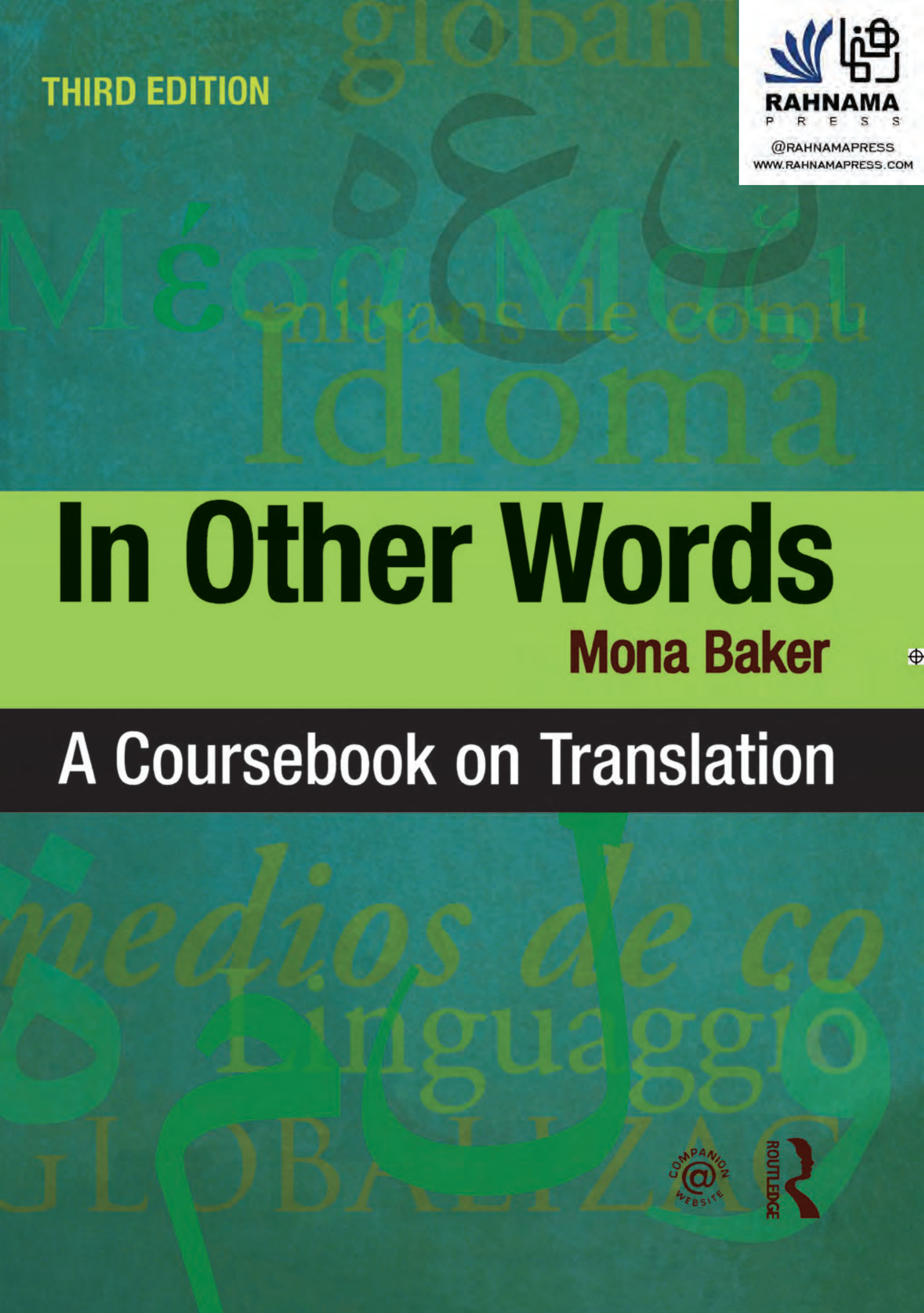

THIRD EDITION

In Other Words

Mona Baker

A Coursebook on Translation

COMPANION WEBSITE
ROUTLEDGE

Contents

List of figures *x*
List of tables *xi*
Preface to the second edition *xii*
Preface to the first edition *xiv*
Acknowledgements *xvi*
Credits *xvii*

