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Text and Context

Essays on Translation & Interpreting in Honour of Ian Mason

Edited by

Mona Baker, Maeve Olohan and María Calzada Pérez

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Essays on Translation and Interpreting in Honour of Ian Mason

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Ian Mason has been a towering presence in the now flourishing discipline of translation studies since its inception, and has produced some of the most influential and detailed analyses of translated text and interpreted interaction to date. The sophistication, dynamism and inclusiveness that have characterized his approach to all forms of mediation are the hallmarks of his legacy.

Text and Context celebrates Ian Mason's scholarship by bringing together fourteen innovative and original pieces of research by both young and established scholars, who examine different forms of translation and interpreting in a variety of cultural and geographical settings. In line with his own inclusive approach to the field, these contributions combine close textual analysis with keen attention to issues of power, modes of socialization, institutional culture, individual agency and ethical accountability. While paying tribute to one of the most innovative and influential scholars in the field, the volume offers novel insights into a variety of genres and practices and charts important new directions for the discipline.

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Introduction

"In Translation Studies … where the raw data are situated at the interface between two languages", Ian Mason argues in a recent publication, "it is impossible (or futile) to conduct analysis independently of cultural considerations, including perceptions of power, status, role, socio-textual practices, etc." (2009:55). This statement sums up one of the key contributions that Ian Mason has made to both translation and interpreting studies in the course of a distinguished career that has spanned several decades. His publications – including those written in collaboration with Basil Hatim – have repeatedly shown us that attempts to treat any form of mediation as culture-free, or to engage in dissecting the history of the discipline into a number of 'cultural' vs. other 'turns' or 'approaches', simply miss the point. Acknowledging the power of culture and the cultural workings of power, he has produced some of the most influential and detailed analyses of translations and instances of interpreted interaction to date. The sophistication, dynamism and inclusiveness that have characterized his approach to all forms of mediation are the hallmarks of his legacy. Not surprisingly, they have attracted many young (and not so young) scholars to draw extensively on his work over the years, and to see him as a role model and a source of continued inspiration. The many students who enjoyed the privilege of having him as doctoral supervisor now occupy key positions in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Australia and elsewhere, and are setting the agenda for a new generation of scholars in the field.

Ian Mason's contribution spans a number of key areas, the most important of these being socially-situated textual analysis of translation and interpreting, informed by critical discourse analysis and pragmatics; dialogue interpreting, an area of research that has particularly been transformed by his pioneering publications; institutional translation; audiovisual translation; translation pedagogy; and research methodology. These themes are reflected in the articles that constitute this modest tribute to his scholarship.

The volume opens with a section on *Language Matters*. The two articles, by Wadensjö and Campbell *et al.*, focus on close linguistic analysis of specific textual features that have concrete implications for participants in any interaction, within and outside a pedagogical context. **Wadensjö** focuses on the interpreter's mediation of answers to yes/no questions in Swedish/Russian court trials. Her study sheds light on the conditions for producing expanded answers to yes/no questions in interpreter-mediated trials, and demonstrates that defendants are dependent on interpreters' active support in attempting to gain and secure conversational space. **Campbell *et al.*** explore another important and under-researched aspect of language patterning, namely sentence openings, as a feature of textual competence. The study compares the output of Arab students translating and interpreting into English as a second language with that of professional translators and interpreters and concludes with a set of recommendations for curriculum designers. The emphasis in designing curricula for translators should be on text- rather than sentence-based diagnosis and amelioration of problems with determiners. For consecutive interpreting, the emphasis should be on developing the student's capacity to build an argumentative plan, a content plan, and a sense of audience.

