

EVALUATION IN TRANSLATION

'Jeremy Munday has over many years made significant contributions to translation theory, methodology and training. His *Evaluation in Translation* addresses yet another key concept of translational theory and practice, illuminating its pervasiveness across registers and genres.'

Erich Steiner, *Universität des Saarlandes, Germany*

'This book successfully bridges the gap between the cultural, social and political concerns of recent Translation Studies and the actual interventions made by translators at critical points in texts. A highly impressive piece of scholarship, offering a new paradigm for Translation Studies research.'

Ian Mason, *Emeritus Professor, Heriot-Watt University, UK*

In *Evaluation in Translation*, Jeremy Munday presents advances towards a general theory of evaluation in translator decision-making that will be of high importance to translator and interpreter training and to descriptive translation analysis. By 'evaluation', the author refers to how a translator's subjective stance manifests itself linguistically in a text.

In a world where translation and interpreting function as a prism through which opposing personal and political views enter a target culture, it is crucial to investigate how such views are processed and sometimes subjectively altered by the translator. To this end, the book focuses on the translation process (rather than the product) and strives to identify more precisely those points where the translator is most likely to express judgement or evaluation.

The translations studied cover a range of languages (Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and American Sign Language) accompanied by English glosses to facilitate comprehension by readers. This is key reading for researchers and postgraduates studying translation theory within Translation and Interpreting Studies.

Jeremy Munday is Professor of Translation Studies at the University of Leeds, UK. He is the author of *Introducing Translation Studies 3rd Edition* (2012), *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book* (with Basil Hatim, 2004) and *Style and Ideology in Translation* (2009), all published by Routledge.

EVALUATION IN TRANSLATION

Critical points of translator
decision-making

Jeremy Munday

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To my mother and in memory of my father
with love and thanks

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INTRODUCTION

In Los Angeles in the early summer of 1966, literary translator Sam Hileman sums up the condition under which he is working in a letter to his friend Carlos Fuentes, the young Mexican novelist. Hileman is battling against time to complete a translation of Fuentes' new novel, *Cambio de piel*, with a young family and in severe financial straits, lacking even the money to post the finished manuscript to the publisher. He is struggling to come to terms with a task that is overwhelming him:

You would never know it, but I hate translation more than I hate anything in this world. I am constantly afraid while doing it, afraid that I won't get it good enough . . . either not close enough or not strong enough. Or either too close. It is a miserable business, at best always a failure, at worst a disaster.¹

This haunting fear, deriving from uncertainty and lack of confidence, almost paralyzes Hileman, as he anguishes over the choices he must make in the text. Hileman, a highly creative translator, agonizes over 'closeness' and 'strength', which are conflicting, or at least distinct, objectives. The question revolves around what a 'strong' translation is meant to be and how much a translator may intervene in order to achieve it. Six months earlier, in a letter written before embarking on the project and in which he gives a very detailed and sensitive critique of the Spanish text, Hileman seems to perceive strength at least in part to be related to higher-level order features of structure and language in what is a complex and adventurous novel: 'It seems to me that this book takes some big chances, that is one of the sources of its strength, but . . . you and I must be very sure that the English takes no chances you don't want to risk.'²

Narrative and textual strength, the degree of intervention in decision-making and the risk entailed are interlinked concerns for Hileman. They are also starting points for this book, which seeks to investigate those places in a text, written

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or spoken, where the translator or interpreter's intervention and subjectivity are potentially most telling. A translator/interpreter as an active participant in the communication process, one who 'intervenes' not as a transparent conduit of meaning but as an interested representer of the source words of others and in a communicative situation constrained and directed by extratextual factors including commissioner, brief, purpose, audience expectation and target text function. In addition, the translator or interpreter brings his/her own sociocultural and educational background, ideological, phraseological and idiosyncratic stylistic preferences to the task of rendering a source text in the target language.

