

# Political Discourse, Media and Translation



# Political Discourse, Media and Translation

Edited by

Christina Schäffner and Susan Bassnett

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

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Edited by Christina Schäffner and Susan Bassnett

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# INTRODUCTION

## POLITICS, MEDIA AND TRANSLATION: EXPLORING SYNERGIES

CHRISTINA SCHÄFFNER  
AND SUSAN BASSNETT

### Introduction

The weekly newspaper *The European Voice* used to have a regular section entitled ‘What the papers say’, commenting on recent political events as reported in various national newspapers. The example below is interesting for a variety of reasons:

Former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder gives an interview to *Le Figaro* [...] Asked by the French paper if [...] Schröder answers: “Absolument.” Oh wait, perhaps he doesn’t really speak French. “It’s not just in the energy sector, where it’s obvious,” he says, presumably in German. [...] “As for the rest, what would be the alternative? [...] It’s up to us to respond positively.” (*European Voice* 16 November 2006, p. 14)

What we see in this example is a report about an interview that had been published in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. French journalists had interviewed a German politician, and the original text was published in the form of a report, with occasionally answers by Schroeder provided in the form of a direct quote. The *European Voice* had subsequently reported about the interview by just selecting parts of the initial text. However, information selection played a role for the initial text as well. *Le Figaro* did not publish the complete interview, but only selected parts. There is, however, another interesting aspect in the *European Voice* text: the reference to language. The text in *Le Figaro* was published in French, though there is no explicit information about the language in which the interview was initially conducted. The *European Voice* had then provided

an English version of the French text. This example illustrates that in the production of both the French and the English text, translation and interpreting had been involved, even if they are hidden in the final published texts.

Most readers are probably unaware of the role played by translation in international news reporting, but as this example illustrates, there is a direct, though usually invisible link between politics, media, and translation – the topic which this book will explore. Media reports about political events are always forms of recontextualisation, and any recontextualisation involves transformations. Recontextualisation and transformation are particularly complex where translation is involved, that is, when media reports cross language boundaries. In the following sections, we will look in more detail at the relationships between politics, or more precisely: political discourse, media, and translation.

## Politics and political discourse

Aristotle famously characterised human beings as ‘political animals’ (*politikon zoon*) who live in a *polis* (Greek *polis*, meaning ‘state’). Any human community is determined by interaction and relationships, including power relationships. Studies of politics have therefore often explained politics in relations to power. Chilton (2004) speaks of two broad strands as follows:

On the one hand, politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. [...] On the other hand, politics is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like. (Chilton 2004, 3)

In any case, whether struggle or cooperation, “politics cannot be conducted without language” (Chilton and Schäffner 1997, 206). Human interaction to a large extent involves language, and linguistic interaction is embedded in and determined by socio-cultural, historical, ideological, and institutional conditions. In relation to politics, we can say that the specific political situations and processes (discursive practices, such as parliamentary debates, political press briefings) determine discourse organization and textual structure of a variety of discourse types (or genres) in which political discourse as a complex form of human activity is realized.

Burkhardt (1996) suggests a broad distinction between communicating about politics (e.g. ordinary people in a pub talking about election results), political discourse in mass media, and political communication (i.e.

discourse originating in political institutions). More specifically, discourse originating in political institutions can be subdivided into genres that are instrumental in policy-making and thus produced by and addressed to politicians (e.g. a manifesto of a political party), and genres that communicate, explain, and justify political decisions, produced by politicians and addressed to the general public (e.g. a speech at an electioneering campaign, a New Year address by a head of state).

Politics as a form of action (see also Palonen 1993) integrally involves discursive practices that create or efface opportunities for action. This means, that the availability of discursive spaces in which to act is itself something to be contested. In particular in dictatorial societies, texts can be prevented from being made accessible to the public if they are not in line with the official ideology of the ruling political party. For disseminating politics, the media play a significant role.

## Media

In addition to the state and the public, the media belong to the main actors in political communication. The media has, in fact, been called the “fourth estate”. Media can reach a large audience, and the speed in which a message reaches as wide an audience as possible is one of the main values that govern journalistic practice. Today, where breaking news 24 hours a day is an established and expected convention, speed is even more vital.

In recent years the study of mass media has grown significantly. In the first instance, it was the print media which supplied the basis for critical analysis. Some studies examined the language of the press (e.g. Lüger 1995, Montgomery 2007), highlighting specific lexical, syntactic and stylistic features. Comparative studies revealed differences in the language in quality papers compared to the broadsheets, linking these differences to the specific readership expectations (e.g. Kress and Trew 1978). In this respect, aspects such as the truth of reporting and journalists’ ethics were addressed. Another area of interest was the analysis of ideology as reflected in the media and in textual structures. For example, van Dijk (1985, 1988, 1991) and Fairclough (1995a, 1995b) showed how dominant elite ideologies were reproduced in the media and how ideologies could be revealed by examining language features used in texts (such as passive sentences). This was illustrated with reference to racism in the British press (van Dijk 1991, also Hodge and Kress 1993). In his analysis of text processing in news production, van Dijk (1988, 114ff) lists five central operations: selection, reproduction, summarisation, local transformation (addition, deletion, permutation, substitution), and stylistic and rhetorical

formulation. These procedures are similar to the recontextualisation strategies addition, deletion, rearrangement and substitution identified by Blackledge (2005), and they can equally be used for describing news production across linguistic boundaries, as will be shown below.