The next section, *Forms of Mediation*, consists of three articles that engage with the issue of the translator's presence in the text. **Hermans** attempts to distinguish between the mimetic nature of translation and the evaluative attitude, or modality, that informs it. Arguing that understanding the social functioning of translation requires us to focus on the translated text as it reaches its audience, without checking it against the original, he explores a number of concepts that allow us to detect and describe the nature of the translator's mediating role. These concepts are drawn primarily from Relevance Theory and Hallidayan linguistics. **Munday**'s analysis of aspects of the translator's intervention in the text is similarly informed by systemic functional linguistics. He revisits Hatim and Mason's static-dynamic continuum and links it to the concept of evaluation, and more specifically to recent work on appraisal theory, to investigate how translators feed in their ideological perspective to the text. Munday offers examples from a range of different genres to illustrate some of the ways in which the translator's attitude (realized as affect, judgement or appreciation) may be inscribed or invoked in the text. **Mossop** begins by redefining the notion of moves, applied by Ian Mason in the context of interpreting, as 'events' in the translator's mind, and more specifically as 'conscious mental acts'. Drawing a distinction between motivating, composing and transmitting utterances, he demonstrates that any move on the part of the translator (e.g. repairing an error in the original, writing a footnote), may be accompanied by a change of footing between the roles of Motivator and non-Motivator, and that the role of 'Motivator' can be described in terms of four types of reporting: Plain, Reconstructive, Summary and Fictive. Mossop finally uses a passage from Thucydides in English translation to revisit the traditional distinction between translation and adaptation.

In a pioneering article that appeared in the second edition of Lawrence Venuti's reader, Mason (2004:470) described "institutional approaches to translating" as "a neglected factor within the field of translation studies". The third and longest section of this volume, *Institutional Context and Individual Agency*, attempts to address this gap and to respond to his call for "the whole issue of institutional cultures of translating" to be subjected to "more systematic exploration, across a range of institutions and language pairs" (*ibid.*:481). It begins with two studies, by Beaton-Thome and Koskinen, which focus on different aspects of interpreting and translating for the European Union institutions. **Beaton-Thome** examines simultaneous interpreting between German and English in the European Parliament, focusing on the ideological significance of the first person plural *we* and the role it plays in the construction and negotiation of in- and out-group identities. One of the most significant findings of this study is that interpreted utterances reveal an intensified trend towards the use of the inclusive *we* to refer to *we, the parliamentary community* and *we, the EU*, at the expense of more peripheral identities such as the national, regional and political group. **Koskinen** looks at the new strategies and modes of communication currently being adopted by the European Commission to support participatory policies and enhance dialogic interaction with European citizens. She charts new developments on this front in order to determine who is invited to participate in the dialogue and to delineate the challenges and opportunities that the new communication strategies present for translators. Koskinen predicts that the trend towards multimedialization will become more evident in the future, not only in the European Union but across the field of institutional translation, and argues that this – together with the growing emphasis on English as *lingua franca* of the EU – poses a challenge for the recruitment and training of translators with new skills profiles.

The next article in this section moves us out of the European context to explore institutional translation in a very different cultural location and genre. **Kang**'s data consist of an article published in *Newsweek U.S. Domestic Edition* and its corresponding Korean article, published in *Newsweek Hankukpan*. Both are based on an interview of the then newly elected South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun. While the English article constructs an image of Roh as uncooperative and anti-American, the Korean version shifts the focus to issues of fact construction and *Newsweek Hankukpan*'s own commitment to convey Roh's views accurately. Lending credibility to and ensuring the acceptability of the target text by embedding and contextualizing the original text within the narrative framework of a translating institution, Kang argues, may not only involve aspects of giving, silencing, distorting and blending voice, but also evoking intertextual connections that may deviate from the typical source-target relationship.

