Constructing the "Stranger" in Camus *L'Étranger* ‒Registerial and Attitudinal Variability under Translation

Peter R. R. White

University of New South Wales, Australia

prrwhite@verbosity.org

ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates insights arising when some key aspects of systemic functional linguistic theory (Halliday 19994) and the appraisal framework (Martin and White 2005) are applied to exploring variation between multiple translations of the same source text. For the purposes of this demonstration, an investigation is conducted by reference to the much discussed and debated variation between the multiple translations of the opening to Albert Camus' celebrated novel, *L'Étranger* (translated either as *The Stranger* or *The Outsider*). It is demonstrated that Halliday's notions of "instantiation", "realisation" and "register" can be applied to show that this variation is communicatively significant in that it involves a shift of register and hence a shift in the social situation being construed for each translation. It is also demonstrated that the account of "invoked attitude" developed in the appraisal framework literature can be applied to show that the different translations have different attitudinal potentials. It is argued that these two lines of analysis can usefully be applied more generally in analyses concerned with inter-translation variation.

1. Introduction

Given that the language of Albert Camus' *L Étranger*, is often described as "simple", "direct" "terse" or "sparse"[1], it is perhaps surprising that there have to date been five English translations of this 20th century classic of French literature. The common-sense view might be that translating such apparently "simple" French into "simple" English ought to be a relatively unproblematic task, resulting, upon the first attempt by a skilled translator, in a text which would hardly be in need of revision. But as is so often the case with understandings of translation, the common-sense view clearly does not hold in this instance. The first translation by Stuart Gilbert in 1946 (four years after the publication of the original) won wide acclaim and firmly established Camus' reputation in the English-speaking world, and yet the four subsequent translators (Laredo 1982; Griffith 1982; Ward 1988; Smith 2013) obviously felt that Gilbert's version was lacking in some way[2], that it was possible to produce a version which provided English-speaking readers with what the subsequent translators presumably felt would be a better sense of the meanings being made in the French original.

In this paper, I report on findings made possible when analyses informed by insights from systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and the associated appraisal framework are undertaken in comparing the multiple translations of the novel's much discussed opening paragraph. (For reasons to be set out below, I include in my dataset the translation of this opening paragraph produced by the Google

online machine translation software.) In focusing on what might seem a very small dataset—six translations of a single paragraph—the paper has several purposes. Firstly I propose to provide theoretically principled, linguistics-based input to the quite extensive debate which has developed around the translations of the book's opening (see, for example, Kaplansky 2004; Bloom 2012; Messud 2014). To date much of this discussion has been impressionistic, with contributors to the debate often relying on personal intuitions about the source and target languages.[3] I am hopeful that the discussion I provide below will be informative for those with an interest in the novel itself and/or its translation. However, a focus on just one paragraph would almost certainly not be adequate if my concern were just with the *L Étranger* as a literary text, and its translation. Rather, my primary objective is to use a discussion of this opening paragraph to offer more general insights into some key issues within translation studies and, more specifically, into the role some of the foundational propositions of SFL can play in the pursuit of such insights. As it turns out, a focus on this particular small-scale dataset—a single paragraph and its multiple translations—serves this purpose well. Additionally, this discussion permits some consideration of interesting differences in how SFL scholars concerned with translation issues have modelled the relationship between source and target texts.

Translation-studies work which involves comparisons of multiple translations of a single source text is, of course, relatively common (see, for example, Munday 2012; Souza 2010, 2013). This is especially so in connection with translations of major literary and religious texts. My focus, however, is somewhat different from this prior work in that my concern, at least initially, is not with the relationship of the translations with the original source text, but rather with the relationships which can be observed to hold between the different

translations themselves. Thus, at least in the first instance, I am not concerned, for example, with issues of what Catford (1965) has termed "translational shift", or with "translational equivalence/commensurability/correspondence" (see for example Munday 2001 chapter 3), or with whether the texts under consideration should be classified as "translation", "paraphrase" or "adaptation/variation" (or what, following Martin 2008, Souza 2010 terms "quotation", "paraphrase" or "retelling".) Rather my initial purpose is to provide, before turning to consider the source text itself, an account of any potential differences in an English-speaking reader's communicative "experience", depending upon which particular English-language version they engage with.