The analysis of print media has also been complemented by studies of audio-visual media, such as radio and television, showing how verbal and non-verbal messages combine to transmit a message and influence the audience. Close-ups of a speaker, a voice from the off, the seating arrangement in interviews and talk-shows, etc. can all be meaningful and fulfil certain functions. Most recently, attention has been given to the “new media”, especially the Internet. Analyses here, too, are of a structural nature, examining the amount of information, the positioning of information, and the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements in the multimodal discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001). Other aspects that have been addressed concern accessibility of information on the Internet, the use and/or control of languages, and legal aspects.

Bednarek (2006, 11f.) lists eight major analytic approaches to the language of news discourse: the critical approach, the narrative/pragmatic/stylistic approach, the corpus-linguistic approach, the practice-focused approach, the diachronic approach, the socio-linguistic approach, the cognitive approach, the conversationalist approach. Fetzer and Lauerbach’s volume (2007) includes a comparative analysis across language boundaries, focusing on the realisation of specific discursive features in languages. However, the role of translation is not addressed in depth in all this research, and often not mentioned at all.

## **Political discourse and media**

The media report on a variety of topics, and we find a number of different genres represented in the print media, including genres such as obituaries, sports reports, advertisements, horoscopes, and weather forecasts. A large number of texts, however, are related to political topics. These texts are normally placed on the first pages of quality newspapers, with leaders (editorials) and comments being typical genres of print media which have a particular role to play. These genres do not simply report on political events in a neutral way, but they provide evaluations and thus can have an impact on public opinion about politics and also on policy making. There are a number of cases where the publication of a text in a broadsheet, often as the result of investigative journalism, has made a politician resign - the Watergate affair being a case in point, and the recent exposure of British MPs’ expenses claims in 2009 being another such example.

Since editorials provide more background information but most of all evaluation of a topical political event, the event itself is only briefly mentioned. Editorials thus typically recontextualise an existing news story, and in this process transform and evaluate it, adding some elements, deleting others, and also rearranging some elements and substituting others. Such recontextualisation strategies are also used in other genres, for example in news reports, and in interviews. Whenever media report on political events and/or quote from statements by politicians, political discourse is transferred in processes of recontextualisation. In these processes, messages and arguments are transformed. In addition to subtle linguistic transformations such as adapting a quote to incorporate it in the syntactic structure of a sentence, recontextualisation also often involves the “filtering of some meaning potentials of a discourse” (Blackledge 2005, 121). The example below illustrates recontextualisation processes:

[...] Understandably, the chancellor was not so explicit. More than most, he knows how galling it must be for Mr Brown to have to admit the demise of his fiscal pride and joy. But in a lecture at the Case Business School in the City of London, Mr Darling ran up the white flag, saying that “to apply these rules rigidly in today’s changed conditions would be perverse”.

The chancellor did his best, blaming “unprecedented global shocks” for the government’s change of heart. These meant that “we need a new approach that is fit for these new times”. The priority for the moment, he said, was to provide support for the economy. Reducing borrowing and debt would have to come later.

No one doubts that these are extraordinary times, still less that the financial crisis is global in extent. But Mr Darling’s explanation was as much an excuse as a reason. [...]

For those expecting detail on what will replace the old fiscal framework, Mr Darling’s lecture was a let-down. That will be left to the pre-budget report later this year. (*The Economist* 1 November 2008, p. 33)

In this news report, a journalist reports on a speech by Alistair Darling, mixing direct quote with indirect quote, and also combining a neutral reporting with an evaluation of the chancellor’s argument and the government’s policy more generally. The original speech in London is discursively removed from its original context and now serves as a basis for critical reflection and analysis against the wider background of financial politics of the British government. The initial genre (explicitly mentioned and identified as a lecture) has thus been incorporated into the new genre of newspaper report. There is also another intertextual reference in this extract, but this time to a text which does not yet exist, i.e. the pre-budget report still to be delivered at a later time. This forward-looking

reference is possible because budget and pre-budget reports are regularly occurring discursive events upon which the media will report.

References to previous and to future texts, either by themselves or by others, are also made in speeches by politicians, as can be seen in the extract from a speech by the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to the Global Ethic Foundation at Tübingen University, Germany, on 30 June 2000:

[...] This is not a speech about Europe though I am happy to take questions on it. Neither despite what you may read was this ever going to be a response to the interesting and important speech made by President Chirac to the German Parliament earlier this week. I will be setting out the British view as to Europe's future in a speech in the autumn. [...]  
([http://www.mediaculture-online.de/fileadmin/bibliothek/blair\\_speech/blair\\_speech.pdf](http://www.mediaculture-online.de/fileadmin/bibliothek/blair_speech/blair_speech.pdf); last accessed 22 September 2009)

We can also see in this extract that politicians are aware of the fact that the media will report on their speeches, hence they may include a reference to this fact (cf. “despite what you may read”), thus also in a way instructing the public how to react to any subsequent media reports.

What these examples illustrate is that texts and their discourses draw on pre-existing discourses. These pre-existing texts often belong to a different genre and may have functioned in a different context. In this way, texts and discourses spread between genres, contexts, and fields of action, thus linking up to form textual chains or chains of discourse (Fairclough 1995a). As communicative events move along the political and media chain, they are transformed (as illustrated with reference to the topic of immigration by Blackledge 2005). Which texts and which arguments are repeated and/or most frequently quoted in such chains of discourse is determined by power struggles surrounding specific opinions, beliefs or ideologies. This also means that the specific types of transformation which occur in the recontextualisation processes are “dependent on the goals, values and interests of the context into which the discursive practice is being recontextualised” (Blackledge 2005, 122).

