

‘The Prime Minister said ...’: Voices in translated political texts

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Summary

A variety of texts are translated to fulfil functions for political communication across languages, cultures, and ideologies. For example, newspapers regularly provide quotes of statements by foreign politicians, without explicitly indicating that these politicians were actually speaking in their own languages. Politicians react to statements by other politicians as they were presented to them in translation. Political scientists and other experts often debate the potential political consequences of (the translation of) a statement.

This chapter addresses the (in)visibility of translation in political communication and the link between textual profiles of translations and the socio-political contexts in which they are produced. The analyses are conducted from the perspective of Translation Studies. The focus is on institutionalised forms of political discourse, i.e. texts that originate in political or media institutions. The link between translation profiles and the social, institutional, ideological conditions of text production is illustrated with reference to authentic political texts (interviews, speeches by politicians, press conferences), mainly involving English, French and German as source and target languages.

Introduction

The mass media play an important role in mediating between politicians and the general public. As members of the public, we tend to get our information about politicians’ speeches and statements from reports in the mass media rather than attending the actual event itself where a speech is delivered. The following three examples illustrate this mediating role of the press:

“Ever since the introduction of the 35-hour week, we’ve heard discussion about purchasing power, not about salaries,” Sarkozy said – rebuffing the business leaders’ frequent retort that purchasing power is mostly an old union chestnut to justify demands for pay hikes.
(<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1658113,00.html?xid=feed-cnn-topics> – last accessed 10 July 2008)

“It is our common wish [...] that we get more transparency in financial markets,” Merkel said after a regular informal meeting with Sarkozy at a government guest house north of Berlin.
(<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2776769,00.html> – last accessed 10 July 2008)

Mr Putin argued that “an arms race is unfolding”, but blamed the US for starting it [...] He cautioned that “we do not want to use our resources” for an arms race [...]
(<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article1878792.ece?print=yes> – last accessed 25 June 2008)

Journalists report about events (e.g. an informal meeting between two heads of government in example two), and in doing so, they quote the politicians verbatim (signalled by speech marks and the verb ‘say’). The direct speech, however, is often combined with some form of evaluation (cf. ‘rebuffing’ in example one, ‘argue’, ‘blame’, ‘caution’ in example three). Reports in the mass media about one event which occurred at an earlier stage can be described as a form of recontextualisation. The discursive strategies involved in such

recontextualisation processes involve information selection and transformation. There is, however, one more aspect which these three examples have in common: the texts provide direct speech in English by French, German, and Russian politicians, respectively. There is no explicit information about the language actually used by the politicians. Example 2 refers to a meeting held in Berlin, and the usual diplomatic practice of such meetings is that the politicians use their mother tongues and the talks are interpreted. That is, all three examples reflect recontextualisation across linguistic and cultural boundaries, which means that translation and/or interpreting – although invisible – had been involved.

In this chapter, I will illustrate the role of translation with reference to three discourse types which are typical of political communication, i.e. (i) political interviews, (ii) political speeches, and (iii) press conferences. Particular attention will be paid to the transformations that occur in recontextualisation processes from the original event to the reports in the mass media. Blackledge (2005) argues that in addition to subtle linguistic transformations such as adapting a quote to make it fit the syntactic structure of a sentence, recontextualisation also often involves the “filtering of some meaning potentials of a discourse” (Blackledge 2005: 121), which is reflected in omissions, additions, and reformulations of the initial text in the new context. This also holds true for recontextualisation processes which include translation.

Political interview

Example three above is an extract from a report in *The Times* about an interview with the former Russian President Putin. The *Times*' report was also referred to in a press briefing from the Prime Minister's Official Spokesman on 4 June 2007, cf:

Asked what the Prime Minister's response was to President Putin's words in the Times, the Prime Minister's Official Spokesman (PMOS) replied that the new missile defence system that was being put forward by the US was not aimed at Russia, as had been made clear. [...] Put that President Putin had said that he would start targeting Europe, the PMOS replied [...]
(<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page11834.asp> – last accessed 19 July 2008)

The phrase “Putin's words in the Times”, however, hides the complexity of linguistic mediation that was involved in producing this report. Putin had given this interview to a selected group of journalists from the G8 countries, representing the German weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* and the daily newspapers *The Times* from the United Kingdom, *Le Figaro* from France, *Kommersant* from Russia, *Wall Street Journal* from the USA, *The Globe and Mail* from Canada, *Corriere della Sera* from Italy, and *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* from Japan. The interview was conducted on 1 June 2007 in Putin's residence. Simultaneous interpreting was provided, although the interpreters are not visible in photos of the interview (cf. http://212.248.33.60/p771175/r_1/Putin,_G8/; the journalists can be seen wearing small headphones).

The whole interview lasted for several hours and included a dinner. As is to be expected, the various newspapers reported differently about this event, in terms of content, quantity, focus and layout. In the complex processes of recontextualisation, a number of transformations occurred, most obviously transformations from spoken discourse to written text (transcription of the interview); from one language into another (which in itself was a complex process, involving recording the interpreters' renderings and probably additional translation work for the subsequent publication); from full-length text to extracts; from an

initial copy to the published text. However, translation is invisible in the texts as published in the mass media. Only *Globe and Mail* mentions translation in its report, saying “Mr. Putin's remarks, translated from Russian, [...]”. None of the other papers include an explicit reference to the fact that translation and interpreting was involved.

A comparison of the reports in some of the newspapers which were accessible (i.e. the print version of *Der Spiegel*, and the online versions of *Spiegel International*, *The Times*, *Le Figaro*, *Kommersant* in the original Russian and in English, *Globe and Mail*, *Corriere della Sera*) revealed a number of recontextualisation strategies. The most obvious difference is the length of the texts. *Information Clearing House*, which presents itself as “an independent media source” (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/who.htm>) indicated its text as being a full transcript of the interview, with a total length of 19,259 words. This text, however, is exclusively in English, and there is no information about the role of translation. All the other newspapers analysed 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.

The information about the event itself is found either at the very beginning of the text, in a sur-title or in a sub-title, or in a separate box on a page, or in the text itself, and ranges from a short list of the newspapers present to evaluative comments about the dinner served or Putin's behaviour. *Der Spiegel*, *Le Figaro*, and *Corriere della Sera* kept the question-answer format of the interview genre. *The Times*, *Kommersant* and *Globe and Mail* transformed the initial interview into a report and integrated some direct quotes, combined with ‘he said’, ‘he added’, in the text. The actual interviewers, i.e. the journalists, are identified only in *Information Clearing House*, although only by the name of the newspaper they represent. In most of the newspapers which retained the interview format, only the labels ‘Question’ and ‘Putin’ are used. In some papers, however, the reader gets the impression that the interview was granted solely to this one newspaper. This is in particular the case for *The Times* and *Le Figaro*, as can be seen from the information provided in the lead (see Table 1 below).

	Main title	Lead
<i>Information Clearing House</i> (online)	Russian President Putin's Interview with G8 Newspaper Journalists	President Vladimir Putin Fields Questions from G8 Member Countries' Newspaper Journalists
<i>Der Spiegel</i> (German print version) 4 June 2007	“Ich bin ein echter Demokrat”	Staatspräsident Wladimir Putin über den Raketenstreit mit den USA, die gefährdete Zusammenarbeit mit Westfirmen bei der Energieerschließung von russischem Erdgas und Demokratiedefizite bei Europäern und Amerikanern
<i>Spiegel International</i> (English, online) 4 June 2007	‘I am a True Democrat’	Russian President Vladimir Putin discusses the missile dispute with the United States, the risks of cooperating with Western companies in the production of Russian natural gas and what he describes as democratic deficiencies in the United States and Europe
<i>The Times (Online)</i> 4 June 2007	‘I'm a pure and absolute democrat. It's a tragedy that I'm the only one.’	Vladimir Putin tells our correspondent that he is Gandhi's true heir and warns against hypocrisy on human rights
<i>Le Figaro</i> (online) 4 June 2007	Poutine: “La Russe devra choisir des cibles	Dans un entretien au Figaro, le président russe réplique au projet américain de système antimissiles en menaçant de pointer ses propres engins sur des cibles en Europe.