While some might see such a shifting of the focus from the original source text as questionable in terms of typical translation-studies concerns, I believe it has value for the following reasons. Insights into the "communicative experience" afforded readers by different translations of the same text are presumably useful and of interest both to linguists/translation studies scholars and to those members of the general reading public with some interest in the work under consideration. (By "communicative experience" is meant the totality of the meanings potentially taken from the text by the reader, along with potential interpretations by the reader as to the setting, the social relations and the field of human activity thereby signified.)   With respect to the various versions of *L Étranger*, Messud (2014) asserts: "Each translation is, perforce, a re-envisioning of the novel: a translator will determine which Meursault [the novel's 1st-person narrator and principal protagonist] we encounter, and in what light we understand him." In this regard, I also note the emerging online phenomenon of "fansubbing" by which amateur subtitling groups produce multiple

audio-visual translations (subtitles) of recently released movies, which are made available to the general public free of charge. In some cases as many as six or seven of these different translations may be available for download (see, for example, Díaz Cintas and Sánchez 2004). This would seem to provide additional reasons why translation-studies scholars might choose to focus as much on the relations between these various target texts as on the relationship between target and source text.

From this view follows my decision to include as data a translation produced by the Google machine translation software. Even while it is probably unlikely that anyone interested in reading *L´Étranger* in English would do so via a Google-translate version, nevertheless the "quality" of the translations produced by Google and other machine translation software is now such that millions of people every day rely on such translations−i.e. their engagement with the meanings conveyed in source texts of interest is via the "communicative experience" provided by the machine translation. It is therefore valid, at least in terms of the issues being addressed in this paper, to include for consideration this machine-translation-derived "communicative experience", and to compare it with that of translations produced more directly by humans.

In the case of the translations of *L´Étranger*, some of the translations were prepared with a United States audience in mind and some for a British audience and it is at least plausible that any differences in the impact of a work for particular reading communities may be related to differences in the translation to which they have access.[4] Certainly in the case of *L´Étranger*, there has been considerable debate over interpretations and evaluation of the character of its central protagonist and narrator, Meursault[5]. Critics differ considerably in their assessments as to the extent to which the

reader is positioned to empathise and align with Meursault, an issue of some interest on account of the fact that Meursault kills a stranger (an "Arab") he encounters by chance on a beach. Accordingly the possibility arises that differences in reader responses to Meursault's character are at least in part attributable to systemic differences in the translations. SFL/appraisal-based approaches are particularly germane here, given that they provide for analyses which can systematically and in a theoretically principled ways, discover the linguistic bases for any such differences in reader responses (differences in "readings"). (For a discussion of differences in reader responses based on the SFL framework, with reference to Theme choices, see Kim 2011 and Kim 2012.)

2. The translations and issues arising

As indicated, the opening paragraph of *L Étranger* has prompted considerable discussion and debate, both from a literary critical and a translation studies perspective. Opening paragraphs from the six translations (five human and one machine) mentioned above are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1. Six translations of the opening of Camus' *L'Étranger*

1. Tr. Stuart Gilbert, *The Stranger*, New York, Vintage, 1954 (1946),	2. Tr. Joseph Laredo, *The Outsider*, London, Penguin, 1983 (1982)	3. Tr. Kate Griffith, *The Stranger*, Washington, D.C., University Press of America, 1982	4. Tr. Matthew Ward, *The Stranger*, New York, Vintage, 1989 (1988)	5. Tr. Sandra Smith, *The Outsider*, Penguin, 2013	6. Google translate, accessed May 2016
Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I	Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I	Mother died today. Or maybe it was yesterday, I	Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I	My mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I	Today, Mom died. Or maybe yesterday, I

can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.	don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely' That doesn't mean anything. It may have been yesterday.	don't know. I received a telegram from the rest home: MOTHER DECEASED. BURIAL TOMORROW. VERY TRULY YOURS. It doesn't say anything. Maybe it was yesterday.	don't know. I got a telegram from the home: "Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours." That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.	don't know. I received a telegram from the old people's home: 'Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Very sincerely yours.' That doesn't mean anything. It might have been yesterday.	do not know. I received a telegram from the asylum: "Mother died. Funeral tomorrow. regards." It does not mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.