Recontextualisation processes occur as well when media report on news from other countries. In such cases the original texts and/or speeches by foreign politicians will in all probability have been in a language different from the one a journalist uses for his or her report. The following section will illustrate such recontextualisation processes across linguistic, cultural and ideological boundaries and will address transformation strategies such as information selection, addition, omission, reformulation.

## Media and translation

'It is our common wish [...] that we get more transparency in financial markets,' Merkel said after a regular meeting with Sarkozy at a government guest house north of Berlin.  
(<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/09/10/europe/EU-GEN-Germany-France.php>; last accessed 16 March 2009)

In this extract we see that an American newspaper, the *International Herald Tribune*, quotes in English what the German Chancellor had said, in all probability in German. Merkel's words are presented as direct speech, a widespread practice in news reporting. Direct reporting has the function of "legitimising what is reported" (Caldas-Coulthard 1997, 59). The interview the French *Le Figaro* had held with the former German Chancellor Schroeder mentioned at the beginning of this chapter also reflects examples of recontextualisation across linguistic boundaries. The readers are not provided with a transcript of the complete interview, but only extracts are given (examples of information selection). Since the complete interview is not accessible, it is impossible to judge how much information has been omitted, and it is also impossible to see whether the sequence of the actual interview has been rearranged for the report in the newspaper. In each case, a decision has had to be taken by somebody concerning information selection and the content and structure of the final text as it was published.

Both the news extract above and the report about the interview quoted at the beginning of this chapter are also examples of changes in discursive practice and genre: from statements at a press conference to a direct quote in a news report, and from an interview to a report about an interview. In both cases, the politicians' words are rendered in another language than the one in which they were initially uttered. That is, in both cases translation and interpreting have been involved, but in both cases these practices are hidden, i.e., there is no explicit reference in the newspaper texts to the fact that the statements by Merkel and Schroeder were interpreted and/or translated. In the case of media interviews with politicians, it is usually the practice that the interview is interpreted and recorded. Subsequently, the recorded text (i.e. the voice of the interpreter) is transcribed and checked and/or amended for stylistic reasons. It is also widespread practice that before the interview is actually published the interviewee has the chance to check the text and authorise it. These procedures, however, are more difficult to achieve if translation and interpreting are involved. In this case, advisors or the interpreters themselves often fulfil this checking function.

As we saw above, recontextualisation always involves transformation, determined by goals, values and interests. The same holds true for recontextualisation which involves translation. All processes, starting from a decision to report on affairs and events in another country (not only political affairs, but any topic) up to the production of a final text are determined by institutional policies and ideologies. Mass media enable communication across languages and cultures, but in doing so, they can privilege specific information at the expense of other information, and they can also hinder and prohibit information from being circulated.

Fairclough (2006, 98) argues that “when events are reported in news narratives, their form and meaning are transformed according to the genre conventions of news narratives”. Moreover, in news reporting, some information can be presupposed since the author can rely on an audience to be familiar with it and thus be able to infer information which the author just implied. Other information may be foregrounded or backgrounded. Whatever choices are made at the various levels in the process of producing texts, choices concerning which information to include or to exclude, what to make explicit or leave implicit, what to foreground or background, what to thematize or unthematize, which categories to draw upon to represent events are questions which have also been studied within (Critical) Discourse Analysis. From the point of view of Translation Studies, some more questions become relevant. When we look again at the interview with Schroeder conducted by *Le Figaro*, we can ask the following questions: in which language was the actual interview conducted? Was the interview interpreted? If yes, who provided the interpreter? Was there only one interpreter or two (at high level talks between politicians, it is normally the case that each politician uses their own interpreter)? Who translated the transcript? Or who transformed the transcript of the oral interview into a text for publication? Which transformations occurred in this process? Who decided that the interview would be published in the form of a report? Who decided which information should be chosen for the published text? Who approved the final text before it went to press? Who decided and why that there would not be any explicit reference to the fact that interpreting and translation were involved and that the translators and interpreters would be anonymous? Or were all these activities (i.e. conducting the interview, producing a written French text) done by the journalists who had conducted the interview themselves, that is without the involvement of professional translators and/or interpreters? If yes, what does this practice tell us about the status of translation and interpreting? And what



consequences does this have for defining and researching translation and interpreting within the discipline of Translation Studies?

These are questions to which we cannot yet provide a definite answer. Quite a lot of these processes that happen in the context of media translation in the widest sense have not yet been investigated in sufficient depth and breadth and are just beginning to attract more attention from Translation Studies scholars. As recent research has shown (e.g. Bassnett 2004, 2005, Bielsa 2007, Bielsa and Bassnett 2009, Bielsa and Hughes 2009, Holland 2006, Kang 2007, Schäffner 2005), translation is normally invisible in media reports, although the practice of reporting politicians' words in translation is common.