	en Europe”	
<i>Kommersant</i> (online, English version – content and layout identical to Russian version) 4 June 2007	Putin Serves Up a Hot Menu	G8 Journalists Dine with Russian President On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave an interview to journalists from the countries of the G8. <i>Kommersant</i> special correspondent Andrei Kolesnikov, a participant in the meeting, recounts the dramatic story of Putin’s swim in the fraught waters of international media. We’ll all just have to wait for the dramatic story of Putin’s decision to extend the president’s term in office to seven years.
<i>Globe and Mail</i> (online) 4 June 2007	Putin threatens to target Europe	He also lashes out at NATO and insists he's world's only true democrat.
<i>Corriere della Sera</i> (online) 4 June 2007	Putin: pronto a puntare i missili sull'Europa	Intervista al presidente russo: le manifestazioni represses? Sciocchezze

Table 1

The main titles, and in particular the sub-titles (or the lead, van Dijk 1985), mention the topics which the respective newspapers identified as most relevant to their own country. Several papers gave prominence to the quote ‘I’m a democrat’, either in the main title or in the sub-title, which is an extract from an exchange between Putin and the correspondent for *Der Spiegel* (Schäffner in press a). Four papers chose to include the topic of the missile dispute into their main title or sub-title (*Spiegel*, *Figaro*, *Globe and Mail*, *Corriere della Sera*). *The Times* has only a relatively short extract (108 words out of a total of 1,804 words) devoted to this issue, but it was the only topic addressed at the press briefing from the Prime Minister’s Official Spokesman, mentioned above.

What is interesting is the way in which the information was selected and presented, in terms of quantity and style of presentation. If we take International Clearing House as – in their own words – providing a complete transcript of the text, we see differences in how the various newspapers reported about the topic of the missile defence systems. It is twice in the interview that this topic is addressed. The first time is at the beginning of the interview, initiated by a question asked by *Der Spiegel* (“Are we once again approaching a Cold War?”) and followed up by the *Wall Street Journal*. There is a long answer by Putin, of which only the second part is given in Table 2 below (layout and font as in the original texts):

<i>Information Clearing House</i>	<p>WALL STREET JOURNAL: A follow-up to the previous question. One of the most acute recent problems between Washington and Moscow has been American plans to install elements of a missile defence system in Europe. Since Russia is very radically opposed to this system and the White House confirms that it will go along ahead regardless, the confrontation becomes more pronounced [...] What does Russia gain by being so fiercely opposed to this system? Are you hoping that Washington will eventually abandon its plans to install an anti-missile defence system or do you have other goals, since Washington has already said that it will not allow Russia to veto this programme?</p> <p>VLADIMIR PUTIN: [...] And now I would like to give a definite answer to your question: what do we want? First of all, we want to be heard. We want our position to be understood. We do not exclude that our American partners might reconsider their decision. We are not imposing anything on anyone. But we are proceeding from common sense and think that everyone else could also use their common sense. But if</p>
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	<p>this does not take place then we will absolve ourselves from the responsibility of our retaliatory steps because we are not initiating what is certainly growing into a new arms race in Europe. And we want everybody to understand very clearly that we are not going to bear responsibility for this arms race. For example, when they try to shift this responsibility to us in connection with our efforts to improve our strategic nuclear weapons. We did not initiate the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. But what response did we give when we discussed this issue with our American partners? We said that we do not have the resources and desire to establish such a system. But as professionals we both understand that a missile defence system for one side and no such a system for the other creates an illusion of security and increases the possibility of a nuclear conflict.</p> <p>I am speaking purely theoretically – this has no personal dimension. It is destroying the strategic equilibrium in the world. In order to restore that balance without setting up a missile defence system we will have to create a system to overcome missile defence, and this is what we are doing now.</p> <p>At that point our partners said: “there’s nothing wrong, we are not enemies, we are not going to work against one another”. We would point out that we are simply answering them: “we warned you, we talked about this, you answered us a certain way. So we are going to do what we said we would”. And if they put a missile defence system in Europe – and we are warning this today – there will be retaliatory measures. We need to ensure our security. And we are not the proponents of this process.</p> <p>And, finally, the last thing. Again I would not want you to suffer from the illusion that we have fallen out of love with anyone. But I sometimes think to myself: why are they doing all this? Why are our American partners trying so obstinately to deploy a missile defence system in Europe when – and this is perfectly obvious – it is not needed to defend against Iranian or – even more obvious – North Korean missiles? (We all know where North Korea is and the kind of range these missiles would need to have to be able to reach Europe.) So it is clearly not against them and it is clearly not against us because it is obvious to everyone that Russia is not preparing to attack anybody. Then why? Is it perhaps to ensure that we carry out these retaliatory measures? And to prevent a further rapprochement between Russian and Europe? If this is the case (and I am not claiming so, but it is a possibility), then I believe that this would be yet another mistake because that is not the way to improve international peace and security.</p>
<p><i>Der Spiegel</i></p>	<p>FRAGE: Was wollen Sie denn?</p> <p>Putin: Wir wollen, dass man uns anhört. Wir schließen nicht aus, dass unsere amerikanischen Partner ihre Entscheidung überprüfen können, und hoffen auf Vernunft. Wenn die ausbleibt, dann müssen wir reagieren. Wir sind nicht schuld, wenn ein neues Wettrüsten in Europa beginnt, wir lassen uns auch nicht eine solche Schuld zuschieben, wenn wir jetzt das System unserer eigenen Nuklearwaffen vervollkommen. Das Abwehrsystem schafft nur die Illusion, dass man geschützt ist - rein theoretisch aber wird die Möglichkeit zur Entfesselung eines nuklearen Konfliktes dadurch sogar größer. Die strategische Balance in der Welt wird gestört. Um sie wiederherzustellen, müssen wir ein System zur Überwindung dieser amerikanischen Waffen schaffen.</p> <p>FRAGE: Weshalb versuchen die Amerikaner denn so hartnäckig, diese Pläne zu verwirklichen, wenn sie ganz offensichtlich nicht erforderlich sind?</p> <p>Putin: Womöglich etwa dafür, dass wir jetzt Antwortschritte unternehmen und dadurch keine weitere Annäherung Russlands an Europa zustande kommt? Ich behaupte es nicht, aber das ist eine Möglichkeit. Wenn es so wäre, dann wäre es ein weiterer Fehler.</p>
<p><i>Spiegel International</i></p>	<p>QUESTION: What exactly do you want?</p> <p>Putin: What are we striving for? We want to be heard. We do not exclude (the possibility) that our American partners might rethink their decision. I think that everyone possesses common sense. But if this does not happen, we cannot be held responsible for our reciprocal steps. Because it is not us who have initiated the arms race that is pending in Europe. We want everyone to understand that we will not assume any responsibility for that. Nor will we allow ourselves to be blamed if we now improve our strategic nuclear weapons system. This system of missile defense creates the illusion of being protected, but it increases the possibility of unleashing a nuclear conflict. So there is a violation, an imbalance of strategic equilibrium in the</p>

	<p>world, and in order to provide for the balance we will need to establish systems that would be able to penetrate the missile defense system.</p> <p>QUESTION: Why are the Americans so obstinate about putting these plans into practice, if it is so clear that they are unnecessary?</p> <p>Putin: Possibly this is to push us to make reciprocal steps in order to avoid further closeness of Russia and Europe. I am not stipulating that, but I cannot exclude this possibility. But if it is so, then it is another mistake again.</p>
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Table 2

What we can see in *Der Spiegel* is that the long answer by Putin was both shortened and transformed to reflect a more balanced question-answer format. One question was added at the beginning (“Was wollen Sie denn?” / “What exactly do you want?”). In its English version, this added question is being repeated by Putin (“What are we striving for?”). Moreover, one of Putin’s own rhetorical questions in the middle of his answer (“But I sometimes think to myself: why are they doing all this? Why are our American partners trying so obstinately to deploy a missile defence system in Europe [...]?”) has been turned into a question (“Weshalb versuchen die Amerikaner denn so hartnäckig, diese Pläne zu verwirklichen, wenn sie ganz offensichtlich nicht erforderlich sind?” / “Why are the Americans so obstinate about putting these plans into practice, if it is so clear that they are unnecessary?”). In this case, Putin’s voice has become the voice of *Der Spiegel*. Normally, the English texts on *Spiegel International* are translated from the German (see Schäffner 2005). In this case, however, the English version is closer to the transcript provided by *International Clearing House*, although the strategy of turning Putin’s own question into a journalist’s question is the same. It may well be the case that the German text underwent some more editing before the final text was published. One of the factors that govern journalists’ practices is speed, and this may explain the slight differences in this extract (however, in the vast part of the texts the German and the English versions are very similar indeed).