The articles by Tipton and Maltby focus on institutional settings in which the conceptualization of the interpreter's role and the way the interpreter interacts with other participants have serious social and political consequences. **Tipton** examines trust as a potential norm of interaction and its impact on the relationship between the interpreter, the service provider and the service user. She argues that changes in social work practice and policy, and increased public scrutiny at both a general level (public perception) and a formal level (audit), have impacted on the practitioner's role in recent times and have served to question the traditional server-served relationship between the service provider and service user, with consequences for the interpreter. Based on focus-group work conducted in the Greater Manchester region, with participants from several social services, she concludes that a general degree of basic trust is still likely to exist between professionals, but that this has often been eroded and has led to particular compensation strategies being deployed to establish a degree of ‘normalcy’ as a backdrop against which the social work practitioner and interpreter can carry out their work. **Maltby** examines a related issue, that of impartiality and neutrality, in the context of codes of conduct as articulated in institutional interpreting policies. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, he investigates the ways in which two voluntary sector organizations in the UK asylum context articulate notions of interpreter impartiality in their policies. His findings suggest that although they both position interpreters as impartial and neutral agents to greater or lesser extents, the policies of the two organizations are underpinned by particular institutional notions of impartiality that depart from normative models to allow client interests to remain of central concern. Both policies allow room for interpreters to offer advocacy and advice to clients in the daunting process of applying for asylum in the UK.

This tribute to Ian Mason appropriately ends with a section on *The Impact of Translation and Interpreting in a Changing World*, in recognition of the vision and insight with which he has steered the discipline for several decades, continually looking ahead and initiating new avenues of research that respond to social, intellectual and political developments as they begin to take shape.

All four articles in this section engage with forms of intervention that are characteristic of the global society in which we now live. The section starts with a historical study by **Cheung**, who argues that studying the past not only enhances our understanding of the past but also facilitates reflection on present realities. This includes the reality of a growing number of people who explicitly identify themselves as part of a community that is focused on effecting change. Cheung draws on this sense of ‘activism’ in her investigation of a number of translation initiatives undertaken during the late Qing period in China, and concludes that the larger the readership of a translation, the greater the scope for disseminating activist values, but also the less predictable the outcome of such dissemination. While Cheung ends with a call for today’s activist translators to make better use of internet technology to attract more recruits, **Pérez González** demonstrates that translation is increasingly being appropriated by politically engaged individuals, without formal training in translation, in order to tamper with the dynamics of the global media marketplace and to promote their own narrative take on political events. His analysis retraces the process by which such fluid networks come into being by examining how a televised interview with Spain’s former Prime Minister, José María Aznar López, conducted in English and broadcast on the BBC programme *Hardtalk*, came to be subtitled into Spanish and circulated on the internet by one such network. Pérez González argues that given their fluidity and lack of structure, we should speak of ad-hocracies rather than networks, the former term referring to groups of like-minded individuals who meet online and capitalize on the potential of networked communication to exploit their collective intelligence.

Moving from written and audiovisual translation to face-to-face interpreting, **Barsky** takes up the cause of illegal immigrants in the United States and argues for activism over machine-like fidelity on the part of interpreters, given the enormity of abuses in certain legal contexts. He uses examples from a large-scale research project to demonstrate the extent to which illegal immigrants are ill-served by the entire legal system, which treats them as 'guilty by virtue of being there'. He concludes that interpreters should be sensitized to the issues that confront immigrants and should drop the façade of 'impartiality' when they are faced with clear and obvious abuses of power. **Cronin**'s contribution finally concludes the volume with a wide-ranging discussion of translation and mobility in a globalized world. Eschewing what he describes as 'the beatific visions of universal understanding' often evoked in discussions of translation, he stresses that we must instead take the incomprehensibility of the other as our starting point. It is in this conflicted sense, he argues, that translation can provide a productive way of thinking about contemporary multilingual and multicultural societies. Ultimately, translation needs to be situated in what he calls 'a new *politics of introversion*' which seeks to expand possibilities, not reduce them, and which reconfigures fundamentals of space and time in the new century, with attendant socio-political and cultural consequences.

Ian Mason's scholarship – "engaged, solid, serious", as Barsky describes it in this volume – has provided inspiration for generations of researchers, including the present contributors and editors. But it is also for his personal integrity and modesty that he is held in such high esteem by those who have been privileged enough to know him firsthand. This collection celebrates both his scholarship and his personal qualities, and is offered as a tribute to an outstanding scholar, colleague and friend.

Mona Baker, Maeve Olohan and María Calzada Pérez
February 2010

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