In 2003, Bielsa and Bassnett began a project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council to investigate how translation functions in the transfer of news across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Their monograph (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009) examines the ways in which news agencies employ translation, and concludes that there are no clearly established parameters either for the training of translators or for evaluating translation competency. Rather, there are highly ambiguous attitudes to translation prevalent in the world of news reporting, which perhaps explains why so much research in journalism studies to date has failed to engage with translation. This ambiguity is manifest firstly in the avoidance of the word 'translation', with journalists/translators referring to themselves as journalists only, and secondly in the absence of translator training in and for news media.

Yet the ambiguity is hardly surprising when we consider what happens in news translation: interviews undertaken locally in one language may then be edited down, summarized, passed on via another language, edited down again, transferred into the news agency language, adapted to the house style of a particular publication, shortened to conform to space limits. In other words, a complex set of textual transactions occur between and within languages, so that it is not only possible but it is indeed frequently the case that tens of thousands of words originating in one language find their way into print in another language as a story of no more than 200 words. The speed with which news has to be processed in this age of high demand for instant information is another significant factor in news translation that cannot be ignored. Such practices raise the question as to whether the label translation is actually applicable in the case of news translation, since what happens does not fit established models of interlingual translation activity and comes closer to what happens in interpreting, where the goal of the transaction is more important than any sense of equivalence.

## Translation

Laypeople are normally unconscious of the fact that they are reading a text in translation. If they are (made) aware of the fact, it is often because of some explicit reference to mistranslation or translation errors. In such cases, translation is perceived first and foremost as involving a change of language, a process of replacing words and expressions in one language by their corresponding words and expressions in another language.

Translation and interpreting as activities have existed for many centuries. There is a long tradition of thought, and an enormous body of opinion about translation has been expressed throughout the centuries. However, it is only since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Translation Studies has developed as an academic discipline in its own right. Theoretical principles have been formulated which are the basis for the description, observation, and teaching of translation. Translation has been studied as a product, as a cognitive process, as a socio-political activity, with scholars approaching their object of research from different angles, with different aims and applying different methods and concepts (for an overview on the development of Translation Studies see, for example, Gentzler 1993, Stolze 1994, Baker 1998, Munday 2001, Kittel et al 2004, Snell-Hornby 2006, Pym 2009, and the contributions in Venuti 2004).

In the 1950s and 1960s, research into translation was very much influenced by (applied) linguistics, and Translation Studies was conceived of as a linguistic discipline. Translation was studied as a linguistic phenomenon, as a process of meaning transfer via linguistic transcoding (e.g. Catford 1965). From the 1970s, insights and approaches of textlinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, communication studies, were adopted and adapted by Translation Studies. Translation was defined as text production, the text moved into the centre of attention, and notions such as textuality, context, culture, communicative intention, function, text type, genre, and genre conventions had an impact on reflecting about translation (e.g. Reiss 1971, Hatim and Mason 1990, 1997, Neubert and Shreve 1992). Towards the end of the 1970s, the traditional source-text centred approaches were complemented (and partly replaced) by functionalist approaches, initiated by Vermeer (1978) with his *Skopos theory* (derived from the Greek word ‘*skopós*’, which means purpose, aim, goal, objective). Functionalist approaches define translation as a purposeful activity (Reiss and Vermeer 1991, Nord 1997) or as translatorial action (Holz-Mänttari 1984) which is initiated by a translation commission, resulting in a target text which is appropriately

structured for its specified purpose, and realised by a translator as an expert in text production for transcultural interaction.

Another major impetus came with Descriptive Translation Studies, inspired by comparative literature. In outlining the field of what he termed 'Translation Studies' Holmes described the two main objectives as (i) to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and (ii) to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted (Holmes 1988, 71). Through comparative descriptions of translations of the same source text, either in one single language or in various languages, it was shown how social and historical conditions, primarily in the recipient socio-culture, influenced translational behaviour. Translational behaviour has thus been understood as contextualised social behaviour, governed by norms (Toury 1995). An empirical and historical perspective also studied the position of translated literature in a culture at a particular time and its function for that culture (cf. polysystem theory, Even-Zohar 1978) as well as the impact of economic and ideological factors on the production and reception of translation (cf. the concept of *patronage*, Lefevere 1992).

Since the early 1990s, the discipline of Translation Studies has been inspired to a considerable extent by Cultural Studies, anthropology, poststructuralist, postmodern, and postcolonial theories (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 12 speak of the 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies). These approaches follow a number of different tendencies and agendas. But in spite of this, as Arrojo (1998) states, they share as

[...] common ground a radical distrust of the possibility of any intrinsically stable meaning that could be fully present in texts [...] and, thus, supposedly recoverable and repeated elsewhere without the interference of the subjects, as well as the cultural, historical, ideological or political circumstances involved. (Arrojo 1998, 25)

Translation is defined as a form of regulated transformation, as a socio-political practice (Venuti 1995). Translation can thus become a form of political action and engagement to overcome asymmetrical cultural exchanges (e.g. Tymoczko 1999, 2000, Niranjana 1992, Baker 2006, Bassnett and Trivedi 1999, Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002). Consequently, in postmodern theories, the traditional conception of the translator as an invisible transporter of meanings has been replaced by that of the visible interventionist. These views are clearly highlighted by Tymoczko and Gentzler in the following quote:

Translation thus is not simply an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration and fabrication – and even, in some cases of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes. (Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002, xxi)

In sum: Translation Studies today is no longer concerned with examining whether a translation has been ‘faithful’ to a source text. Instead, the focus is on social, cultural, and communicative practices, on the cultural and ideological significance of translating and of translations, on the external politics of translation, on the relationship between translation behaviour and socio-cultural factors. In other words, there is a general recognition of the complexity of the phenomenon of translation, an increased concentration on social causation and human agency, and a focus on effects rather than on internal structures. Most recently, sociological approaches have been applied to the study of translation, mainly building on the work by Bourdieu (see, for example, the contributions in Wolf and Fukari 2007). In this way, insights can be gained into institutional practices, into the respective roles of actual agents involved in the complex translation processes as well as into the power relations (see, for example, the contributions in Milton and Bandia 2009). These factors are of relevance as well for investigating translation in mass media and also in the context of political institutions (e.g. governments, political parties, embassies).

