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# Transitivity in Translating

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Preface by Ian Mason

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Peter Lang

This is why, when, by the end of 1997, I completed a PhD thesis on what was in effect language and politics, the time was as ripe as ever for the topic. The thesis – entitled *Transitivity in Translating. The Interdependence of Text and Context. A Contrastive Study of Original and Translated Speeches in English and Spanish from the European Parliament* (Calzada-Pérez, 1997) – was on language and politics in the widest of senses. As far as language was concerned, the thesis did not study phenomena in one language but opened its spectrum to two (original and translated) languages (English and Spanish) as tools to facilitate/hinder communicative encounters. The concept of politics, in turn, was enlarged to incorporate (pragma-semiotic) ideology. I published extensively on these topics (as one tends to do when one finishes a PhD). For almost 10 years now, I have always encountered the same, logical interest in language and politics and this has meant that I have been contacted by scholars from as diverse parts of the world as Korea or Argentina, enquiring about such PhD research. This interest has encouraged me, almost ten years later, to re-read the initial manuscript and publish it to make it more accessible to those interested.

The present book, therefore, starts from the observation that, during the process of translating, very often unwarranted (even unconscious or unintended) effects are created. Thus, it is not uncommon to encounter Target Texts (TTs) that contain what are sometimes regarded as more or less insignificant changes at a tangible level of communication. These may, however, unleash unwarranted divergences at other pragma-semiotic (ideological) levels of communication which are frequently not accounted for.

One linguistic phenomenon which is believed to be a particular potent source of such changes, but which is relatively unexplored by the literature on translation studies, is transitivity. Consequently, the previous general observation has been narrowed down as the following hypothesis:

Shifts of transitivity in translating will result in the creation of unwarranted effects at different levels of communication. The consequences may be pragma-semiotic (ideological)

In order to investigate this hypothesis, three basic resources are required:

- 1) an overall framework for the study of language as a communicative activity (bearing in mind that translation is a communicative activity);
- 2) a descriptive/analytic tool for the study of transitivity in translation;  
and
- 3) a corpus of source texts (STs) and target texts (TTs) in which transitivity can be investigated, by using the descriptive tool devised (2) against the background of the overall framework proposed (1).