This book is an attempt to investigate the linguistic signs of a translator's intervention and subjective evaluation. To add objectivity to the analysis, the main theoretical model adopted is drawn from what is known as appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005). This is designed to describe the different components of a speaker's **attitude**, the strength of that attitude (**graduation**) and the ways that the speaker aligns him/herself with the sources of attitude and with the receiver (**engagement**). This theory is itself embedded within Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1994, Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), which locates lexicogrammatical choices within a framework that examines the function of different choices. Appraisal theory particularly relates to what is known as the **interpersonal function** of language that deals with the relationship between the writer and the reader. It has been called the 'intruder function' (Halliday 1978: 117).

Appraisal theory has been used in recent years in the analysis of original writings in English, particularly in genres of academic and newspaper discourse, but has rarely been used for the analysis of translation. This book seeks to test out the validity of the theory as a model for translational analysis. Rather than a wholesale imposition of an English-oriented theory on to a translational context, the aim is to discover those features of the model that, in practice, are 'critical' for a translator. These may be elements which are essential to retain in the TT (target text), but particularly they are those points in a text which require interpretation and in some cases substantive intervention from the translator. They potentially alter the orientation of the text in the target locale. Critical points share some of the properties of what the anthropologist Michael Agar (1991, 1994) calls 'rich points', defined as 'locations in discourse where major cultural differences are signalled' (Agar 1994: 232). Agar (*ibid.*: 227) recounts his work for a US company in Mexico which sold *rebuilt* engine parts. This caused a problem in translation, where the literal equivalent *usado* ('used') connoted 'old' and of inferior quality because the concept of reused parts was unknown in the target culture.

In some instances, the critical points may be located at a high textual or cultural level. Standard Thai, for instance, has a special sacred range of language used of royalty and Buddhist monks, distinguished by lexical differences (kinship terms, animals, parts of the body, some actions) and by the special prefixed or compound forms of all verbs (Smalley 1994: 58). It is a strong social marker of difference, and more or less impossible to translate into languages that do not have a similar range. Thai speakers themselves may be extremely sensitive to this. Thus, in 1960,

Prince Chula wrote that members of the ruling dynasty often preferred to write to each other in English precisely ‘to avoid the elaborate language required for the different ranks amongst relatives’ (Chakrabongse 1960: 271, in Smalley 1994: 55). In its most dramatic form, it may be the erroneous selection of a whole language which may have devastating effects. So, in predominantly Pashto-speaking Southern Afghanistan, it was found that Dari speakers were being recruited to interpret for the Canadian military. Dangerous breakdowns in communication resulted that allegedly led to the arrests of innocent bystanders and the flawed translation of sensitive documents (Brewster 2009).

In other cases, it is an individual keyword that may be so sensitive it becomes a critical ideological point of translation. Mona Baker (2006) gives various examples, including the phenomenon of naming: *Derry vs Londonderry* in Northern Ireland, *Judea and Samaria vs the West Bank* and *Jerusalem vs al-Quds* in the Middle East, for instance. The most sensitive term of all is the name for deities, as is illustrated by the proselytizing missions of the Jesuits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Japan, Francis Xavier (Francisco de Jasso, 1506–1552), realized that the early Japanese translation *Dainichi* had in fact rendered the Christian *Deus* as the Vairocana Buddha and he ordered that it no longer be used. It was replaced with the loanword *Daiusu* (Kim 2004: 81). In Peru, the Jesuits under José de Acosta (1540–1600) imposed the lexical and semantic borrowing of the Spanish *Dios* on an indigenous tradition that already had its own monotheistic divine names *Viracocha* and *Pachacamac*; the latter was deliberately distorted by early missionaries, who construed it as ‘the devil’ (Kim *ibid.*: 97). By contrast, the Italian priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who spent half his life in China, decided to use the ancient Chinese term and Confucian concept *Shangti* rather than coin a phonetic loanword. In modern times this attempt at establishing a point of contact with the local religion has been described as ‘a risk-taking “identification” of the Christian God (*Deus*) with the Confucian Most-High (*Shangti*)’ (Kim *ibid.*: 1, 166–71).