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 9

2 Equivalence at word level **10**

2.1 The word in different languages 10
2.2 Lexical meaning 12
2.3 The problem of non-equivalence 16
Exercises 46
Suggestions for further reading 49
Notes 50

3 Equivalence above word level **53**

3.1 Collocation 54
3.2 Idioms and fixed expressions 69
Exercises 87
Suggestions for further reading 91
Notes 92

4 Grammatical equivalence

4.1 Grammatical versus lexical categories 95
4.2 The diversity of grammatical categories across languages 97
4.3 A brief note on word order 123
4.4 Introducing text 123
Exercises 126
Suggestions for further reading 130
Notes 131

5 Textual equivalence: thematic and information structures 134

5.1 A Hallidayan overview of information flow 136
5.2 The Prague School position on information flow: functional sentence perspective 173
Exercises 184
Suggestions for further reading 189
Notes 191

6 Textual equivalence: cohesion 194

6.1 Reference 194
6.2 Substitution and ellipsis 200
6.3 Conjunction 204
6.4 Lexical cohesion 215
Exercises 228
Suggestions for further reading 232
Notes 233

7 Pragmatic equivalence 235

7.1 Coherence 235
7.2 Coherence and processes of interpretation: implicature 239
7.3 Coherence, implicature and translation strategies 244
Exercises 268
Suggestions for further reading 275
Notes 276

8 Semiotic equivalence 279

8.1 Semiotic resources and semiotic regimes 281
8.2 Creative deployment of semiotic resources 288
8.3 Translating semiotically complex material 292
Exercises 299

Suggestions for further reading
Notes

9 Beyond equivalence: ethics and morality 307

9.1 Ethics and morality 308
9.2 Professionalism, codes of ethics and the law 316
9.3 The ethical implications of linguistic choices 320
9.4 Concluding remarks 323
Exercises 324
Suggestions for further reading 330
Notes 331

Glossary 334
References 339
Name index 359
Language index 363
Subject index 365

Preface to the second edition

The 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, or 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 Greek.

I am particularly grateful to Moira Inghilleri, Julie Boéri and Sofia Garcia for their extremely helpful, critical comments on the new chapter on ethics and to Monika Bednarek and her students at the University of Sydney for critical feedback on several chapters. From Routledge, Russell George, Sophie Jacques, Nadia Seemungal, Anna Callander and Lizzie Clifford have been extremely supportive. Their help is much appreciated.

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 Malmkjær, 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 Brasshouse 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.

Chinese and Japanese texts required additional help to analyze; this was competently provided by Ming Xie (Chinese) and Haruko Uryu (Japanese), both at the University of Cambridge. Lanna Castellano of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting read a substantial part of the draft manuscript, and her encouraging comments were timely and well appreciated.

I owe a special debt to three people in particular: Helen Liebeck, Philip King and Michael Hoey. Helen Liebeck and Philip King are polyglots; both kindly spent many hours helping me with a variety of languages and both read and commented on Chapters 2, 3 and 4. Philip King also provided the Greek examples and helped with the analysis of several texts.

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 invaluabl
indeed a privilege to work with so distinguished a scholar who is also extre
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

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

> Writing my own novels has always required a huge effort of organisation and imagination; but, sentence by sentence, translation is intellectually more taxing.
>
> *(Parks 2010)*

Professionals in every walk of life form associations and institutes of various kinds to provide practising members with a forum to discuss and set standards for the profession as a whole, to set examinations, assess competence and lay codes of conduct. The standards set by a given profession may well be extremely high, but this does not necessarily guarantee recognition by those outside the profession. Notwithstanding the length and breadth of one's experience, recognition, in our increasingly qualification-conscious society, comes mostly with proof of some kind of formal education. Every respectable profession (or every profession which wants to be recognized as such) therefore attempts to provide its members with systematic training in the field.

