TRANSLATION AS IDEOLOGY: A CASE STUDY OF ARABIC-ENGLISH TEXTS

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ABSTRACT


Much as it would seem palpable, the theory of ideology persists to date to be a trying leitmotif that calls for further study and research. Within the framework of an interdisciplinary project on translation and ideology, this thesis discusses a critical theory of translation in which translating text-worlds are conceived of as the basic socio-cognitive representations of translators (language users as social actors) working toward orientating, legitimating, or justifying the interests of a given group (van Dijk, 1996: 7ff.). The study is founded on the notion that translators are usually inclined to intervene, consciously or unconsciously (Mason, 1994), and convey thereof their socio-cognitive sets of beliefs, values, and assumptions to the processing of the text at all levels. Moreover, the scope of this research design transgresses traditional theories by proposing a study of the critical function of translation as a means of affecting our opinions, attitudes, world-views, and ideologies.

In addition, the thesis is informative of some key junctures in the etymology of “ideology”; it identifies several main streams which have been employed by classical and contemporary theorists in their conceptualisation of the term ‘ideology’. The study progresses further by reviewing the related literature, and focusing, subsequently, on an in-depth analysis of three translations of an Arabic text into English; all three translations were managed by leading news agencies (ABC, Associated Press, Reuters) in the post-11 September. The study takes on Thompson’s view apropos of the theory of ideology as a model for analysis and discussion. That is, the discussion develops
with recourse to: (a) analysis of linguistic analytic devices through the study of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) and the Hallidayan functional grammar, and (b) content analysis, i.e. in terms of omission, addition, permutation, and merged ideological distortion. To a certain degree, the findings support the tacit view that ideology permeates translation; more intriguing, still, this research design shows that translation acts as a means of affecting our opinions, attitudes, world-views, and ideologies. Finally, the research recommends that similar studies be undertaken so that a more solid critical theory of translating can be developed as regards: (a) ideological studies, and (b) intercultural studies, considering the inherent intercultural aspect of translation.

KEY WORDS: translation, ideology, bias, distortion, media institutions, power, control, systemic functional grammar, critical discourse analysis, content analysis.