The literary critical analysts of *L Étranger*, of whom there are very many, have typically interpreted this opening as inviting the reader to start to form some impression of the 1st-person narrator's character, to start the process so fundamental to much narrative fiction of treating a fictional character as if he/she were a real person and thereby judging his/her portrayed behaviour by reference to social norms, and/or empathising with his/her circumstances or dilemma (see Macken-Horarik 2003: 287 for a discussion of this in terms of "emotional solidarity" versus "ethical discernment"). In this case the analysts are often struck by what they interpret as the apparent "impassivity" or "detachment" (see, for example, McCarthy 2004) of the narrator, "Meursault", as he reports receiving the news of his mother's death, without any preamble or introduction. It is this disconnection and apparent lack of "normal" emotion which, throughout the novel, is both central to the characterization of Meursault and a central theme of the novel as iconic "absurdist/existentialist" tract. As it turns out, this sense of Meursault's "detachment", as apparently conveyed by the text to most readers, is central to reader judgements of his character, as, for example, either "heartless", "callous" and even "psychopathic" or, by

way of the complete opposite reading, as "heroic" and "courageous", on the basis of Meursault's refusal to dissemble and in his resolute recognition of the "absurdity" of modern existence.

It is noteworthy that there are multiple points of variability in the versions of this short opening paragraph, despite the apparent "simplicity" of the language. These are both of interest in their own right because, as indicated above, they provide for a discussion of SFL formulations of the notions of "instantiation", "realisation", "register" and "intertextuality", and of how these notions can be applied in analysing similarities and differences between texts which are closely related variants (i.e. related as translations or adaptations of the same source text).

3. Mentioning *my mother/mother/mom/mommy*

I begin with the variation of "Mother died today" versus "My mother died today" versus "Maman died today" versus "[Today] Mom died". That there is something significant at stake here is indicated by the debate which has arisen around this single sentence. Thus, for example, an article in the *New Yorker* in 2012 by Ryan Bloom was devoted in its entirety to arguments about what this opening line *should* be, with Bloom asserting that all the translations published to that date had "got it wrong" (Bloom 2012). Similarly, in an interview with *The Guardian* newspaper in 2013 (Jordison 2013), the translator of the most recent version, Sandra Smith, observed: "When I first got the contract and told people, the first thing everyone asked was 'How will you translate the first sentence?' It was a real challenge…"

Smith chose to use "My mother" and outlined her reasons as

follows: "I chose 'My mother' because I thought about how someone would tell another person that his mother had died. Meursault is speaking to the reader directly." Writing his *New Yorker* piece, before the release of Smith's translation, Bloom strongly advocated for "Maman" and against the "Mother" variant. His reasons were as follows.

> First impressions matter, and, for forty-two years, the way that American readers were introduced to Meursault was through the detached formality of his statement: "Mother died today." There is little warmth, little bond or closeness or love in "Mother," which is a static, archetypal term, not the sort of thing we use for a living, breathing being with whom we have close relations. ⋯ The word forces us to see Meursault as distant from the woman who bore him. What if the opening line had read, "Mommy died today"? How would we have seen Meursault then? Likely, our first impression would have been of a child speaking. Rather than being put off, we would have felt pity or sympathy. But this, too, would have presented an inaccurate view of Meursault. (Bloom 2012)

4. Accounting for communicative effects by reference to "realisation", "instantiation" and "register"

In order to explain, in theoretically principled linguistic terms, what is at stake here, we can turn firstly to aspects of SFL theory, as mentioned above, and then to insights arising from the treatment of evaluative language within the appraisal framework literature (White 1998, 2002, 2015, 2016, Martin 2000, Martin and White 2005).