There are two main types of training that a profession can provide for its members: vocational training and academic training. Vocational courses provide training in practical skills but do not include a strong theoretical component. A good example would be a course in plumbing or typing. At the end of a typing course, a student is able to type accurately and at speed and has a piece of paper to prove it. But that is the end of the story; what the student acquires is a purely practical skill which is recognized by society as 'skilled work' but is not generally elevated to the level of a profession. Like vocational courses, most academic courses set out to teach students how to do a particular job, such as curing certain types of illness, building bridges or writing computer programs. But they do more than that: an academic course always includes a strong theoretical component. The value of this theoretical component is that it encourages students to reflect on what they do, how they do it and why they do it in one way rather than another. This last exercise, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of various ways of doing things, is itself impossible to perform unless one has a thorough and intimate knowledge of the objects and tools of one's work. A doctor cannot decide whether it is better to follow one course of treatment rather than another without understanding such things as how the human body works, what side effects a given medicine may have, what is availa teract these effects and so on.

Theoretical training does not necessarily guarantee success in all instances. Things still go wrong occasionally because, in medicine for example, the reaction of the human body and the influence of other factors, such as stress, will never be totally predictable. But the value of a theoretical understanding of, say, the human apparatus and such things as the nature and make-up of various drugs is that (a) it minimizes the risks involved on any given occasion and prepares the student for dealing with the unpredictable; (b) it gives the practising doctor a certain degree of confidence, which comes from knowing that his or her decisions are calculated on the basis of concrete knowledge rather than 'hunches' or 'intuition'; and (c) it provides the basis on which further developments in the field may be achieved because it represents a formalized pool of knowledge which is shared and can be explored and extended by the professional community as a whole, not just locally but across the world. Needless to say, this type of theoretical knowledge is itself of no value unless it is firmly grounded in practical experience.

Throughout its long history, translation has never really enjoyed the kind of recognition and respect that other professions, such as medicine and engineering, have enjoyed. Translators have constantly complained that translation is underestimated as a profession. In summing up the first conference held by the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in Britain, Professor Bellos (reported by Nick Rosenthal) stated, 'The main impetus and concern of this first ITI Conference was the unjustly low status in professional terms of the translator. An appropriate theme, since it was one of the main reasons for the formation of the ITI' (Bellos 1987:163). Some two decades later, the novelist and translator Tim Parks still had to remind us that at least 'for a few minutes every year we really must acknowledge that translators are important' (Parks 2010). There is no doubt that the low status accorded to translation as a profession is 'unjust', but one has to admit that this is not just the fault of the general public. The translation community itself has traditionally been guilty of underestimating not so much the value as the complexity of the translation process and hence the need for formal professional training in the field, though this situation is thankfully changing quite rapidly. Since the first edition of this book was published, in 1992, numerous training programmes have been set up for translators and interpreters across the world. Translation has become a highly attractive career for young people with a love for languages and for engaging with other cultures, as well as a growing area of research. Those entering the profession now have to demonstrate that they can reflect on what they do and that they have invested in acquiring not only the vocational but also the intellectual skills required to undertake such a complex and highly consequential task, one that has a major impact on the lives of the many people who rely on them as mediators.

In the past, talented translators who had no systematic formal training in translation but who nevertheless achieved a high level of competence through long and varied experience tended to think that the translation community whole could achieve their own high standards in the same way:

> Our profession is based on knowledge and experience. It has the longest apprenticeship of any profession. Not until thirty do you start to be useful as a translator, not until fifty do you start to be in your prime.
>
> The first stage of the career pyramid – the apprenticeship stage – is the time we devote to *investing in ourselves* by acquiring knowledge and experience of life. Let me propose a life path: grandparents of different nationalities, a good school education in which you learn to read, write, spell, construe and love your own language. Then roam the world, make friends, see life. Go back to education, but to take a technical or commercial degree, not a language degree. Spend the rest of your twenties and your early thirties in the countries whose languages you speak, working in industry or commerce but not directly in languages. Never marry into your own nationality. Have your children. Then back to a postgraduate translation course. A staff job as a translator, and then go freelance. By which time you are forty and ready to begin.
>
> (*Lanna Castellano 1988:133*)

Lanna's recommended career path no doubt worked for many people in the past. Her own case proves that it did: she is a widely respected first-class translator. The question is whether it was ever feasible for most aspiring translators to pursue this career path and whether this approach is or was right for the profession as a whole, bearing in mind that it stresses, at least for the first thirty or forty years of one's career, life experience rather than formal academic training. One obvious problem with this career path is that it takes so long to acquire the skills you need as a translator that your career is almost over before it begins.