The topic of missile defences is taken up again later in the interview, initiated by a question from *Kommersant*, followed by a long answer by Putin (1,124 words). This is followed by another question by *Kommersant*, an answer, a follow-up question by *Corriere della Sera*, and a continuing answer. It is this second extract that was taken up in the reports by *Globe and Mail* and *Le Figaro*, whereas *The Times* combines information from both extracts in its short report. Table 3 below illustrates these differences.

<p><i>Information Clearing House</i></p>	<p>KOMMERSANT: [...] I would like to ask: do you not think it is possible to talk about certain compromises, to engage in compromises, to look even occasionally, even for show, at public opinion in Europe, in America and, finally, in Russia? Do you not think that this present course is leading nowhere? It is becoming, even gaining new strength with, this arms race, with these missiles of ours. To what purpose?</p> <p>VLADIMIR PUTIN: Frankly, I find this question quite strange and unexpected. An arms race really is unfolding. Well, was it we who withdrew from the ABM Treaty? We must react to what our partners do. [...]</p> <p>KOMMERSANT: When I mentioned public opinion in Russia I was referring to the fact that, as I understand it, public opinion in Russia would be strongly opposed to a new arms race after the one the Soviet Union lost.</p> <p>VLADIMIR PUTIN: And I am also against an arms race. I am opposed to any kind of arms race but I would like to quickly draw your attention to something I said in last year’s Address [to the Federal Assembly]. We have learned from the Soviet Union’s experience and we will</p>
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	<p>not be drawn into an arms race that anyone imposes on us. We will not respond symmetrically, we will respond with other methods and means that are no less effective. This is called an asymmetrical response.</p> <p>The United States are building a huge and costly missile defence system which will cost dozens and dozens of billions of dollars. We said: “no, we are not going to be pulled into this race. We will construct systems that will be much cheaper yet effective enough to overcome the missile defence system and therefore maintain the balance of power in the world.” And we are going to proceed this way in the future. [...]</p> <p>CORRIERE DELLA SERA: Mr President, two more points [...] And the second point. You said that you do not want to participate in an arms race. But if the United States continues building a strategic shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, will we not return to the situation and times in which the former Soviet Union’s nuclear forces were focused on European cities, on European targets?</p> <p>VLADIMIR PUTIN: Certainly. Of course we will return to those times. And it is clear that if part of the United States’ nuclear capability is situated in Europe and that our military experts consider that they represent a potential threat then we will have to take appropriate retaliatory steps. What steps? Of course we must have new targets in Europe. And determining precisely which means will be used to destroy the installations that our experts believe represent a potential threat for the Russian Federation is a matter of technology. Ballistic or cruise missiles or a completely new system. I repeat that it is a matter of technology.</p>
<i>Times Online</i>	<p>Mr Putin argued that “an arms race is unfolding”, but blamed the US for starting it by quitting the 1972 AntiBallistic Missile Treaty in 2002, planning to deploy missiles in outer space and developing smaller nuclear weapons. He cautioned that “we do not want to use our resources” for an arms race and that “we will find an asymmetric answer”, pointing missiles at Europe or declining to cut conventional forces near Europe. “Of course, we are returning to that time” when Russian missiles were aimed directly at Europe, he said. Nor did he offer hopes of gentler treatment for Russia’s neighbours with whom he has picked recent fights.</p>
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	<p>Asked what he might do to retaliate, he said he would return to the Cold War practice of having Russian ballistic missiles programmed to strike targets in Europe – in this case, he said, the Czech and Polish antimissile sites as well as new U.S. bases in Bulgaria and Romania.</p> <p>“It is obvious that if part of the strategic nuclear potential of the United States is located in Europe, and according to our military experts will be threatening us, we will have to respond,” he said.</p> <p>“What kind of steps are we going to take in response? Of course, we are going to get new targets in Europe.”</p> <p>He suggested that this could include powerful nuclear-capable weapons.</p> <p>“What kind of means will be used to hit the targets that our military believe are potential threats to the Russian federation? This is a purely technical issue, be it ballistic missiles or cruise missiles, or some kinds of novel weapons systems – this is a purely technical issue.”</p> <p>But Mr. Putin explained at length that Russia sees itself being forced into this position – which he described as an “arms race” but said he regretted – because of the actions of the United States. In 2002, the Americans withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and Washington has never signed the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty, designed to end the Cold War military standoff.</p> <p>“There is a violation, an imbalance of strategic equilibrium in the world, and in order to provide for the balance, without establishing our own antimissile defence system, we will need to establish those systems which would be able to penetrate the missile defence systems.”</p>
<i>Le Figaro</i>	<p>Allons-nous donc revenir à l'époque où des missiles étaient pointés sur l'Europe occidentale ?</p> <p>Oui. Nous sommes en train de revenir à cette époque. Nos experts militaires nous disent que le système antimissile menace le territoire de la Russie jusqu'à l'Oural. Si une partie du potentiel nucléaire des États-Unis est en Europe, nous devons trouver une réponse. Bien sûr, nous devons avoir des cibles en Europe. Quels moyens utiliserons-nous ? Des missiles balistiques, des missiles de croisière ou de nouveaux systèmes d'armements, c'est une question technique. Je suis contre toute course aux armements. Nous avons appris de l'expérience de l'URSS. Nous n'allons pas nous laisser entraîner. Les États-Unis vont dépenser des milliards et des milliards de dollars, nous allons bâtir une réponse asymétrique, beaucoup moins chère mais efficace.</p>

Table 3

Le Figaro has slightly rearranged the order of the information, whereas the reporting style in the *Globe and Mail* presents a scenario of threat, with Putin coming across as more proactively striving to deploy new Russian missiles. The transcript in *International Clearing House* shows Putin confirming the potential hypothetical situation described by the journalists in their question (“will we not return to the situation and times in which ...? – Certainly. Of course we will return to those times.”), with the ‘certainly’ and ‘of course’ being linguistic indicators of this communicative strategy of confirming a point expressed by the previous speaker. In the *Globe and Mail*, the answer is linked to a transformed question (“Asked what he might do to retaliate, he said he would return to the Cold War practice of having Russian ballistic missiles programmed to strike targets in Europe”), which results in the scenario of threat for a reader. The short extract in *The Times* provides only a statement (“Of course, we are returning to that time” when Russian missiles were aimed directly at Europe, he said.), although without the preceding question, and thus, too, makes the hypothetical future situation a more dangerous one. We can therefore understand that it is this way of reporting which caused British journalists to focus on this topic at the press briefing.

There is one final example from this interview which I want to comment on. One question concerned democracy and political freedom in Russia. Putin gives a very long answer (608 words), but only the first part of it is rendered in the German and English versions of *Der Spiegel*, with some generalisations and omissions (see Table 4 below).