## **Translation and politics**

Translation also plays a very important political role in international policy making and diplomacy (for example, the signing of bilateral and multilateral contracts, delivering speeches during state visits) and in national policy-making (in particular for officially bilingual or multilingual countries – see Gagnon and van Doorslaer in this volume, but also in respect of communicating political decisions to ethnic minorities or immigrants in an officially monolingual country, such as the translation of a variety of documents into community languages in the UK).

International organisations, such as the United Nations and the European Union, have their own language and translation policies, and also their own translation departments. In the United Nations Organisation, the working languages are English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese. In contrast, the UN official languages are English and French. For the European Union, all national languages of the member states are official languages due to the EU's language policy (see, for example, Tosi 2002,

Wagner et al. 2002, Koskinen 2008, and Stecconi in this volume). Every citizen of the EU has the right to use their own national language in communicating with EU institutions. Due to this policy, translation and interpreting services have expanded massively. Koskinen (2000) divided translations in the EU institutions into two groups: intracultural communication and intercultural communication, depending on the producers, addressees, and functions of the texts (e.g. intra-institutional translation intended for internal use within the same institution, or translations produced within one of the EU institutions and intended for communication with the general public as one form of intercultural communication).

Where foreign policy of individual states is concerned, translation becomes relevant, for example, for delivering speeches during state visits. Translations of such speeches are made available on government or embassy websites, and are sometimes also published in bulletins or the media. In this way, a government can communicate its political aims and decisions to the outside world. Political aims and decisions of foreign countries are also presented to home governments in translation. For example, the BBC Monitoring Service translates texts into English for the UK government. That is, translation plays a role in both the export and import of political texts.

Translation, although often invisible in the field of politics, is actually an integral part of political activity. Which texts get translated, from and into which languages is itself already a political decision. For example, websites of governments have become more multilingual (see also Price in this volume), but not every text which is available in the source language is also made available in other languages. The website of the German government offers links to English and French, the website of the Spanish government too has a direct link to an English version. If we look more closely at the different language versions, we see that only some texts are translated. For the German government, for example, there are more texts translated into English than into French, with English translations being available before the French translations. The website of the UK government has traditionally been available in English only, but had for a short time in 2007 some general information about the structure of the government in French, German, Spanish. However, these foreign language links disappeared in the latest restructuring of the website. Whereas, for example, speeches by German ministers are made available in translation on foreign language versions of government websites, this is not yet the case for the UK government website. However, speeches by the UK Prime Minister can be accessed in German translation, for example, from the

website of the British Embassy in Germany. Embassy websites in general are bilingual and provide a significant amount of speeches by politicians in translation.

No detailed research has been conducted yet into the actual translation policies and processes of national governments, or of national political parties, or embassies. Questions of interest from the point of view of Translation Studies are, for example, the following: who decides whether websites of governments, of individual government ministries, of political parties are made available in foreign languages in the first place, and more specifically, who decides which languages these should be? Who decides which texts are translated? Who translates these texts, that is, do governments and political parties have their own in-house translation departments? Or are translation needs outsourced to translation companies? In that case, on the basis of which criteria may a translation company be selected? Are some texts translated by politicians and/or political advisors and/or staff themselves? If yes, which kinds of texts and for which reasons? Who checks the translations before they are put on a website? Who decides which texts are used in translation for internal purposes only? Are different policies and procedures in place for translating relevant texts into foreign languages and for translating texts into the home language? For example, on the basis of which criteria are speeches by the UK Prime Minister translated into which language(s) and by whom, and on the basis of which criteria are speeches by foreign politicians translated into English and by whom? Are the criteria the same, and if not, why not?

There have recently been reports in the media that UK government departments, in an effort to make translation and interpreting more cost-effective, closed down existing services or merged them. For example, the Department of Transport closed their translation service in the mid-1990s, and in 2006, the Office of Government Procurement advertised tenders for government translation and interpreting work. Individual UK translation companies signed agreements with the government for specific work.

An analysis of government websites purely focusing on the texts which are available there gives rise to a number of questions which deserve further exploration. For example, texts on the UK government website reporting press conferences on the occasion of visits by foreign heads of state are exclusively in English. Even when there is an explicit reference to the use of another language, as in the example below from a press conference with the Portuguese Prime Minister on 9 July 2007 in London, there is no explicit indication of translation or interpreting:

Prime Minister:

Ladies and Gentlemen I am delighted that my first foreign visitor to No 10 should be the President of the European Union Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister of Portugal. [...]

Mr Socrates:

Thank you Prime Minister. I will speak in Portuguese, if you don't mind. It will be better for me and better for you.

I would like to start by thanking you Prime Minister for inviting me here.