Lanna Castellano has never been opposed to formal academic training; on the contrary, she has always encouraged it and recognized its value to the profession. But I have met professional translators in the past, and still come across some very occasionally today, who actually argue strongly against formal academic training because, they suggest, translation is an art which requires aptitude, practice and general knowledge – nothing more. The ability to translate is a gift, they say – you either have it or you do not – and theory (almost a dirty word in some translation circles) is therefore irrelevant to the work of a translator. To take the analogy with medicine a step further, if we accept this line of thinking, we will never be seen as anything but witch doctors and faith healers. And while it may well suit some individuals to think that they can heal people because they have magic powers or a special relationship with God, rather than because they have a thorough and conscious understanding of drugs and of the human body, the fact remains that witch doctory and faith healing are not recognized professions and that medicine is.

Most translators and interpreters prefer to think of their work as and would like to see others treat them as professionals rather than semiskilled workers. But to achieve this, they need to develop an ability to stand back and reflect on what they do and how they do it. Like doctors and engineers, they have to prove to themselves as well as others that they are in control of what they do and that they do not just translate or interpret well because they have a 'flair' for it, but rather because, like other professionals, they have made a conscious effort to understand various aspects of their work.

Unlike medicine and engineering, translation studies is a relatively young discipline in academic terms, though it is increasingly featuring as a subject of study in its own right in many parts of the world. Like any young discipline, it needs to draw on the findings and theories of numerous related disciplines in order to develop and formalize its own methods – from linguistics to literary theory, from sociology to cognitive science and media studies. This is not surprising, given that almost every aspect of life in general and of the interaction between speech communities in particular can be considered relevant to translation, a discipline which has to concern itself with how meaning is generated within and between various groups of people in various cultural settings and with what impact on society. For translation to gain more recognition as a profession, translators cannot resort to a mixture of intuition and experience to think through and justify the decisions they have to make but must constantly look to developments in neighbouring disciplines to appreciate the varied, complex dimensions of their work. Among the many skills they need to acquire through training is the skill to understand and reflect on the raw material with which they work: to appreciate what language is and how it comes to function for its users.

Linguistics is a discipline which studies language both in its own right and as a tool for generating meanings. It should therefore have a great deal to offer to translation studies; it can certainly offer translators and interpreters valuable insights into the nature and function of language. This is particularly true of modern linguistics, which no longer restricts itself to the study of language *per se* but embraces such sub-disciplines as text linguistics (the study of text as a communicative event rather than as a shapeless string of words and structures) and pragmatics (the study of language in use rather than language as an abstract system). This book attempts to explore some areas in which modern linguistic theory can provide a basis for training translators and can inform and guide the decisions they have to make in the course of performing their work.

1.1 ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The organization of this book is largely hierarchical and is based on a straightforward principle: it starts at the simplest possible level and grows in complexity by widening its focus in each chapter. Chapter 2, 'Equivalence at word level', initially adopts a naive building-block approach and explores the meaning of single words and expressions. In Chapter 3, 'Equivalence above word leve scope of reference is widened a little by looking at combinations of words phrases: what happens when words start combining with other words to form conventionalized or semi-conventionalized stretches of language. Chapter 4, 'Grammatical equivalence', deals with grammatical categories, such as number and gender. Chapters 5 and 6 cover part of what might be loosely termed the textual level of language. Chapter 5 deals with the role played by word order in structuring messages at text level, and Chapter 6 discusses cohesion: grammatical and lexical relationships which provide links between various parts of a text. Chapter 7, 'Pragmatic equivalence', looks at how texts are used in communicative situations that involve variables such as writers, readers and cultural context. Chapter 8, 'Semiotic equivalence', is new; it moves beyond verbal expression to explore the interplay between verbal and visual elements in genres as varied as comics, films, children's literature and concrete poetry. Chapter 9, 'Beyond equivalence: ethics and morality', is intended to encourage students to reflect on the wider implications of their decisions and the impact of their mediation on others. Again, like members of any other profession that strives to be taken seriously, translators and interpreters have to engage reflectively with the ethical implications of their work and demonstrate that they are responsible professionals and citizens of society.