The very real controversy caused by such sensitive terms is not only of historical relevance. For example, in 1986 the Malay government banned the use of the word *Allah* to refer to the God of religions other than Islam, claiming that it was potentially confusing but with the implicit fear that it could be used for proselytization. *Allah* had been used in translations of the Bible into Malay since 1629, when the Dutch merchant Albert Cornelius Ruyl’s translation of the Gospel of Matthew was published. Indeed, in preparation for the most recent translation, the *Revised Malay Bible*,³ a conscious decision was even taken by the Language Committee to retain the term *Allah* (Soesilo n.d.).⁴ However, distinguished critics of such decisions have included the President of the Universitat Sains Malaysia, Tan Sri Professor Dzulkipli Abdul Razak. He attacked ‘insensitive, inconsistent’ translations of proper names in the *Bahasa Indonesia Bible*,⁵ more than 20,000 imported copies of which were confiscated by the Malay government.⁶ In Razak’s view, the translation casts doubt on the Quranic Tauhidic concept of the oneness of Allah and, in the expression *Son of God*, may be regarded as blasphemous by Muslims (Razak 2009).⁷ In December 2009, the Malay government’s ban was successfully challenged in the

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courts by the Catholic paper *The Herald*, which led to the backlash burning of a number of churches.⁸ The government appealed the verdict, which was suspended pending the appeal. Elsewhere, and more prominently, President George W. Bush's use of the term *crusade on terror* in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks generated understandable alarm in the Muslim world, where *crusade* is a hugely negative term associated with the violent Christian military expeditions to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages. Counterbalancing this is the debate (see Hatim 2005: 54) over the meaning and translation of the Arabic *jihad*, represented either as 'holy war' (to construct an anti-Muslim message) or as 'a struggle to do right' (by more favourable or nuanced observers). The way in which these critical points are resolved produces a specific representation of the foreign that reflects an ideological point of view and evaluative reading and seeks to guide the response to international events.

It is the translation of such lexical evaluation, and how such evaluation operates and varies in real, contemporary settings, that is a focus of this book. The following is a striking example from a prominent stage. During a European Parliament debate on 24 February 2010 on the follow-up of the informal EU 20–20 European council, the right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party MEP Nigel Farage launched a string of insults at the newly appointed President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, and his State, Belgium:

We were told that, when we had a President, we would see a giant global political figure: the man that would be the political leader for five hundred million people; the man that would represent all of us on the world stage; the man whose job was so important that of course you're paid more than President Obama. Well, I am afraid what we got . . . was you. And I am sorry, but after that performance earlier that you gave . . . and I do not want to be rude . . . but, but . . . you know, really, **you have the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk**. The question that I want to ask and that we are all going to ask is: who ARE YOU? I'd never heard of you; nobody in Europe had ever heard of you. I would like to ask you, Mr President: who . . . voted for you? And what mechanism – [*he addresses other members protesting at his comments*] oh, I know democracy is not popular with you lot – what mechanism do the peoples of Europe have to remove you? Is this European democracy? Well, I . . . I sense, though, that you are competent and capable and dangerous, and I have no doubt that it's your intention to be the quiet assassin of European democracy and of the European nation states. You appear to have a loathing . . . for the very concept of the existence of nation states; perhaps that it's because you come from Belgium, which of course is pretty much a non-country.⁹

The headline sound-bite is indicated in bold in the transcription: *you have the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk*.¹⁰ These are evident, and very hefty, instances of subjective evaluation from Farage. He uses parallel syntactic structures (*the charisma of a damp rag; the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk*) and

