CHAPTER 10

Strategies of Adaptation in the Translation of German and Italian Travel Guides

Tania Baumann

1 Introduction

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, travelling became a widespread and popular leisure activity in the industrialized nations and shares similar features within this “community of civilisation”;\(^1\) in the same way travel guides, tourists’ faithful companion from the 19th century onwards, have an unmistakable international textual identity. Nevertheless, the text genre of the travel guide has particular culture-specific features in each linguistic and cultural community linked to the respective different travelling traditions. Thus, travel guides are generally written by a sender who is member of the same linguistic and cultural community as the final receivers, and who acts as a mediator between the “known world” and the more or less “exotic” destinations promoted and described in the text; but there may also be translated versions of successful travel guide series into different languages. The translation of travel guides requires the adaptation of the source text to the needs of the new receivers according to a pragmatic-functional approach. As Boyer and Viallon (2000: 119) observe, translating a travel guide, there are first of all problems on the level of the “cultural differential”.

This paper, starting from the assumption that the dimension of the cultural distance between the source text producer, the target text receiver and the tourist destination influences the translation, aims to propose a classification of the adaptation procedures employed in the translation of travel guides, continuing a previous exploratory study.\(^2\) The classification is realized in the field of functional translation theories, notably the Skopos theory elaborated by H. Vermeer and K. Reiß (1984) and the later works by K. Reiß (1995) and C. Nord (1995, 2006) (section 3). The analysis starts with the particular characteristics of the text genre of the travel guide (section 2) and is based on the examination of a bidirectional parallel corpus of travel guides dedicated to two

---

1 Warnke 2001: 248.

All the translations were realised within a wider agreement between the publishers: for the German travel guides, there is the giant publisher of travel guides MairDumont with the Marco Polo series and the publisher Travel House Media, by the publishing group Ganske, with the Merian live! series; concerning the Italian travel guides, there is, restricted to the two decades between the 20th and the 21st century, the agreement between De Agostini and Baedeker, and the agreement between the publishers Mondadori and Dorling Kindersley, that has the German translation mediated by the English one, *Eyewitness Travel Sardinia* (2011) (=GMSarEN), corresponding to the publisher’s custom.3

The agreements concerning the German series Marco Polo and Merian live!, as well as the Italian Guida Mondadori, concern the entire editorial product, so the source text (=ST) and the target text (=TT) are almost identical in every part: layout, photos (except for the cover photo), and texts. The case of the German translation of the De Agostini guide, instead, is quite different: the TT is included in the Baedeker guide series and the translation is adapted to the format of that series: so not only are the photos different, but there are also significant integrations on the textual level and other adaptations which will be illustrated below (section 4.1).

My hypothesis is that in a text genre such as that of the travel guide, in which the pragmatics of the target audience is the most important factor, the adaptations realized in the translations are due to the fact that the target audience has special requirements linked to the different linguistic and cultural contexts in which it lives; thus to say that the adaptation procedures depend on the direction of translation. Indeed, it is this context that influences both

---

3 If the source language of the travel guide with the aim to be translated is different from English, it is first translated into English and from this language to other target languages. (Personal communication with the publisher’s German headquarters, T.B.).