[...]

(<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page12381.asp>; last accessed 16 March 2009)

The statement by the Portuguese Prime Minister is given in English only, with no option to access his speech in the original Portuguese. Although it is clear from this extract that interpreting was provided, it is actually invisible on the website.

A comparative analysis of the websites of the German and the US-American governments show that practices are different in the case of press conferences. The German government website has press conferences with foreign heads of state visiting Germany in German, with a sentence right at the top stating that the transcript of the foreign text was provided on the basis of consecutive or simultaneous interpreting. The US government website puts the phrase 'as translated' in brackets after the first turn by the politician, as can be illustrated with an extract from the joint press conference by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and former US President George Bush, held in Stralsund, Germany, on 13 July 2006, on the occasion of a visit by Bush to Germany.

CHANCELLOR MERKEL: (As translated.) Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be able to welcome the President of the United States here in Stralsund yet again. [...]

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060713-4.html>; last accessed 16 March 2009)

There is, however, another interesting difference in the transcripts of press conferences: whereas the US government website reproduces the statements verbatim as they were made, some revision process is in place for the German government's website. The transcripts reflect the fact that the orally delivered contributions by speakers and their interpreters are grammatically and stylistically improved to a certain extent for the written texts. This can be seen in another extract from the Merkel and Bush press conference in Stralsund:

Bush: You know, on the Iranian issue, for example, the last time that we were together we talked – spent a lot of time on Iran, and the Chancellor was wondering whether or not the United States would ever come to the table to negotiate with the Iranians. You made that pretty clear to me that you thought it was something – an option we ought to consider, which I did. And I made it clear to the Iranians that if they were to do what they said they would do, which is to stop enrichment in a verifiable fashion, we're more than pleased to come back to the table. [...]

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060713-4.html>; last accessed 27 November 2008)

Das tun wir auch, was den Iran betrifft. Bei unserem letzten Treffen haben wir mit dieser Frage sehr viel Zeit verbracht. Dabei wurde die Frage gestellt: Werden sich die Vereinigten Staaten jemals zum Verhandlungstisch begeben? Die Bundeskanzlerin hat mich auch dazu aufgefordert, darüber nachzudenken. Ich habe dann Folgendes gesagt: Wenn die Iraner nachweislich mit der Urananreicherung aufhören, dann werden wir zum Verhandlungstisch zurückkehren.

(Literally: We do the same in respect of Iran. At our last meeting we devoted much time to this issue. Then the question was asked: Will the United States ever come to the table to negotiate? The Chancellor asked me to reflect about this. I then said the following: If there is evidence that the Iranians stop uranium enrichment, then we will return to the table to negotiate.)

([http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2006/07/2006-07-13pressekonferenz-merkel-bush.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2006/07/2006-07-13pressekonferenz-merkel-bush.html); last accessed 27 November 2008)

The transcript on the White House website reflects the typical features of oral speech (e.g. false starts, self corrections), whereas in German, Bush's discourse is fluent and grammatically correct (see also Schäffner 2008). The reasons behind these practices still need to be investigated.

Press conferences are increasingly made available in full on government websites, but in addition, journalists who are present at such press conferences will also write reports for publication in the media they represent. This can mean writing for a newspaper in a third country, which makes the language and translation processes even more complex (and in all probability even more invisible). For example, if a journalist from France representing a French newspaper were to attend a press conference held in Germany on the occasion of a state visit to Germany by the Italian Prime Minister, and at the press conference the statements in Italian were interpreted into German, that French journalist would have to understand German and/or Italian or rely on interpreting from German and/or Italian into French or rely on subsequent translation of the transcript of the press



conference into French in order to write a report for a French newspaper. Since normally, interpreting is not provided at international press conferences for foreign journalists, they are expected to understand the language of the host country or at least understand the language of the foreign guest. This scenario also highlights the link between politics, media and translation. The media not only play a role when reporting on press conferences, they can also make it possible for politicians to present their views directly to readers in the pages of a newspaper or via TV (interviews are a good example, provided they are not shortened and/or amended). And as already illustrated above, journalists also have a role to play in mediating between politicians and the public. In this mediating role across linguistic, cultural and ideological boundaries, some of the transformations that occur in the recontextualisation processes can be politically significant and can result in different interpretations of the 'same' political event by readers in different countries and even in political conflict. We will give some illustrative examples in the following section.

### **Political discourse, media and translation**

If we compare different language versions of the 'same' text in different media, we can notice changes which cannot be explained purely with reference to stylistic reasons. Let us take two examples. The first example is the opening paragraph of a joint article by the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and the British Foreign Secretary David Miliband which was published in English in the *International Herald Tribune* on 14 October 2007, and subsequently made available in German translation on the website of the UK Embassy in Germany and in French on the website of the French Embassy in the UK, cf.:

The world has reacted with horror to the Burmese regime's brutal crackdown against its own people. Monks, nuns and ordinary citizens took to the streets peacefully in protest at the deterioration of the economic situation in the country. They were met with guns and batons.