analogies designed to be mocking and hurtful. The strong negative evaluation of adjectives *damp* and *low-grade*, collocated with the nouns *rag* and *bank clerk*, here merely exaggerates the overall ideational negativity of the speech. It would seem obvious that such intensity of evaluation would be a critical consideration for the interpreters working on the spot in the interpreting booths. In this respect, analysis of the simultaneous interpreting on the day is indeed revealing, but also rather surprising. It is true that most of the interpreters hesitate at this point in the text, doubtlessly taken aback at the virulence and the directness of the attack on the President. A hesitation (or ‘disfluency’, Pöchhacker 2004: 109) is likely to be one indication that a translator or interpreter is faced with a ‘problem nexus’ (Angelone 2010) and possibly that he/she considers a point to be especially sensitive. As far as the lexical realizations of the evaluation are concerned, the French interpreter gives *vous avez le charisme d’une serpillière* [‘you have the charisma of a floor-cloth’] and the German *das Karisma eines nassen Lappens* [‘the charisma of a damp flannel’]. Both omit any reference to the bank clerk, while the Italian explicates and downplays the first part as *Lei ha un charisma di una persona incapace* [‘you have a charisma of an incompetent person’]. Perhaps this reduction in the strength of the evaluation, by omission or explicitation in the target text (TT), has something to do with the severe face-threatening act and the interpreters’ concern to avoid the risk of exaggerating it. Since the interpreters are using the first person, they place themselves in the position of representing the speech act of Farage. They thus incur the risk that the words they utter may be taken to be their own subjective interpretations of the ST (source text).

Some of the interpreters used the technique of compensation (Klaudy 2008), inserting evaluation elsewhere in the text. This was clear in the inflection of their voice and in the addition of expressions and particles designed to heighten the intensity or graduation of the pejorative evaluation at other points. Hence, the German stresses *Wer SIND Sie denn eigentlich?* [lit. ‘Who ARE you then actually?’] for *Who ARE YOU?*, adding the modal particles *denn* [‘then’] and *eigentlich* [‘actually’]. The Spanish interpreter, who translates both parts of the major sound-bite more or less literally,¹¹ adds evaluative interpersonal markers: *¿quién demonios es usted?* [‘who the devil are you?’] ... *usted no tiene ni pajolera idea* [‘you don’t have the **foggiest** idea’]. The overall ‘evaluative prosody’ (Bednarek 2006: 8) of a text influences other points too. Towards the end of the extract, Farage makes the rhetorical move from scathing attack on Van Rompuy’s standing and legitimacy to a grudging acknowledgement of his ability (*I sense, though, that you are competent*). In Farage’s opinion this is all the more ‘dangerous’, since Van Rompuy’s competence may enable him to fashion a more centralized Europe. At this point, the negative evaluative prosody of the rest of the passage seems to colour the attention of the French and the Spanish interpreters, who render this with the opposite meaning – *you are incompetent* ... This error does not appear to have been picked up in the media, which shows that the receiver, too, listens selectively.

Differences in interpretation of evaluation may be subtle, but that does not mean they are only of academic interest or always go unnoticed amongst the audience. Indeed, the role of modal expressions and reporting verbs were crucial in the

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rewriting of the notorious dossier prepared by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's inner circle of advisers in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The 'WMD dossier', based on intelligence at the time, was published on 24 September 2002 and purported to show that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction.¹² It has subsequently been the source of much controversy, as the government of the time was accused of 'sexing up' the report, rewriting the intelligence to exaggerate the threat and thus to garner support for war.¹³ In the drafting, the most noted insertion was of the claim that Iraq might be able to launch chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes. Here, crucial evaluative features are those that deal with the language of certainty and truth.¹⁴ The above claim, along with others in the Executive Summary, is presented as a series of fourteen bullet points, commencing as follows:

As a result of the intelligence we judge that Iraq has:

- continued to produce chemical and biological agents;
- military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, including against its own Shia population. Some of these weapons are deployable within 45 minutes of an order to use them.¹⁵

The bullet points mask the modal expression *we judge that ...* and therefore suggest a factual list rather than opinion. Even more stark is the certainty value in the document afforded by the choice of reporting verbs (cf. Thompson and Ye Yiyun 1991). Revisions in the drafting consistently reduce hedging (Hyland 1998) and instead move towards the certainty pole, as shown by the highlights in the following example:

Within the last month intelligence has **suggested** that the Iraqi military **would be** able to use their chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so.

(draft dossier 10.9.2002)

The Iraqi military **may be** able to deploy chemical or biological weapons ...

(draft dossier 16.9.2002)

Intelligence **indicates** that the Iraqi military **are** able to deploy ...