I attend firstly to Halliday's account of the interconnected theoretical dimensions of "stratification/ realisation" and "instantiation". With

respect to "stratification", the meanings being made in individual texts are understood to constitute a particular socio-semiotic "stratum" which "realises" a higher level "stratum", that of social situation, a particular configuration of settings for what within SFL are termed "field", "tenor" and "mode" (Halliday 1994). In this formulation, field refers to the experiential domain being referenced and construed, tenor refers to the social relations, social roles, identities and personalities of those involved in the communication, and mode refers to the manner by which communication occurs (e.g. as speech or writing; in face-to-face communication or at a distance, as constitutive of what is going on or ancillary, and so on.). Thus under "realisation" a particular social situation is understood to give rise to a text as a particular configuration of meanings and combination of meanings. "Realisation" of "strata" is not, however, a one-way process of social situation determining language choices. Rather, while language choices may reflect the current social situation, at the same time they will function to bring a particular social situation into being as, for example, they construe particular social relations between interlocutors or construe what is going on as a particular social activity. Thus under this notion of "realisation", a text and its associated social situation are understood to be mutually constitutive. (See, for example Halliday 2002 [1977], 2005 [2002]; Halliday and Hasan 1987, Matthiessen 1993, 2015; Lukin et al. 2011.)

If it is possible to systematically correlate particular social situations (particular settings of field, tenor and mode) with a particular deployment of meanings in a text, then it follows that the more similar two social situations are, then the more similar will be the language choices in the texts with which they are associated. This is the proposition on which Halliday's notion of "register" (and the associated notion of "text type") relies. In this, "registers/text-types"

are "functional varieties of language" which are linguistically similar on account of realising/construing similar social situations. Halliday explains this in the following terms.

> The principle is that each of these elements in the semiotic structure of the situation [field, tenor and mode] activates the corresponding component in the semantic system, creating in the process a semantic configuration, a group of favoured and foregrounded options from the total meaning potential that is typically associated with the situation type in question. This semantic configuration is what we understand by the term *register* (emphasis in original). (Halliday (2002 [1977]: 58)

He uses the twin terms of "register" and "text type" for the following reasons.

> I think that the critical intermediate concept, for our purposes, is that of register, which enables us to model contextual variation in language. Seen from the instantial end of the cline [of instantiation – authors], a register appears as a cluster of similar texts, a text type; whereas seen from the systemic end, a register appears as a subsystem. (Halliday, 2005 [2002]: 248)

The key insight here, then, is that it is possible to identify "types" of social situation—with individual situations grouped together on the basis of similarities in their settings of field, tenor and mode—and that these situation "types" will be associated with texts which can similarly be grouped together as "registers" or "text types"—on the basis of their linguistic similarities. Thus we can say that individual texts construe individual social situations, while groupings of similar texts construe a particular type of social situation. Going one step further, Halliday proposes that culture can be understood as a

system of possible social situations and that the language system, in its totality (along with other attendant semiotic systems), realizes and construes that cultural system.

With respect to "instantiation", the notion that an individual text is an "instance" of a given register/text type follows naturally and necessarily from this, as does the notion that individual social situations are "instances" of given situation types. A text "instantiates" a given register/text type in that it favours and foregrounds similar meanings and combinations of meanings to those which are favoured and foregrounded in the other texts which constitute that register/text type. Similarly, a social situation "instantiates" a given "situation type" in that it involves similar settings for field, tenor and mode to those involved in the other situations constituting this "situation type". Putting this in the context of the systems of culture and language, we can say that a situation type represents a mid-point in the process by which the culture, as a potential for a great diversity of social situations, is instantiated in individual situations. A culture is organized as certain recurrent situation types which, of course, only come into being as they are enacted by social actors in particular social situations. Similarly, we can say that a register/text type represents a mid-point in the process by which the language, as a potential for meaning making, is instantiated in individual texts. Thus a language is experienced as recurrent registers/text types which exist as a result of the occurrence of groupings of individual texts which favour and foreground particular meanings and combination of meanings. This arrangement can be modelled diagrammatically by means of the following figure (based on Halliday 2005 [2002] and Matthiessen 2015).

