocultural and situative-agentive conditions as causal factors impinging on the individual translations. Such interactive and interpersonal – in other words *discursive* – factors largely determined textual choices. The discursive factors are described as two divergent patterns of textual transfer: while two translations were part of an ideologically compliant pattern of translational export, nine translations were part of an ideologically resistant pattern of translational import. Both ideologically contrastive patterns are closely examined on the textual level of each translation. The overarching concept of *framing* – both in its wider sociological (e.g. Baker 2006) and linguistic applications (Snell-Hornby 2005) within translation studies – constitutes the theoretical background of the textual description.

The overall textual analysis consists of an interrelated corpus-driven and corpus-based approach. It demonstrates how corpus software can be fruitfully harnessed to discern ideological significations. It describes how translational strategies – in other words acts of framing – aimed to ideologically reposition the author and his major work. The corpus-driven examination proceeds inductively by using frequencies and concordance patterns as the basis for the establishment of ideologically significant choices. The corpus-based examination proceeds deductively by using evaluative features already established in the literature on National-Socialist discourse as the investigative platform. The textual analysis is then concluded by assessing a small selection of passages within the framework of strategic functionality as developed in political discourse analysis. Altogether, the thesis investigates how translational decision-makers attempted to position the source text author and his narrative in line with the demands of strategic functionality.

References

- Baker, Mona (2006) *Translation and Conflict*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Calzada-Pérez, María (2001) 'A Three-level Methodology for Descriptive-Explanatory Translation Studies', *Target* 13(2): 203-239.
- Chilton, Paul (2004) *Political Discourse*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Schäffner, Christina (2002) 'Translation, Politics, Ideology', *CTIS Occasional Papers* 1: 97-111.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary (2005) 'Of Catfish and Blue Bananas: Scenes-and-Frames Semantics as a Contrastive 'Knowledge System' for Translation', in Jan Engberg, Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast and Helle V. Dam (eds) *Knowledge Systems and Translation*, Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 193-206.

KEYWORDS: corpus-analysis of ideological significations, framing, ideology and translation, strategic functionality, translated political discourse.

Completion of thesis

Place: Aston University, Birmingham

Year: 2007

Supervisor: Christina Schäffner