(draft dossier 19.9.2002 and published dossier 24.09.2002)

Intelligence has suggested becomes the more certain *indicates*, while the conditional *would be able to use* shifts to *may be* and finally to the simple indicative statement *are*. This presents the speaker as being sure of the truth value of the proposition. That these shifts have a real effect on the reader and are a site of contestation of evaluation is underlined by the attention given to them in two UK investigations: the Hutton Inquiry of 2003 into the death of consultant Dr David Kelly¹⁶ and the Butler Inquiry of 2004 into pre-invasion intelligence.¹⁷ In the Hutton Inquiry,

testimony by Martin Howard, Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence at the Ministry of Defence, reported the discussion of alternative wordings at the time of the preparation of the dossier. These wordings were related to different interpretations of the information available, as Howard makes clear:

At the time the dossier was produced there was a very wide variety of views on different parts of the dossier and the language that was used in it. They were not differences of view about whether intelligence should be included or not, it was more about how the intelligence was described or how it should be interpreted. It was, for example, the difference between saying ‘intelligence suggests’, ‘intelligence shows’, ‘intelligence indicates’. These meanings have quite a lot of – you know, to intelligence analysts they are quite important distinctions.¹⁸

An example of this was provided by another witness, Dr Brian Jones, former branch head in the Scientific and Technical Directorate of the Defence Intelligence Analysis Staff. He relayed his concerns at the excessively categorical statements in the dossier which use the reporting verb *show*. It is used four times in the Executive Summary, as follows:

It [Information] **shows** that Iraq has refurbished sites formerly associated with the production of chemical and biological agents ... It [Intelligence] **shows** that Saddam attaches great importance to possessing weapons of mass destruction ... It **shows** that he does not regard them only as weapons of last resort ... Intelligence also **shows** that Iraq is preparing plans to conceal evidence of these weapons ...¹⁹

Jones’ own comments attest to the certainty value attached to *shows*, which was well understood by those in the intelligence services who needed to express subtleties of judgement:

JONES: I think we felt that it was reasonable to say that the intelligence indicated that this was the case [i.e. that Iraq possessed and was prepared to use chemical and biological weapons]; and I think I felt it was a reasonable conclusion to draw; but we did not think – we did not think the intelligence showed it absolutely beyond any shadow of doubt.

Q: And there is a difference, I take it, from your answer between ‘indicates’ and ‘shows’?

JONES: Yes.²⁰

In other words, to say *Information shows that Iraq has refurbished sites* demonstrates the text producer’s commitment to the truth-value of the statement. For Jones, the use of *shows* is equivalent to implicitly stating that it is ‘absolutely beyond any shadow of doubt’. By contrast, less conviction is connoted by *indicates*, as in:

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[Information] **indicates** that Iraq remains able to manufacture these agents, and to use bombs, shells, artillery rockets and ballistic missiles to deliver them.²¹

An even greater degree of hedging is conveyed by *suggested*:

The ... report also **suggested** that Iraq could assemble nuclear weapons within months of obtaining fissile material.²²

Such nuances, particularly the use of *shows*, which creates the impression of the certainty of the information and the conclusions drawn, constrain the responses from the reader. They were extremely influential and devastatingly consequential, promoting the stance of the authors of the dossier and helping to enlist public and parliamentary support for war. In the event, of course, they were erroneous and misleading because no chemical and biological weapons were to be found in Iraq.

The practical insights of the intelligence analysts are supported by the theoretical and applied frameworks of discourse analysis. In appraisal theory, the shades of meaning expressed in reporting verbs are discussed under the heading of 'engagement'. They are seen to be central to the expression of the writer/speaker's attitude and stance and to the negotiation of alignment between the writer/speaker and addressee:

[W]hen speakers/writers announce their own attitudinal positions they not only self-expressively 'speak their own mind', but simultaneously invite others to endorse and to share with them the feelings, tastes or normative assessments they are announcing. Thus declarations of attitude are dialogically directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief.