<p><i>Information Clearing House</i></p>	<p>THE GLOBE AND MAIL: Rumours suggesting that Russia should no longer be a member of the G8 continue to circulate. They say that your country is moving away from the values of liberal democracy, has been unable to improve its record in terms of political freedom, transparency, the development of human rights, and so forth. People are saying that part of the Russian economy has moved away from the principles of free economy and is now back in the hands of the state. According to this point of view, your country might no longer be considered as belonging to the ranks of industrialised countries that make up the G8.</p> <p>How do you respond to such assertions?</p> <p>VLADIMIR PUTIN: I would say that this is the usual stupidity and perhaps motivated by a desire to draw attention to oneself, perhaps to gain some political goals, aggravate problems, or to attract special attention to these issues. We ourselves did not ask to join the G8. It was offered to us and we are delighted to be there.</p> <p>Russia, as you know, is changing and changing very rapidly. Measured in economic terms we are now ninth in the world and by some indicators have already overtaken certain G8 countries. If we consider the magnitude of the economy in a certain way then we have already overtaken some of the G8 countries.</p> <p>Russia has enormous gold and currency reserves, the third largest in the world. Russia has very sound macroeconomic policies and thereby influences the global financial market. Maybe this is not very significant degree today, but nevertheless important. Russia is one of the leading players in international energy policy. I said last year that we had moved into first place as an oil producer, ahead of everybody. And we have already been ranked as the largest producer of natural gas for a long time. Russia’s role and significance in the energy sector are increasing and will continue to grow.</p> <p>After all, Russia is one of the biggest nuclear powers. Let us not forget that Russia is one of the founding members of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council.</p> <p>If someone wants to turn the G8 into an exclusive club for a few members who will try to resolve humanity’s problems among themselves, I think that no good will come of it. On the contrary, we are presently examining the idea of extending the G8 club with a view to involving other countries more systematically in the G8: China, India, Brazil,</p>
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	<p>Mexico and the Republic of South Africa.</p> <p>Let us not be hypocritical about democratic freedoms and human rights. I already said that I have a copy of Amnesty International's report including on the United States. [...]</p>
<i>Der Spiegel</i>	<p>FRAGE: Was antworten Sie Kritikern, die Russland wegen der Verletzung von Bürger- und Menschenrechten aus der G8 ausschließen wollen?</p> <p>Putin: Das wäre eine große Dummheit. Unsere wirtschaftliche Bedeutung wächst und wird noch weiter wachsen. Wir haben die drittgrößten Devisen- und Goldvorräte weltweit. Im vergangenen Jahr sind wir zur Nummer eins in der Ölförderung aufgestiegen, bei Gas haben wir diese Position schon seit langem. Wir sind eine Atommacht und Mitglied des Sicherheitsrates der Vereinten Nationen. Man kann die Probleme der Menschheit nicht lösen, indem wir die G8 in einen exklusiven Club verwandeln. Im Gegenteil: Es wird sogar über eine Ausweitung nachgedacht – beispielsweise durch China, Indien, Brasilien, Mexiko und Südafrika.</p>
<i>Spiegel International</i>	<p>QUESTION: How do you respond to critics who want to see Russia excluded from the G-8 for violations of civil and human rights?</p> <p>Putin: This is another piece of nonsense. Our economic importance is growing and will continue to grow. We have the world's third-largest foreign currency and gold reserves. We became the world's No. 1 oil producer last year and have long been the top producer of natural gas. We are a nuclear power and a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. One cannot solve the problems of humanity by converting the G-8 into an exclusive club. On the contrary, some consideration has been given to enlarging (the G-8) to include, for example, China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa.</p>
<i>Times Online</i>	<p>He dismissed as "another piece of nonsense" suggestions that Russia should be thrown out of the G8 for failing to improve democracy as it promised when it was made a member in 1998. "Let us not be hypocritical on human rights and democratic freedoms," he said in a swipe at other countries, which is his favourite rebuttal technique. "Let us look what is happening in North America. It is horrible – torture, the homeless, Guantanamo, detention without normal court proceedings." In Europe, he said, "we can see violence against demonstrators, the use of gas to disperse rallies".</p>
<i>Le Figaro</i>	<p>Certains disent que la Russie n'a pas sa place au G8 parce qu'elle n'est pas assez démocratique...</p> <p>C'est absurde. La Russie est devenue la neuvième puissance économique au monde et dépasse les pays du G8 dans de nombreux domaines. Quant aux droits de l'homme, je ne veux offenser personne, mais le rapport d'Amnesty International affirme que les États-Unis sont le plus grand pourfendeur des droits de l'homme à l'échelle globale.</p>
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	<p>Throughout the interview, Mr. Putin addressed questions about troubling aspects of the Russian state by citing similar flaws he sees in other nations. He repeatedly quoted from the most recent Amnesty International annual report, which harshly criticized the United States for its human-rights record on antiterrorism activities and the Iraq war. And, when the flaws in Russian democracy were cited, he mentioned the 2000 U.S. presidential elections.</p> <p>"Of course, I am a pure and absolute democrat," he said. "The tragedy is that I am alone. I am the only such pure democrat. There are no such other democrats in the world. Let us see what is happening in North America: Just horrible torture. The homeless. Guantanamo. Detentions without normal court proceedings."</p>
<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	<p>Vladimir Vladimirovich, qualcuno chiede che la Russia sia esclusa dal G8 perché la sua democrazia è troppo imperfetta. Cosa risponde?</p> <p>"È una cosa che non ha senso. Siamo nel G8 perché ci hanno invitati. E per quanto riguarda la nostra democrazia non siamo gli unici ad avere difetti. Con la differenza che gli altri non attraversano un periodo di trasformazioni epocali come noi. Del resto alcune libertà sono garantite da noi meglio che altrove. Per esempio noi non abbiamo la pena di morte e nemmeno i senza casa, Guantánamo, la tortura, la violenza contro i dimostranti".</p>

Table 4

We can see a reference to Guantanamo only in *The Times*, *Le Figaro*, and *Globe and Mail*. This sentence actually occurred in Putin’s response to a question by *Der Spiegel* (“Mr President, former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder called you a ‘pure democrat’. Do you consider yourself such?”). According to the transcript in *International Clearing House*, Putin’s answer started as follows:

VLADIMIR PUTIN: (laughs) Am I a ‘pure democrat’? Of course I am, absolutely. But do you know what the problem is? Not even a problem but a real tragedy? The problem is that I’m all alone, the only one of my kind in the whole wide world. Just look at what’s happening in North America, it’s simply awful: torture, homeless people, Guantanamo, people detained without trial and investigation. [...]

A detailed micro-level comparison of the clause which contains the reference to Guantanamo reveals striking differences (*Kommersant* does not include this piece of information at all):

<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, [...]

Table 5

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 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. The more concrete form (‘people detained’) in *International Clearing House* has been transformed into the abstract noun ‘detention’ in *Times* and *Globe and Mail*. 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 *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.

What this example should have made clear is that media interests and ideologies play a role in how information is selected and presented. Even information that is used by nearly all publications (e.g. the reference to Guantanamo) is presented somewhat differently as far as

lexical and syntactic details are concerned. The processes involved from conducting the actual interview to the final text as published in the mass media are highly complex and involve a number of transformations. As a result of these transformations, readers of the respective newspapers get a different impression of the topics discussed in the interview and of the way in which Putin expressed his views. Deletions, rearrangements of information, substitutions and paraphrasing are typical examples of transformations that text producers (i.e. journalists, revisors, editors) make use of in the recontextualisation processes. Transformations occur as well in recontextualisation processes of political speeches, as I will illustrate in the next section of this paper.

Political speech

In October 2005, BBC News reported on the British Prime Minister's reaction to a speech by the Iranian President Ahmadinejad as follows:

Tony Blair has expressed "revulsion" at the Iranian president's assertion that he wanted Israel "wiped off the map". (27 October 2005) (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4380306.stm – last accessed 15 June 2008)

In this article, the BBC news uses two direct quotes, signalled by speech marks. In the first case, a word used by Blair ('revulsion') is repeated, whereas in the second case, Blair had incorporated a phrase from the speech which the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had delivered at a conference, entitled 'The World without Zionism', in Tehran on 26 October 2005. However, we have again an example of a mediated voice. As we have seen with the Putin interview, most media do not normally publish a complete text but select information which is transformed in the recontextualisation process. In the case of Ahmadinejad's speech, it were in particular his comments about Israel, and in this respect the specific phrase 'wipe off the map', that were most frequently reported in the media. The Iranian President delivered his speech in his own Persian language, and there are different English translations, prepared by different institutions. Table 6 below shows the English versions I have looked at (provided by *Al-Jazeera*, a media network with its headquarter in Doha, Qatar; the daily *New York Times*; the *Middle East Research Institute*, *MEMRI*, a press monitoring organization located in Washington, DC; and the Iranian Students' News Agency, *ISNA*). Only the *New York Times* and *MEMRI* present their texts explicitly as translations.