We cannot know for sure the number of those who were killed, but it is likely to be many more than the regime is willing to admit. [...] Meanwhile, the persecution continues: The security forces carry out new raids and new arrests every night. [...] (<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/10/14/opinion/edkouchner.php>, also: <http://www.britischebotschaft.de/en/news/items/071014.htm>; last accessed 27 November 2008)

Mit Entsetzen hat die Welt auf das brutale Vorgehen des Regimes in Birma gegen sein eigenes Volk reagiert. Mönche, Nonnen und normale Bürgerinnen und Bürger waren auf die Straße gegangen, um friedlich gegen die Verschlechterung ihrer wirtschaftlichen Lage zu protestieren. Das Regime reagierte mit Gewehren und Schlagstöcken.

Die genaue Zahl der Todesopfer kennen wir nicht, aber sie liegt wahrscheinlich viel höher, als das Regime zuzugeben bereit ist. [...]. Inzwischen setzt das Regime seine Repressalien fort: Die Sicherheitskräfte führen jede Nacht neue Razzien und Verhaftungen durch. [...]

(<http://www.britischebotschaft.de/de/news/items/071014.htm>; last accessed 27 November 2008)

Whereas the agent is left implicit in '[t]hey were met with guns and batons' and in 'the persecution continues', the German version has an explicit reference to 'the regime' in both cases ('Das Regime reagierte mit Gewehren und Schlagstöcken' – Literally: The regime reacted with guns and batons; 'setzt das Regime seine Repressalien fort' – Literally: The regime is continuing its repressive measures). It could be argued that as a result of such a strategy, the active role of the regime has been put more in the foreground. The French version of this text has the same passive structure as the English text, cf.:

La brutalité avec laquelle le régime birman a réprimé son propre peuple nous a tous horrifiés. Des moines, des nonnes et des citoyens ordinaires, descendus pacifiquement dans la rue pour protester contre la situation économique du pays, ont été accueillis à coups de fusils et de gourdin.

Le chiffre exact des morts et des blessés reste inconnu et il est probablement beaucoup plus élevé que celui avancé par les autorités. [...] Et, pendant ce temps, les persécutions continuent: les forces de sécurité procèdent chaque nuit à de nouveaux raids et à de nouvelles arrestations. [...]

(<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/Renforcer-la-pression-sur-la.html>; last accessed 27 November 2008)

Since the complete German text does not reflect a significantly foregrounded role for the regime, it would not really be justified to say that the German translator chose such a strategy deliberately in order to show his or her own political attitude and engagement.

In the following example, however, it was not the complete text that was published, but only extracts. The example comes from an interview which the former Russian President Putin gave to a selected group of journalists from the G8 countries on 1 June 2007. One newspaper or magazine from each country had been invited to send one journalist, and the interview was conducted in Putin's residence, with simultaneous

interpreting, and lasted for several hours. As expected, various newspapers reported differently about this interview, in terms of content, quantity, focus and layout (for a more detailed analysis see Schäffner 2008, in press). A complete transcript in Russian is available on the website of *Kommersant*, the Russian daily newspaper which had been invited to the interview. *Information Clearing House* (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17855.htm>; last accessed 24 June 2009) has - in its own words - a full transcript of the interview in English, with a total length of 19,259 words. All the other newspapers have much shorter texts, ranging from 1,461 words in *Le Figaro* to 2,291 words in *Der Spiegel*. The information selected for publication differs and is determined mainly by the national political interests. There are also differences in the way the information has been arranged.

In the course of the interview, Putin was questioned about the role of democracy in Russia. In his answer, he compared Russia to other countries, and his comments also contain a reference to Guantanamo. A detailed micro-level analysis of some of the newspapers reveals striking differences:

<i>Information Clearing House</i>	Just look at what's happening in North America, it's simply awful: torture, homeless people, Guantanamo, people detained without trial and investigation
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	In Amerika wird gefoltert, zum Beispiel in Guantanamo,
<i>Spiegel International</i>	The Americans torture at Guantanamo,
<i>Times Online</i>	"Let us look what is happening in North America. It is horrible – torture, the homeless, Guantanamo, detention without normal court proceedings."
<i>Le Figaro</i>	Voyez les États-Unis: des tortures horribles, des sans-abri, Guantanamo.
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Let us see what is happening in North America: Just horrible torture. The homeless. Guantanamo. Detentions without normal court proceedings."
<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	Per esempio noi non abbiamo la pena di morte e nemmeno i senza casa, Guantánamo, la tortura, [...]

Changes in the syntactic and semantic structure result in a modification of focus and evaluation. *International Clearing House* presents a list of things as happening in North America, with the implication that these are acts which do not fit a democratic society. The English version is very close to the Russian one published by *Kommersant*. The same list is used in *The Times*, *Le Figaro* (although here slightly shortened), and in *Globe and Mail* (in a slightly different order). Whereas in *International Clearing*

*House* and *Times* all examples are evaluated as ‘awful’ (or ‘horrible’), in both *Le Figaro* and *Globe and Mail* only ‘torture’ is qualified by this evaluative adjective. Both the German and the English version of *Spiegel* mention only ‘torture’, with the transformations reflecting a change of transitivity. In the German version (Literally: There is torture applied in America, for example in Guantanamo), the passive form of the verb for ‘torture’ is used, which puts emphasis on the action, and the space where this action happens is enlarged (‘in America’). In the online *Spiegel International*, an active sentence is used, thus putting the focus on the agents of torturing (‘the Americans’), and the area of action specified as Guantanamo. In *Corriere della Sera*, Putin speaks about Russia (Literally: ‘For example, we do not have the death penalty and not even homeless people, Guantánamo, torture, [...]’), thus setting Russia apart from other, not named, countries.