Figure 1. Halliday's model of instantiation, realisation and register
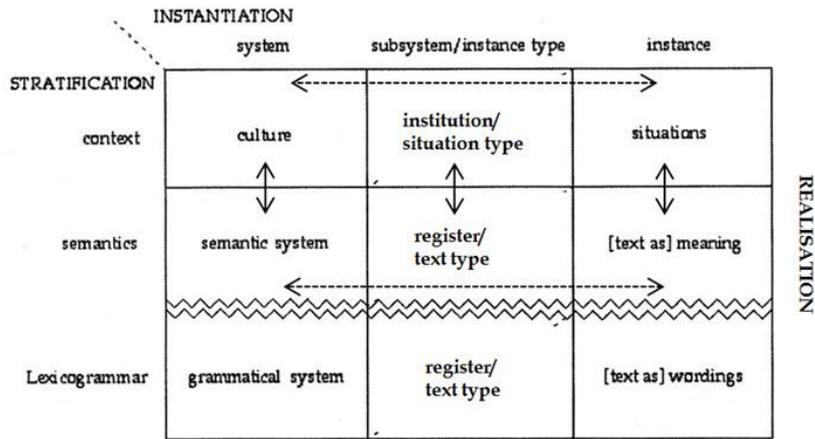
Crucial to our current purposes is the insight that realisation and instantiation constitute a matrix (see, for example, Matthiessen 1993, 2015 and Lukin et al. 2011) – i.e. an individual text is simultaneously a realisation/construal of a particular social situation and an instantiation of a particular register/text type. As is to be demonstrated below, it is by simultaneously referencing both realisation and instantiation that it becomes possible to provide a systematic account of differences in the communicative experience provided by different translations and ultimately to compare and contrast multiple translations in terms of their relationship with their source text. In this I possibly differ from Martin (2006, 2008) and, following Martin, Souza (2010, 2013). Martin and Souza seem to be proposing that analysts interested in exploring relations between textual variants (e.g. translations of the same source text, intra-lingual "retellings" of source texts) should focus on instantiation rather than realisation since, as Souza proposes, "instantiation is more appropriate [than realisation] for probing intertextual relations,

i.e., how one text is sourced from another" (Souza 2013: 578). There is not the space here to address the differences between Halliday's and Martin's formulations of instantiation, stratification/realisation and register which underlie this proposition. I can only note in passing that Martin proposes that analysts interested in comparing and contrasting textual variants should focus on (1) differences in the degree of specificity, elaboration and explicitness between the utterances under consideration (which, following Hood 2008, he terms degree of "commitment"[6]), and (2) patterns in the co-articulation of meanings in the texts under consideration (which he terms "coupling").

I turn now to considering how this notion of a realisation-instantiation matrix can provide for a principled account of what is at stake communicatively with respect to the choice of *mother* versus *my mother* versus *mom*. As fiction, of course, this opening paragraph does not realise an actual social situation, and we must adjust our analysis accordingly. The novelist relies on the potential of particular language choices to influence the reader to construe a particular social situation, in this case a particular imagined social situation. Thus, we can interpret this opening paragraph as inviting or inducing the reader to imagine an actual person, in a particular social situation undertaking a communication for some identifiable purpose. Given that there is no background on the speaker nor any description of the circumstances in which these words are being offered, the reader's task is essentially a forensic one, to piece together clues provided by the narrator's language as to who he is, what his personal circumstances might be and for what purposes and with what audience in mind he offers up these words.

We must consider, therefore, potential differences in meaning or connotation between *mother* as opposed to *my mother* as opposed to

mom – specifically what indications or clues as to social situation are provided by Camus having Meursault, the 1st-person narrator, use one of other of these terms in this opening sentence. (I will turn in a later section to considering the registerial and social-situational implications of the use of <u>maman</u> in translation 4). Any such determination involves a generalised process of intertextual referencing or recall on the part of the reader. S/he must reference her/his own past experience of, not so much specific texts, but rather of the presumably rather large set of texts where speakers/writers have addressed or referenced parents in different ways, according to differences in social roles, relationships and communicative purposes. The reader considers in what "register/text type" and hence in what "situation type" one would be more likely to use "my mother" versus "mother" versus "mom" in reporting the death of a maternal parent? By this mechanism then, of identifying the current texts as an instance of a particular register, the reader is able to reach conclusions as to the situation type and hence the likely social roles, relationships and communicative purposes of the current text.