(Martin and White 2005: 95)

For Martin and White (ibid.: 98), *shows* is an example of 'proclaiming' attitude where the textual voice does not permit alternative positions to be adopted by the reader. *Indicates* or *suggests* would reveal more subjectivity ('entertaining' more voices) and a verb such as *claims* would represent a subjective external voice that would provoke challenge. We might represent these differences as a cline between poles of positioning that are, to use Bakhtin's seminal terms, at the one extreme monoglossic (univocal, not permitting of other voices or responses) and at the other heteroglossic (openly engaging with other voices and permitting a wide response from the addressee), as in Figure 0.1.

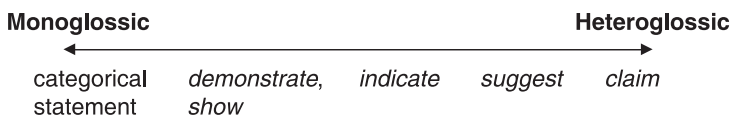


FIGURE 0.1 Engagement positioning of reporting verbs

The translation of these linguistic signals poses significant problems. First, languages may differ in the range of resources used in reporting – English conventions point to a wider range than in Arabic and Persian, for example (Ardekani 2002). Second, translators may not always be finely attuned to the positioning that is conveyed, which may cause shifts along the cline. Thus, in the Arabic translation of the Iraq dossier posted online by the UK government *indicates* is rendered as the more monoglossic *دكوي* (*yuakid*, ‘asserts/ confirms’) and *suggested that Iraq could . . .* is the more explicit and direct *راشاً* (*ashara*, ‘pointed to/ indicated . . .’). In some instances this may have a significant impact on the reception of the text.

The structure of the book

Critical points can therefore range considerably in their form and subtlety. This book seeks to uncover their range and to identify the trends in their translation. It looks at the translator’s mediation, or intervention, through an analysis of evaluation based on the model of appraisal theory, a development of the interpersonal function described in Hallidayan linguistics. The structure of the book is as follows:

- Chapter 1 is an introduction to the main ideas of appraisal theory and how these may relate to translation. The theory is then tested on a range of translation²³ scenarios in order to begin to reveal the critical subjective points of translation and the decision-making processes that are associated with them. These scenarios are:
- Chapter 2: the simultaneous interpreting of President Barack Obama’s inaugural address in January 2009. Three different interpretations into Spanish are studied, together with written translations of the same speech and interpretations in other languages (French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and American Sign Language).
- Chapter 3: the views of professional technical translators as to what are critical points in a text. These are investigated through direct telephone and email interviews and through the analysis of discussions on the online forums KudoZ™ and SENSE.
- Chapter 4: the literary translator and reviser. Translator archives are used to research decision-making through the revisions made at different points of drafts. Analysis of related correspondence between the authors, translators and editors helps to explain some of these decisions and to monitor problem areas in their texts.
- Chapter 5: an experiment into translation variation involving the study of multiple translator trainee student versions of the same extract from the Jorge Luis Borges short story ‘Emma Zunz’. The aim behind the study is to see what remains invariant (which would suggest readings and encodings that are not contested) and what is subject to most variation (which may indicate key critical points). The experiment is explored further by the comparison of some of the same students’ works in a different genre – technical translation.

10 Evaluation in translation

Together, these scenarios constitute a study of critical points in different modes (simultaneous interpreting and written translation), different genres (literary and technical translation) in a range of languages (European and non-European) and with different levels of experience (professional translators and trainees). They also encompass different forms of research (detailed analysis of individual texts and a corpus of translations, interviews with professionals, the study of online forums and of translator archives and correspondence). In sum, therefore, they are selected to offer a multiple perspective on the concept of critical points. The study is innovative both for its subject of study and also for the form of analysis. It does not take for granted that the form of analysis based on appraisal theory is necessarily going to be applicable or revealing in its entirety. The results are not predetermined, the examples not picked to order. Indeed, the study specifically seeks to test out appraisal theory in order to determine to what extent it fits the purpose of analysing and better understanding the translator's work. The avoidance of the indiscriminate importation of a linguistic model developed for English means that the current book is truly an experiment.