Does this focus on the actors in *Spiegel International* reflect a deliberate intention to make readers aware of deplorable acts? It could be argued that the decision to leave this part of the interview in the published version in combination with the changed structure has given more prominence to this argument (*Spiegel* also opted for the main title ‘I’m a True Democrat’, which is another extract from the interview which related to the issue of democracy in Russia – in contrast, *Globe and Mail* had chosen as its main title ‘Putin threatens to target Europe’, and the whole text focuses on issues of armament, Russian missile deployment, and a potential new Cold War). One of the associations and groups that see their task in monitoring the media and expose cases of misrepresentation and biased reporting, *Davids Medienkritik* (<http://www.dmko.info/>; last accessed 16 June 2009), has repeatedly criticised *Spiegel International* for its supposed anti-Americanism and its mistranslations. Although the comments on Davids Medienkritik reflect that the underlying concept of translation is one of literal translation, a systematic analysis of German and English versions of the texts in *Spiegel* and *Spiegel International* might well reveal that the transformations that occur in the process of translation could be motivated by the translators’ own political stance – but a larger corpus of texts would need to be analysed before such a conclusion could be drawn.

Chung (2008) gives a similar example of the reformulation of a syntactic structure that resulted in a change of perspective on an event. In an English translation (produced by the Chinese government) of a speech by the Chinese Prime Minister in March 2008, the Prime Minister explained the riots in Tibet as “an incident of beating, smashing up properties, looting and arson” and “a small number of violent rioters

attacked or even killed innocent people with extreme cruelty.” In this text, as in the original Chinese text, the rioting thus refers to a campaign of violence by Tibetan activists. In news texts published in British newspapers, however, labels such as ‘violence’ and ‘riots’ were situated in a different perspective. For example, the *Financial Times* (19 March 2008) says: “The protests started [...] as peaceful demonstrations [...] They turned into widespread violence on Friday following reports of a Chinese crackdown.”. That is, it is the crackdown by the Chinese government that is presented as having turned the demonstrations into violence. Such a perspective, which re-distributes the agency of an activity, fits the normal way of reporting about China in the UK.

What these examples demonstrate is that the media play an important role in the transmission of information about politics and political events from other countries, thus also influencing impressions and reactions of the public, as well as (potentially and in reality) influencing actions by home politicians. That is, without media, there would not really be any politics and international relations. In reporting about politics, however, information gets recontextualised, and more often than not, information is presented from a different perspective.

## Outline of this volume

Despite an increase in translation and in researching translation worldwide, we do not yet know that much about the actual translation practices in political institutions and about the complex interaction between practices in political institutions and those in the media. What exactly happens in the complex processes of recontextualisation across linguistic, cultural and ideological boundaries? What exactly happens in the processes from producing political discourse within a particular national political institution to its (re)presentation in mass media in another language in another country? Who exactly are the agents who are involved in all these processes, and who takes which decisions and why at which point? How are all these complex processes reflected in the texts, in particular, which transformations occur in the recontextualisation processes from the original source text to its representation, for example, in a newspaper or on a government website? How can these transformations be explained and justified? What effect do they have on readers and their perception of policies?

This volume tries to answer some of these questions, which were first discussed at a symposium ‘Political Discourse, Media and Translation’, held at Aston University in February 2007, as part of the AHRC funded

project based at the University of Warwick on ‘The politics and economics of translation in global media’. The contributors all explore the interrelationship between media in the widest sense and translation, with a focus on politics texts, institutional contexts, and translation policies. Most of the authors approach their topic from a Translation Studies perspective, thus bringing a new disciplinary view to the investigation of political discourse and the language of the media. The first part of the volume focuses on textual analysis, investigating transformations that occur from source text to target text, and explaining reasons and effects of such changes in terms of ideology (Loupaki, Gumul, Caimotto), types of positionings (Brownlie), and legitimisation (Federici). The second part of the volume examines institutional contexts, some of which have an impact on the production of translations (Gagnon, Tsai), or on institutional and national policies towards language and translation, either within a multilingual country such as Belgium (van Doorslaer) or within the supranational context of the European Union (Stecconi). The role of new media, especially the Internet, for disseminating political views beyond national borders is discussed by Price in his chapter.

**Siobhan Brownlie** investigates how French politicians and situations (illustrated with reference to the 2007 Presidential elections in France) are “translated” by journalists into a British situation. In these processes of transferring French events, people, and attitudes into terms understandable to a British public, she identifies a number of strategies that are used across all the newspapers she analysed. The way journalists structure their texts for the British public is determined by seven positionings with regard to individual newspapers, genre, journalists, addressees, socio-historical situation of the target culture, intercultural and transcultural relations and attitudes. Her study highlights the important role of foreign correspondents and other journalists who act as intercultural translators and mediators in the representation of foreign news.

**Elpida Loupaki** is concerned with investigating how translators deal with ideological conflict which is evident in news articles. She analysed Greek translations of English news articles and found that translation strategies can reproduce ideological conflict, or erase it, or introduce a new conflict in the target text. Typical techniques are literal translation, neutralization, omission, addition, and explicitation. These strategies can result in a shift of the overall position. Loupaki argues that translators normally try to comply with the ideological profile promoted by the publication they are working for. She queries whether the term “translator” is appropriate to capture all the activities in the context of news (re)production since translation in the news environment is not as innocent