
A review of *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (3rd edition) by Mona Baker

New York: Routledge, 2018. xviii + 390pp., 23 B/W Illustrations. ISBN: 9781138666887.
Paperback £30.39

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1. Introduction

The reviewed book, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (abbreviated as *In Other Words*) by Mona Baker, has been a seminal work in the field of translation studies since its initial publication in 1992. The 2018 3rd edition of the book further solidifies its status as a definitive resource for both translation scholars and practitioners.

Despite the book's age, it remains widely taught in translation programs, particularly in the MENA region, and continues to be an effective textbook and reference. The sequential reprinting of the book, with the most recent edition in 2018, underscores its recognized importance. This review aims to provide an overview of the book's content, highlight its strengths, and evaluate its relevance and contribution to the field of translation studies.

2. Content overview

In Other Words encompasses a wide range of topics relevant to translation and offers valuable insights for both instructors and students of translation, as well as other linguists. The latest book's edition's content is organized into nine chapters, each focusing on a specific aspect of translation. The book covers a range of topics, from foundational linguistic concepts to practical translation strategies.

The author's central thesis is that translation is a complex, multi-faceted endeavor that requires a nuanced understanding of linguistic structures, cultural context, and pragmatic considerations. From foundational linguistic concepts to practical translation strategies, Baker provides a thorough examination of the challenges inherent in cross-cultural translation, drawing from a diverse array of language examples.

Moreover, Baker effectively discusses the challenges inherent in cross-cultural translation. She provides copious examples drawing from a diverse array of languages, including Arabic and English, to illustrate the pitfalls translators may encounter. These range from divergences in expressive meaning and grammatical forms to the complexities of translating idiomatic expressions. Baker's expert analysis equips readers with the strategies needed to navigate these

treacherous waters, such as translation by cultural substitution and the use of unrelated words.

Regarding the book's organizational structure, Baker dedicates an entire chapter to the critical distinction between grammatical and lexical choices in translation, underscoring the often-obligatory nature of the former and the more malleable nature of the latter. Her discussion of word order as a textual strategy in Chapter 5 is particularly insightful, exploring how translators can manipulate information flow to achieve desired effects.

One of the highlights of Baker's work is her in-depth exploration of cohesion and pragmatics in Chapters 6 and 7. She provides a thorough examination of the role of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and lexical cohesion, equipping readers with a stronger understanding of the essential connections that hold a text together. Moreover, her treatment of pragmatic concepts, such as coherence and implicature, further contributes to the book's value as a comprehensive resource on the complexities of translation.

The book's value is further bolstered by Baker's inclusive, "sensibly undogmatic" approach, as noted by translator Lanna Castellano (1988, p.133). The author's willingness to acknowledge the inherent strengths and weaknesses of any translation, as well as her insistence that a "good translator" must first understand the source text holistically, lend an air of pragmatism and humility to her work (Castellano, 1988. p.133).

3. Strengths and contributions

One of the key strengths of Baker's work is its in-depth exploration of diverse linguistic and translation-related topics, including syntax, semantics, rhetorical devices, cohesion, coherence, and pragmatics. The inclusion of numerous real-life examples further strengthens the book's practical value, demonstrating the application of translation principles across different linguistic contexts.

Baker's emphasis on the importance of theory in translation is another significant contribution of the book. By incorporating theoretical concepts into practical examples, she provides a strong foundation for translators to enhance their skills and develop a deeper understanding of the translation process.

4. Evaluation and conclusion

In Other Words is a well-written and comprehensive resource that addresses key aspects of translation. The author's expertise and extensive research are evident in the way she covers various linguistic matters and cultural considerations related to translation. The book's theoretical framework, coupled with practical examples and exercises, makes it a valuable tool for both instructors and students of translation.

The book's organization and content balance ensure a systematic exploration of translation concepts and techniques. Each chapter explores distinct areas of translation, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The inclusion of exercises and further reading suggestions encourages active engagement and enables readers to apply the concepts discussed.

The overall contribution of *In Other Words* to the field of translation studies is significant. It offers a solid foundation for translators, equipping them with the necessary theoretical

knowledge and practical skills. Furthermore, the book's emphasis on real-life examples and its consideration of multiple languages make it relevant and applicable to a wide range of translation contexts.

To maintain its relevance, it would be beneficial for the book to stay abreast of the latest developments in translation technology, such as machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools. Incorporating discussions on the impact of technological advancements on the translation process would further enhance the book's value and ensure it continues to provide comprehensive coverage of the field.

In conclusion, *In Other Words* is an essential resource for anyone involved in translation or interested in the field of translation studies. Its comprehensive coverage, practical examples, and theoretical insights make it an asset for translators, teachers, and students alike. Baker's expertise and meticulous approach ensure that the book remains a reliable reference for years to come, provided it adapts to the evolving technological landscape in the translation industry.

References

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