	Main title	Lead
<i>Al-Jazeera</i>	Ahmadinejad: Wipe Israel off map	Ahmadinejad addressed students at a conference Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has openly called for Israel to be wiped off the map
<i>New York Times</i>	Full Translation of Ahmadinejad's Speech	This is a translation, by Nazila Fathi in The New York Times Tehran bureau, of the October 26 speech by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to an Islamic Student Associations conference on "The World Without Zionism." The conference was held in Tehran, at the Interior Ministry. The text of the speech was posted online, in Persian, by the Iranian Student News Agency (www.isnagency.com). Bracketed explanatory material is from Ms. Fathi.
<i>MEMRI</i>	Iranian President at Tehran Conference: 'Very Soon, This Stain of Disgrace [i.e. Israel] Will Be Purged From the Center of the Islamic World – and This is Attainable'	[...] At the conference, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke to the representatives [...] The Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), published the full text of Ahmadinejad's speech. The following is a translation of excerpts from ISNA's report and from the speech

<i>ISNA</i>	Transcript of speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at “World Without Zionism” conference in Tehran	Reported by Iranian government-owned news agency ISNA on 26 October 2005 at 13:10 local time (for original persian text see: ...) Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made a keynote speech on Wednesday at the gathering of 4,000 students organised by the Association of Islamic Students Societies. The text follows:
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Table 6

In the speech, there are two paragraphs which are relevant in connection with Blair’s response. In the first extract, Ahmadinejad is quoting Imam Khomeini, and in the second one, he refers to the situation in Palestine at the time he delivered the speech. The quotes below illustrate the different strategies used by the translators for rendering the two paragraphs into English, including strategies such as additions in brackets and explanations, cf.:

Al-Jazeera:

[...] “As the Imam said, Israel must be wiped off the map,” said Ahmadinejad, referring to Iran’s revolutionary leader Ayat Allah Khomeini. [...] Nevertheless, Ahmadinejad said, “There is no doubt that the new wave (of attacks) in Palestine will soon wipe off this disgraceful blot (Israel) from the face of the Islamic world.”

New York Times:

[...] Our dear Imam said that the occupying regime must be wiped off the map and this was a very wise statement. [...] I have no doubt that the new wave that has started in Palestine, and we witness it in the Islamic world too, will eliminate this disgraceful stain from the Islamic world.

Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI):

[...] “Imam [Komeini] said: ‘This regime that is occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history.’ This sentence is very wise. [...] I do not doubt that the new wave which has begun in our dear Palestine and which today we are also witnessing in the Islamic world is a wave of morality which has spread all over the Islamic world. Very soon, this stain of disgrace [i.e. Israel] will be purged from the center of the Islamic world – and this is attainable.

ISNA:

[...] Our dear Imam ordered that the occupying regime in Al-Qods be wiped off the face of the earth. This was a very wise statement. [...] I have no doubt that the new wave that has started in dear Palestine and which we witness today all over the Islamic world will soon wipe this scourge of shame from the Islamic world. This can be done.

The additions in brackets can be characterised as translators’ (or editors’) interventions in that they specify a referent for an evaluative phrase (see “this disgraceful blot (Israel)” in *Al-Jazeera* and “this stain of disgrace [i.e. Israel]” in *MEMRI*). Only *Al-Jazeera* and *New York Times* use the exact phrase ‘wipe off the map’. The Iranian President’s own website has only a very short English summary of the speech, which includes the following sentence:

[...] He further expressed his firm belief that the new wave of confrontations generated in Palestine and the growing turmoil in the Islamic world would in no time wipe Israel away. [...]

Despite differences in the various translations, it is the particular phrase ‘wipe off the map’ that had been taken up and repeated most frequently. It is now typically used in articles

without any explicit reference to the initial context, i.e. the speech, as can be seen in the following example:

Meanwhile, remarks by its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, suggesting the Holocaust was a “myth” and calling for Israel to be “wiped off the map” and reconstituted somewhere in Europe or America, have heightened concern about Iran’s nuclear plans, [...] (*The Economist*, 24 December 2005, p. 69)

In the context of the heated political debates, it has also been argued that the phrase had been mistranslated. However, once a text – or recontextualised information about a text – is in the public domain, it serves as a reference point for other discursive events and forms the basis for political and legal debates, independent of any factual ‘truth’ or ‘accurate’ translation. This can be illustrated with the quote from a text which commented on the political and legal consequences of Ahmadinejad’s words and which was published by DisarmamentActivist.org (a volunteer venture blog whose website is no longer accessible):

The New York Times recently reopened the issue of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s notorious appeal to “wipe Israel off the map”. The Times piece focuses exclusively on the translation – or possible mistranslation – of the statement in order to determine if it constituted a threat against Israel and a call for war. The original phrase in Farsi, borrowed from rhetoric used by Ayatollah Khomeini, lacks a direct literal equivalent in English. The closest expression is to remove from the “pages of time of history”. Despite this, the Times noted that Ahmadinejad’s personal translators chose the wording “wipe off the map” in the posting on the President’s web site. The Times concludes that it remains an open question of whether Ahmadinejad called for war against Israel.
(<http://disarmamentactivist.org/2006/06/15/off-the-map> – last accessed 12 April 2007)

One German translation of the Ahmadinejad speech, produced by the German press agency *dpa* also used a phrase which is very similar to the English ‘wipe off the map’, with synonyms for ‘wipe off’: ‘von der Landkarte tilgen/löschen/ausradieren’. The German version of the two excerpts, published in the daily *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, reads as follows:

Der Imam (Ajatollah Khomeini) hatte das Verschwinden des Staates Israel von der politischen Bühne prophezeit, genauso wie er das Ende des Ostblocks und (des irakischen Machthabers) Saddam Husseins prophezeit hatte. Das mit dem Ostblock und Saddam ist eingetreten, sogar das haben wir erleben dürfen.
Inschallah (so Gott will) wird die Prophezeiung des Imam bezüglich der Vernichtung Israels durch kontinuierliche Weisheit der Palästinenser auch bald realisiert werden. Eine neue Welle (in Palästina) ist im Anmarsch, und es ist machbar, dass dieser Schandfleck (der Staat Israel) aus der islamischen Welt getilgt wird. [...]
(http://www.lvz-online.de/thema/drt.html?p=/thema/4724_148914.html – last accessed 12 December 2006)

Here too, we see a strategy of adding information in brackets, resulting in assigning a specific referent (‘the state Israel’) to the evaluative noun ‘Schandfleck’ (‘stain of disgrace’) and specifying the place (‘in Palestine’) where the new wave is emerging. In German, the phrase ‘von der Landkarte tilgen’ is the most frequently used version, and there have been similar debates about the (in)accuracy of translation. For example, one activist organisation (arbeiterfotografie, which presents itself as a forum for engaged photographers) criticised the English translations by the *New York Times* and *MEMRI* and presented an “independent” German translation on the basis of the Persian original that was published by ISNA. In this version, Khomeini’s words are rendered as “aus der Arena der Zeit verschwinden” (literally: disappear from the arena of time). The other part of the speech is translated as:

Ich habe keinen Zweifel, daß die neue Bewegung, die in unserem geliebten Palästina stattfindet, eine spirituelle Bewegung ist, die die gesamte islamische Welt umfaßt und bald diesen Schandfleck aus der islamischen Welt entfernen wird.

(Literally: I have no doubt that the new wave, which is taking place in our beloved Palestine, is a spiritual movement which encompasses the whole Islamic world and which will soon eliminate this stain of disgrace from the Islamic world.)

(<http://www.arbeiterfotografie.com/galerie/kein-krieg/hintergrund/index-iran-0008.html> – last accessed 10 July 2008)

In the same text, there is also a criticism of a German version, published by the TV news *Tagesschau*, in which the second sentence was rendered as:

Es gibt keinen Zweifel: Die neue Anschlagswelle in Palästina wird das Stigma im Antlitz der islamischen Welt ausradieren.

(Literally: There is no doubt: The new wave of attacks in Palestine will wipe off the stigma in the face of the Islamic world.)

It is criticised that ‘wave’ in the *New York Times* has been translated as ‘wave of attacks’ for *Tagesschau*, and this translation is judged as being pure deformation. However, this argumentation assumes that the German text is actually based on the English version as published in the *New York Times*. If we look again at the four English extracts above, we can see that the German version criticised here is much closer to the text published by *Al-Jazeera*, where ‘of attacks’ had been added in brackets.