To return to the bulk of this book, namely Chapters 2 to 7, it is important to point out that the division of language into seemingly self-contained areas, such as words, grammar and text, is artificial and open to question. For one thing, the areas are not discrete; it is virtually impossible to say where the concerns of one area end and those of another begin. Moreover, decisions taken at, say, the level of the word or grammatical category during the course of translation are influenced by the perceived function and purpose of both the original text and the translation and have implications for the discourse as a whole. But artificial as it is, the division of language into discrete areas is useful for the purposes of analysis, and provided we are aware that it is adopted merely as a measure of convenience, it can help to pinpoint potential areas of difficulty in translation and interpreting.

Like the division of language into discrete areas, the term *equivalence* is adopted in this book for the sake of convenience – because most translators are used to it rather than because it has any theoretical status. It is used here with the proviso that although equivalence can usually be obtained to some extent, it is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is therefore always relative. Kenny (2009) offers an excellent overview of the notion of equivalence and the various ways in which it has been approached in the literature.

The organization followed in this book is a bottom-up rather than a top-down one: it starts with simple words and phrases rather than with the text as situated in its context of culture. This may seem somewhat at odds with current thinking in linguistic and translation studies. Snell-Hornby (1988:69) suggests that 'textual analysis, which is an essential preliminary to translation, should proceed from the "top down", from the macro to the micro level, sign', and Hatim and Mason's model of the translation process (1 also adopts a top-down approach, taking such things as text-type and context as starting points for discussing translation problems and strategies. The top-down approach is the more valid one theoretically, but for those who are not trained linguists, it can be difficult to follow; there is too much to take in all at once. Moreover, an excessive emphasis on 'text' and 'context' runs the risk of obscuring the fact that although 'a text is a semantic unit, not a grammatical one . . . meanings are realized through wordings; and without a theory of wordings . . . there is no way of making explicit one's interpretation of the meaning of a text' (Halliday 1985:xvii). In other words, text is a meaning unit, not a form unit, but meaning is realized through form and without understanding the meanings of individual forms one cannot interpret the meaning of the text as a whole. Translating words and phrases out of context is certainly a futile exercise, but it is equally unhelpful to expect a student to appreciate translation decisions made at the level of text without a reasonable understanding of how the lower levels, the individual words, phrases and grammatical structures, control and shape the overall meaning of the text. Both the top-down and the bottom-up approaches are therefore valid in their own way; I have opted for the latter for pedagogical reasons – because it is much easier to follow for those who have had no previous training in linguistics.

1.2 EXAMPLES, BACK-TRANSLATIONS AND THE LANGUAGES OF ILLUSTRATION

In each chapter, an attempt is made to identify potential sources of translation difficulties related to the linguistic area under discussion and possible strategies for resolving these difficulties. The strategies are not preconceived, nor are they suggested as ideal solutions; they are identified by analyzing authentic examples of translated texts in a variety of languages and presented as 'actual' strategies used rather than the 'correct' strategies to use. The examples are quoted and discussed, sometimes at length, to illustrate the various strategies identified and to explore the potential pros and cons of each strategy. Although the discussion is occasionally critical of certain translations, finding fault with published translations is never the object of the exercise. It is in fact virtually impossible, except in extreme cases, to draw a line between what counts as a good translation and what counts as a bad one. Every translation has points of strength and points of weakness, and every translation is open to improvement.

The source language of most examples is English. This is because in both literary and non-literary translation today, English is probably the most widely translated language in the world. And since it also happens to be the language in which this book is written, I feel justified in assuming that all readers will have an adequate command of it. Much as I would have liked to include examples of and exercises on translation into English, I have had to accept that it is not possible to wr general coursebook on translation unless the source language is kept con With a few exceptions, the direction of translation is therefore assumed to be from English into a variety of target languages. However, readers – particularly teachers of translation – are invited to adapt the examples and exercises to suit their individual purposes. Once a given topic is discussed and understood, alternative texts can be easily found in other languages to replace the examples and exercises in which English is treated as the source language.