As said above, the particular phrase ‘wipe off the map’, or ‘von der Landkarte tilgen’, has become so widely established that in new contexts (recontextualisation) journalists expect their readers to know it and do not explicitly refer to the original speech anymore. In the following two examples, both excerpts from interviews conducted by *Der Spiegel* with Iranian politicians, it is surprising to see that the politicians do not actually reject the use of the phrase itself or argue that it was mistranslated. Instead, they engage with the message and the assumed political aims (although we need to bear in mind that in these cases too, processes of recontextualisation occurred, and that in the transfer from the actual interview, which was probably conducted in Farsi, to the written report in German, transformations will have included omissions and/or linguistic changes, in addition to the translation).

SPIEGEL Die Palästinenser sind Ihnen doch längst einen Schritt voraus, sie erkennen Israel als Faktum an, während Sie es weiter von der Landkarte ausradieren wollen. Die Palästinenser sind bereit zu einer Zwei-Staaten-Lösung, während Sie Israel das Existenzrecht absprechen.

Ahmadinedschad: Sie täuschen sich. Sie haben doch gesehen, dass das Volk bei der freien Wahl in Palästina die Hamas gewählt hat. Wir sagen, weder Sie noch wir sollten uns zum Sprecher des palästinensischen Volkes machen. [...]

(interview with President Ahmadinejad, *Der Spiegel* 29 May 2006, quote on p. 27)

Spiegel International published an English translation of this interview:

SPIEGEL: The Palestinians have long gone a step further than you and recognize Israel as a fact, while you still wish to erase it from the map. The Palestinians are ready to accept a two-state solution while you deny Israel its right to existence.

Ahmadinejad: You're wrong. You saw that the Palestinian people elected Hamas in free elections. We argue that neither you nor we should claim to speak for the Palestinian people. [...]

(<http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,418660-2,00.html> – last accessed 16 June 2008)

The second interview was conducted with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, cf.:

SPIEGEL: Als er davon sprach, Israel von der Landkarte zu tilgen, hat er einen internationalen Aufschrei verursacht.

Mottaki: Wir sehen in der ewigen Wiederholung dieses Vorwurfs ein Zeichen dafür, dass einige Länder entschlossen sind, nicht auf die wahren Fragen einzugehen, sondern sie zu unterdrücken. Der Zweite Weltkrieg war eine Tragödie, die sich nun einmal in Europa ereignet hat. Viele Millionen Menschen kamen in diesem Krieg um, darunter auch Juden. Wer waren diese Juden? Alle Dokumente belegen, dass sie Europäer waren. Warum soll die islamische Welt für die Konsequenzen dieses Kriegs aufkommen?

(interview with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Manutschehr Mottaki, *Der Spiegel*, 26 March 2007, quote on p. 111)

This interview too was translated and published by *Spiegel International*:

SPIEGEL: He caused an international outcry when he suggested wiping Israel off the map.

Mottaki: We see the constant repetition of this accusation as a sign that some countries are determined not to address the real questions but to suppress them. World War II was a tragedy that happened to take place in Europe. Many millions of people died in that war, including Jews. Who were these Jews? All documents prove that they were Europeans. Why should the Islamic world be responsible for the consequences of that war?

(<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,473862,00.html> – last accessed 16 June 2008)

In the following interview of *Spiegel* with Israel's Minister for Immigration, Jaakov Edri, the German translation of the statement by an Israeli politician again uses the phrase which had become the most commonly used one in German political discourse. There is no indication of the language in which the interview was conducted, and there is no English translation on *Spiegel International*:

SPIEGEL: Fürchten Sie nicht als Antwort einen Flächenbrand im Nahen Osten? (Literally: Don't you fear that an area conflagration in the Middle East will be the response?)

Edri: Wir haben keine Wahl. Sollen wir darauf warten, bis Ahmadinedschad seine Drohung wahrmacht und Israel von der Landkarte tilgt? [...]

(Literally: We have no choice. Are we supposed to wait till Ahmadinejad will go ahead with his threat and wipe Israel off the map?)

(*Der Spiegel*, 10 September 2007, p. 139)

A more recent interview by *Der Spiegel* is interesting in that a different version is provided in the second turn, which is presented as a direct quote from Ahmadinejad's speech:

SPIEGEL: Iran bedroht aber Israel mit der Auslöschung. (Literally: But Iran is threatening Israel with erasure.)

Bertram: Die iranische Formulierung lautete nicht: Wir wollen Israel auslöschen, und erst recht nicht: Wir wollen es mit der Atombombe auslöschen. Iran beteuert, es wolle die Bombe gar nicht bauen.

(Literally: The Iranian wording was not: We want to erase Israel, let alone: We want to erase it with a nuclear bomb. Iran assures us that it does not want to build a bomb.)

SPIEGEL: Ahmadinedschad hat verlangt, das "Besatzungsregime" müsse "von den Seiten der Geschichte verschwinden".

(Literally: Ahmadinejad demanded that the 'occupying regime' must "vanish from the pages of history".)

(interview with Christoph Bertram, former director of a research institute in Berlin, *Der Spiegel*, 14 April 2008, p. 19)

The wording used here is similar to the translation provided by *MEMRI* ('This regime that is occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history.'). It is too early to comment on whether this change in the wording also signals a change in the reporting strategy of *Der Spiegel*, or whether the choice of the words was determined by other factors

(such as the interview partner, the context of the interview in the wider sense). More texts on this topic will need to be analysed before a conclusion can be drawn.

A situation like the one described above, i.e. the existence of different translations of the same text, leads to the following question which is of interest to a Translation Studies researcher: why is one particular translation recontextualised more often than others? Why does it ‘survive’ in complex chains of discourse? And a related question would be: who decides which translation is passed on to politicians? In order to answer such questions, we need to take into account that the choice of and reliance on a translation provider depends on power relations. Institutions such as governments and mass media normally use (extracts from) translations which fit their own institutional ideology. The British government, for example, relies on the BBC Monitoring Service for providing translations into English, which in turn also conveys information from sources that publish in English, as *Al-Jazeera* does (see Schäffner in press b).

In the first two cases, we have seen how mass media recontextualised messages from foreign politicians for their home audience. Another institutionalised form of interaction between politicians and journalists, i.e. another discursive practice, are press conferences. In this case too, translations are relevant, which will be illustrated in the next section.

Press conference

Political press conferences are part of political discourse, but since they are held for representatives of the media who in turn construct their own discourse following a press conference – a process which again involves recontextualisation and transformations – press conferences are also a part of media discourse. In fact, Bhatia characterizes press conferences as “mediatization of political action” (Bhatia 2006: 176).

The examples I will use for illustrating the role of translation are joint press conferences by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and US President George Bush. The normal procedure at such press conferences is that at first the politicians give statements which are then followed by questions and answers. The transcripts of a press conference (or: ‘press availability’ as it is called by the White House) are made available on the websites of the German government and of the Office of the Press Secretary of the White House, in each case only in German and in English, respectively. As I have shown elsewhere (see Schäffner in press a), the German and the US government seem to have different norms as far as the style of the press conference is concerned. Whereas the US website reflects the oral nature of the interaction, the texts on the German website seem to have been stylistically enhanced. This is reflected for example in false starts, hesitations, self-corrections, inclusion of metacommunicative comments we see on the US website, whereas the German texts are more grammatically correct. This can be seen in the following extract from the press conference given by Bush and Merkel on 11 June 2008 in Meseberg, Germany:

PRESIDENT BUSH: Madam Chancellor, thank you for the invitation to this beautiful place, a modest little cottage by the lake, it is – I’m really glad you thought of this location. Laura and I loved our dinner last night. For those in the German press who thought I didn’t like asparagus, you’re wrong. (Laughter.) The German asparagus are fabulous.

But anyways, it’s a great place for -- to relax and have a good discussion. Our relationship is strong and our relationship is active. And I assured the Chancellor that when I say I’m going to sprint to the finish, that’s what I mean. And that we had a lot of – we’ve got a lot of issues that we can talk about. [...]

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/print/20080611-1.html> – last accessed 3 July 2008)

P Bush: Frau Bundeskanzlerin, ich danke Ihnen ganz herzlich für die Einladung zu diesem schönen Ort. Ich freue mich außerordentlich, dass dieser Tagungsort ausgewählt worden ist. Das gestrige Abendessen hat Laura und mir ausgesprochen gut gefallen. Einige in der deutschen Presse meinten, ich würde keinen Spargel mögen. Das ist jedoch falsch. Spargel aus Deutschland ist hervorragend. Es ist ein wunderschöner Ort hier. Man kann sich hier entspannen und gute Gespräche führen. Unsere Beziehungen sind stark. Wir haben sehr dynamische Beziehungen. Ich habe der Bundeskanzlerin versichert, dass ich meiner Arbeit bis zum Ende meiner Amtszeit intensiv nachgehen werde. Das meine ich ernst. Es gibt sehr viele Gesprächsthemen. [...]

(The second paragraph literally: This is a beautiful place. You can relax here and have good talks. Our relations are strong. We have very dynamic relations. I assured the Chancellor that I will carry on with my job intensively till the end of my term. I really mean this. There are very many topics for talks.)
(http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2008/06/2008-06-11-pk-merkel-bush.html – last accessed 3 July 2008)

Another difference is that the US website has a complete transcript, which includes the – often rather informal – interactions between Bush and the journalists. The German transcripts are more neutral in this respect and record only questions and answers. This can be seen in an extract from the same press conference in Meseberg:

Q Mr. President, [...] Now I'm wondering, do you actually just regret your war rhetoric, or do you regret having gone to war with Iraq?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I don't regret it at all. Removing Saddam Hussein made the world a safer place. And yes, I told the guy -- the guy said, now what could you do over? First of all, you don't get to do things over in my line of work. But I could have used better rhetoric to indicate that one, we tried to exhaust the diplomacy in Iraq; two, that I don't like war. But, no, the decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision.

Myers. Tell me -- no, no, Eggen, Eggen, excuse me. I called you yesterday, Myers. What's the difference? (Laughter.)

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, sir.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, no problem. (Laughter.)

Q Speaking of Iraq, [...]

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/print/20080611-1.html>)

Frage: Herr Präsident, [...] Ist das der Fall, oder bedauern Sie, den Krieg geführt zu haben?

P Bush: Nein, ich bedauere das überhaupt nicht. Saddam Hussein ist nicht mehr an der Macht, und die Welt ist sicherer. In der Politik darf man natürlich nichts wiederholen. Wir haben natürlich hinsichtlich des Iraks den diplomatischen Weg ausgeschöpft. Ich mag den Krieg nicht, aber die Entscheidung war richtig, Saddam Hussein von der Macht zu entfernen.

Frage: Zum Irak. [...]

(Literally:

Q Mr. President, [...] is this the case, or do you regret having gone to war with Iraq?

PRESIDENT BUSH: No, I don't regret it at all. Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, and the world is a safer place. Of course, you must not repeat anything in politics. In the case of Iraq, we have exhausted the diplomatic way. I don't like the war, but it was the right decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power..

Q About Iraq, [...]

(http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2008/06/2008-06-11-pk-merkel-bush.html)

A number of mass media took up this topic and presented Bush's comments in their own reports, making use of direct quotes and reported speech in this recontextualisation process,

as illustrated below in the extract from the news agency CNN, published online on 11 June 2008:

“Removing Saddam Hussein made the world a safer place,” Bush said. But he admitted once again that he regretted the tough rhetoric he had used in the run-up to the conflict which had made it appear he was eager to go to war.

(<http://64.236.29.112/2008/POLITICS/06/11/bush.europe/index.html?iref=topnews>– last accessed 12 July 2008)

On both websites, translation is only visible in the form of metacommunicative comments. The US website typically adds ‘as translated’ in brackets after the first turn by Merkel. Transcripts of press conferences on the German website are normally preceded by a sentence saying that the German version of the foreign talk was provided on the basis of the simultaneous interpreting (“Die Ausschrift des fremdsprachlichen Teils erfolgte anhand der Simultanübersetzung.”). In one other example, however, the joint press conference by Merkel and Bush, held on 10 November 2007 in Crawford, Texas, on the occasion of a visit by Merkel to the USA, there is no provision in German of Bush’s words on the German government’s website. A statement at the top of the text says that no translation into German was provided. Reading only Merkel’s comments in German and in between just the words ‘Bush (in English)’ does not actually allow the readers to get a clear idea of the topics that were discussed.

For Translation Studies, there is another point of interest, which is linked to the question of the voice we hear. At this press conference in Crawford, Bush finishes his introductory statement as follows:

[...] It’s hard to deal with the climate change issue if you’re broke. It’s easier to deal with the climate change issue if you’ve got the revenues and finances that enable you to invest in new technologies that will change how we live, and at the same time enable us to grow our economies, and at the same time enable us to be good stewards of the environment.

And so, Madam Chancellor, the mic is yours.

As said, all this, including the explicit invitation to Merkel to start her statement, are missing on the website of the German government. Merkel’s words are given as follows:

BK’in Merkel: Sehr geehrter Herr Präsident, lieber George, ich möchte mich zuerst für diese Möglichkeit bedanken, hier in Texas diese Gespräche zu führen, auch im Namen meines Mannes. Es ist ein wunderschönes Fleckchen Erde, wie man in Deutschland sagen würde, das etwas von der amerikanischen Weite und der Vielfalt der Landschaft zeigt. Herzlichen Dank dafür, dass wir heute Morgen die Möglichkeit zum Spaziergang hatten. Das war eine wirklich neuartige Erfahrung.

Wir haben die Zeit genutzt, um uns über eine Vielzahl von Fragen auszutauschen und zu verständigen.

[...]

(Literally: Dear Mr President, dear George, first of all, allow me to thank you for the possibility to have these talks here in Texas, also on behalf of my husband. This is a very beautiful spot on earth, as we would say in Germany, which shows us something of the American vastness and variety of the countryside. Thank you very much for the opportunity we had this morning to go for a walk. This was a totally new experience.

We have used the time to exchange views about a number of issues [...] (http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2007/11/2007-11-10-pk-merkel-bush-crawford.html)

On the US website, Merkel’s statement is rendered as follows:

CHANCELLOR MERKEL: (As translated.) Well, yes, thank you very much, Mr. President, dear George. First of all, allow me to thank you very warmly for the possibility to meet with you here in Texas and to have this exchange of views. I would also like to extend this word of gratitude to you on behalf of my husband, who accompanies me here to this, what we also in Germany would call a very

beautiful spot, a very beautiful part of this planet, of this world. It enables us to appreciate a little bit the vastness of the territory here, and also the beauty and the sheer variety of species that you have here.

So we again were able to see this for ourselves this morning. Thank you again for making this possible to have this stroll with you and to appreciate the beauty of this part, and to have again an exchange of views on a number of subjects.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Jawohl. (Laughter.)

CHANCELLOR MERKEL: (Translation continues.) Let me say, first of all, that we did make the best possible use of our time to exchange our views on a number of issues. [...]

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/print/20071110-2.html>)

It is noticeable here that Merkel's words in English reflect features of oral communication more clearly than on the German website. The more interesting point, however, is Bush's interjection – in German at that – in the middle of her turn. 'Jawohl' is an intensifying form of 'ja' ('yes'). On the basis of the written transcript, this 'jawohl' could be interpreted as confirming and reinforcing Merkel's comments about having made the best possible use of the time to exchange views. However, an analysis on the basis of the written text alone is misleading. The White House website had a link to a video recording which made it possible to include the role of interpreting into the analysis. In this particular case, consecutive interpreting was used. The interpreter is not visible in the video, we only hear her voice while looking at the bodies and faces of Merkel and Bush (unfortunately, this video is not accessible anymore). What we see in the transcript are the exact words as used by the interpreter (Merkel's original words in German on the German website have only been slightly stylistically and grammatically enhanced). The hesitations, fillers, repetitions, are thus the words of the interpreter, and in a way reflect her own strategies. As becomes clear from the video, Merkel started immediately with addressing Bush ("Sehr geehrter Herr Präsident, lieber George"). The interpreter's "Well, yes, thank you very much" are actually more like metacommunicative comments, signalling her readiness to start her interpreting. Based on the English transcript, these words, however, could be interpreted as immediate reaction to Bush's invitation "And so, Madam Chancellor, the mic is yours." The 'jawohl' too, is in fact not the reinforcing 'yes' which signals agreement to Merkel's point, but actually a filler. The video shows that the interpreter made a short pause after rendering the first part (after "... on a number of subjects"). Into this pause comes Bush's 'jawohl', which is a kind of encouragement to the interpreter, possibly interpreting her pause as searching for words.