The target languages exemplified are by no means all European. They include major non-European languages, such as Arabic, Japanese and Chinese. The emphasis on non-European languages, I hope, no longer seems unusual, although it did when the first edition of this book appeared, in 1992. Since then, much has been done by scholars such as Diriker (2004), Hung and Wakabayashi (2005), Hermans (2006), Cockerill (2006), Cheung (2006, 2009), Gentzler (2008), Bandia (2008), Curran (2008), Wakabayashi and Kothari (2009), Selim (2009) and Shamma (2009), among others, to counterbalance the traditional preoccupation with European languages in translation studies. Many more translators as well as teachers and scholars of translation now appreciate that there is life – and indeed translation – outside Europe, and that professional non-European translators use a range of strategies that are at least as interesting and as useful as those used by European translators. The reception of the first and second editions of this book over the past three decades has confirmed that it is instructive for translators of any linguistic background to explore difficulties of translation in non-European languages, given that the structure of those languages and their cultural settings raise important issues that could otherwise be easily overlooked in discussions of language and translation.

The majority of readers will not be familiar with all the languages illustrated in this book, but they should still be able to follow the discussion of individual examples by using the back-translations provided. **Back-translation**, as used in this book, involves taking a text (original or translated) which is written in a language with which the reader is assumed to be unfamiliar and translating it as literally as possible[1] into English – how literally depends on the point being illustrated, whether it is morphological, syntactic or lexical, for instance. I use the term *back-translation* because, since the source language is often English, this involves translating the target text back into the source language from which it was originally translated. A back-translation can give some insight into aspects of the structure, if not the meaning of the original, but it is never the same as the original. The use of back-translation is a necessary compromise; it is theoretically unsound and far from ideal, but then we do not live in an ideal world – very few of us speak eight or nine languages – and theoretical criteria cease to be relevant when they become an obstacle to fruitful discussion.

All examples are quoted in the original language as well as in back-translation. For instance, an English example is immediately followed by its German or Arabic translation and then a back-translation of the German or Arabic. Technological

'This is a must-read for anyone who opts for translation and interpreting studies, regar language combinations. It is informative, interesting and inspirational. The author never new insight to the readership with each new edition, and this time it is semiotics.'

Wen Ren, *Beijing Foreign Studies University, China*

'*In Other Words* is an invaluable resource for linguistic analysis in translation studies. Mona Baker manages to strike the right balance between step-by-step explanation of increasingly complex categories of analysis, from the lexical to the pragmatic, without sacrificing academic rigour. This combination is rare and makes *In Other Words* the ideal textbook for degree-level study in translation studies.'

Morven Beaton-Thome, *Technical University of Cologne, Germany*

In Other Words has been the definitive coursebook for students studying translation for nearly three decades. Assuming no knowledge of foreign languages, it offers a practical guide based on extensive research in areas as varied as lexis, grammar, pragmatics, semiotics and ethics. It thus provides a solid basis for training a new generation of well-informed, critical students of translation.

Drawing on linguistic theory and social semiotics, the third edition of this best-selling text guides trainee translators through the variety of decisions they will have to make throughout their career. Each chapter offers an explanation of key concepts, identifies potential sources of translation difficulties related to those concepts and illustrates various strategies for resolving these difficulties. Authentic examples of translated texts from a wide variety of languages and genres are examined, and practical exercises and further reading are included at the end of each chapter.

The third edition has been fully revised to reflect recent developments in the field and includes a new chapter that engages with the interplay between verbal and visual elements in genres as varied as children's literature, comics, film, poetry and advertisements.

This key text remains the essential coursebook for any student of translation studies.

Mona Baker is Professor Emerita of Translation Studies at the University of Manchester, UK, and Director of the Shanghai Jiao Tong Baker Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies, China (www.jiaotongbakercentre.org). She is Founding Vice President of the International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS, 2004–2015).

TRANSLATION STUDIES / MODERN LANGUAGES

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
www.routledge.com

Student and instructor resources can be found at the companion website:
www.routledge.com/cw/baker

ISBN 978-1-138-66688-7
9 781138 666887

Routledge titles are available as eBook editions in a range of digital formats.