The differences between the two websites in terms of style give different impressions to the readers about the nature of press conferences. Informality, orality and friendly interaction seem to be the expected and accepted characteristic features for the US audience, whereas the producers of the German website seem to value factual information and linguistic correctness. German- and English-speaking journalists who use such transcripts for their own reporting about press conferences, may convey different information, bearing in mind that even more transformations may occur in the discursive chain from a transcript of a press conference to an evaluative report in a newspaper. Equally, political analysts or linguists who wish to do a discourse analysis of press conferences will inevitably end up with somewhat different findings and images of politicians, depending on the language version they study. This highlights the fact that in any analysis, due attention needs to be paid to translation and to the institutional, social, ideological contexts in which translations were produced.

Conclusion: Mediated voices

The discussion of the examples above should have made clear that translation plays an essential role in international political communication. Political arguments cross linguistic and cultural boundaries as a result of translation, and the communicative aims as well as the institutional policies and ideologies have an impact on the actual textual profiles of the translations.

As we have seen in the case of the political interview, the (amount of) information selected for publication in the respective print media reflects the topics and political issues which are of particular relevance to the country, or more precisely, to the political group(s) which the newspaper is more or less openly lending its voice to. In addition to quantitative differences between the original interview and its published versions, transformations include rearranging information and turning the interview genre into a report about an interview. Rearranging information can be seen as ideologically significant since it allows to give a more prominent position to a specific topic. In the case of media institutions translations and accompanying transformations are carried out by journalists and editors who base their decisions on the values of journalism. The textual transformations performed by journalists as translators as well as by editors can thus also be explained with reference to ‘gatekeeping functions’ (e.g. Vuorinen 1995).

In the recontextualisation chains from a political speech to its (transformed) publication in the mass media and continuing references to it in subsequent media texts, power is at play as well. Powerful news agencies and mass media get quoted by other mass media more often than others. In the international chain of discourse, some voices are therefore represented and heard more frequently than others. It is again as a result of such cross-lingual and cross-cultural recontextualisation processes, that the English phrase ‘wipe off the map’ has become the most frequently cited translation of Ahmadinejad’s original words, and actually discursively constructed as being his own words.

Gatekeeping functions also operate in the case of press conferences. Recontextualisation is at work when transcripts of press conferences are made available on government websites. As the examples above have shown, a comparison of the German and US-American versions of the same press conference reveals differences in the quantity, the genre, and the linguistic structure of the messages. As a result, the image constructed of the politicians is different, with politicians being presented as more authoritative on the website of the German government due to style enhancements in the transformation of the oral speech into a written text. These amendments to the texts are done by staff in the press office and again reflect institutional values and policies.

What all these examples have illustrated is that translations are not straightforward and faithful reproductions of their source texts, as often assumed by lay-people. The more traditional view of translation as transfer of meaning, which formed the basis of linguistics-based theories of translation (e.g. Catford 1965, Koller 1979), has been replaced by modern views which understand translation as a purposeful activity (e.g. Vermeer 1996), as norm-governed behaviour (Toury 1995), as a socio-political practice (e.g. Venuti 1995), embedded in socio-historical contexts and determined by cultural, ideological, institutional conditions and constraints. Translation Studies has emerged as an independent discipline in its own right, often characterised as an interdiscipline (cf. Snell-Hornby et al. 1992). Research has convincingly shown that translation always involves refraction (Lefevere 2000), and that there is always an “interference of the subjects, as well as the cultural, historical, ideological

or political circumstances involved” (Arrojo 1998: 25). The ideological dimension of translation too has recently seen more attention (e.g. Calzada Pérez 2002, Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002, Baker 2006).

An awareness of translating as a social practice means that translation strategies which result in a specific profile of the target text need to be explained with reference to the socio-political conditions in which the translations were produced. In this paper I have mainly illustrated textual profiles and I have tried to explain them with reference to the institutional contexts in which they were produced. What still remains to be done, however, is a more detailed and extensive exploration of the actual translation practices in political settings that result in the textual profiles as illustrated above. For news translation, some insights have already been gained (for example, Bassnett 2004, Bielsa 2007, Holland 2006, Kang 2007), but the translation practices in political institutions are not yet well known (but see Koskinen 2008 for the EU institutions). Research questions to be addressed would then, for example, be: What exactly are the translation practices in political institutions (in particular governments, press offices of governments, embassies)? What is their translation policy? Who decides on the selection of texts for translation? Who produces translations of political speeches, documents, press releases, etc.? What influence do these institutional policies and practices have on the dissemination and reception of translated political discourse?

In order to find answers to these questions, the textual analysis will have to be combined with a sociological analysis (cf. Wolf and Fukari 2007). In this way, insights into the respective roles of the actual agents involved in the complex translation processes (translators, editors, staff officers, political advisors, etc) as well as into the power relations can be gained. As Blackledge argues, all such transformations that occur in recontextualisation processes are “dependent on the goals, values and interests of the context into which the discursive practice is being recontextualised” (Blackledge 2005: 122). Analysing translational recontextualisations can contribute new insights into the representation of politics and politicians across linguistic, cultural, and ideological barriers.

Analysed texts

All sources listed below were last accessed on 10 July 2008.

Russian President Putin’s Interview with G8 Newspaper Journalists
Information Clearing House
<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17855.htm>

“Ich bin ein echter Demokrat”
Der Spiegel, 4 June 2007, pp. 116–120

‘I am a True Democrat’
Spiegel Online, 4 June 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,486345,00.html>

‘I’m a pure and absolute democrat. It’s a tragedy that I’m the only one.’
Times Online, 4 June 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article1878792.ece?print=yes>

Poutine: “La Russie devra choisir des cibles en Europe”
Le Figaro, 4 June 2007,
http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/20070604.FIG000000301_poutine_la_russie_devra_choisir_des_cibles_en_europe.html

Putin Serves Up a Hot Menu

Kommersant, 4 June 2007,
http://212.248.33.60/p771175/r_1/Putin,_G8/
Putin threatens to target Europe

Globe and Mail, 4 June 2007,
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070602.wputin01/BNStory/International?home>
Putin: pronto a puntare i missili sull'Europa
Corriere della Sera, 4 June 2007,
http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Esteri?2007/06_giugno/03/putin_missili_litvinenko.html

Ahmadinejad: Wipe Israel off map
Al-Jazeera
<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/15E6BF77-6F91-46EE-A4B5-A3CE0E9957EA.htm>

Full Translation of Ahmadinejad's Speech
New York Times
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/30/weekinreview/30iran.html?ex=1136782800&en=d932ad0feae2cdef&ei=5070>

Iranian President at Tehran Conference: 'Very Soon, This Stain of Disgrace [i.e. Israel] Will Be Purged From the Center of the Islamic World – and This is Attainable'
Middle East Media Research Institute
<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP101305>

Transcript of speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at "World Without Zionism" conference in Tehran
ISNA
<http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=4164>

Ahmadinejad: Supporters of Israel will face wrath of Islamic ummah
<http://www.president.ir/eng/ahmadinejad/cronicnews/1384/08/4/index-e.htm#b3>

Pressekonferenz Merkel und Bush in Crawford
http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2007/11/2007-11-10-pk-merkel-bush-crawford.html

President Bush and Chancellor Merkel of Germany Participate in a Joint Press Availability
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/print/20071110-2.html>

Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und Präsident Bush
http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1516/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2008/06/2008-06-11-pk-merkel-bush.html

President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with Chancellor Merkel of Germany, Schloss Meseberg, Meseberg, Germany
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/06/print/20080611-1.html>

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