It does need to be noted here that, typically, it is more general favourings and foregroundings of meanings by which registers and hence associated situation types are indicated, rather than by individual words or phrases. Thus Halliday states: "We shall not expect to be able to show that the options embodied in one or another particular sentence are determined by the field, tenor and mode of the situation" (Halliday 2002 [1977]: 58). However, occasionally, it is possible for individual words of phrases to be "indexical" of a given register/text type, as can be the case, for example, with certain slang, specialist or technical lexis, or with the journalistic indexicality of an expression such as "A pile-up on the motorway has claimed five lives". While I am not proposing that "mother", "my mother" or "mom" are

suggestive of a narrowly circumscribed register, I am proposing that, at least in this co-textual setting, they are broadly indicative of register, indicative perhaps of what Matthiessen terms "macro-register" (Matthiessen 2015: 2).

We are now in a position to reach some conclusions as to the registerial variation and hence social-situational variation arising from the use of one or other of these terms. Firstly there is variability as to whom, and in what circumstances, the narrator offers this report of his mother's death. As indicated above, in producing her translation, Smith chose "my mother" so as to present the narrator as addressing people in general—that is to say a situation type in which the relationship between speaker and addressee is one of acquaintanceship, but not that of a family member or close friend: "I thought about how someone would tell another person that his mother had died" (Jordison 2013). In contrast, the choice of just "mother" ("Mother died today") is suggestive of a register and situation type in which the speaker is addressing someone with whom he/she is more intimately acquainted and "mom[7]" suggestive of even greater familiarity. Alternatively, of course, both "mother" (as opposed to "my mother") and "mom" might construe an altogether different register and situation type – specifically that of a personal diary. Obviously one would refer to "mother" or "mom" and not "my mother" in such a context. Thus the use of "mother" or "mom" has the potential to suggest the reader has gained access to material only intended as a personal record—material the writer addresses only to himself.[8] As well, "mom", when contrasted with "mother", is potentially suggestive of registers in which the speaker has a stronger emotional connection with the woman who has just died, or of family arrangements with a higher degree of intimacy and informality—or at least of a speaker wishing to convey such interpersonal arrangements. Thus "my

mother" versus "mother" versus "mom" are associated with variation as to whether the register/situation type is that of conversational exchange versus personal diary entry, and then (1) variation in terms of degree of social distance between speaker and addressee and (2) variation in terms of suggestions as to the strength of the speaker's feelings vis-à-vis his mother. Thus what is surely significant variation in the reader's communicative experience follows from this variation in just a single word.

It does also need to be acknowledged that this is the point at which interpretations may differ, according to any differences in readers' experiences of prior texts and hence in their sense of the register to which the text belongs and, following this, their sense of the specifics of the social situation with which it is associated. Thus we can say that the formulation "Mother died today" is not sufficiently indexical of the personal diary text type for us to predict that this is how it will be interpreted by all. Some may well interpret the narrator as involved here in some form of person-to-person communication, resulting, obviously, in a different "reading" of the text. In this, of course, an analysis which brings to bear the notion of the instantiation-realisation axis can provide a systematic account of the bases for such differences of interpretation−by reference to differences in readers' conclusions as to the register implicated by the language.

What then to make of the "Maman died today" version, as formulated by Ward in version 4 above, in terms of what is implicated with respect to register and situation type? There is a general agreement among commentators that the French "Maman" poses a significant challenge with respect to translation in English−i.e. there is no readily available translationally commensurate term, no expression in English which has a similar location to "Maman" in the

network of interrelated meanings by which the term acquires its particular connotational potential. Thus Messud (2014) notes: "[The translator] Matthew Ward concluded that it was essentially untranslatable ("mom" or "mummy" being not quite apt), and left it in the original." Along similar lines, Bloom contends,

> The truth is that neither of these translations—"Mother" or "Mommy"—ring true to the original. The French word maman hangs somewhere between the two extremes: it's neither the cold and distant "mother" nor the overly childlike "mommy." In English, "mom" might seem the closest fit for Camus's sentence, but there's still something off-putting and abrupt about the single-syllable word; the two-syllable maman has a touch of softness and warmth that is lost with "mom." (Bloom 2012)

Ward's solution, then, to this dilemma was not to translate, to use the source text/source language term, presumably on the assumption that English speakers are sufficiently familiar with the French language and French culture to make some sense of the reference. He chooses to produce what in the translation-studies literature would be termed an "overt", "source-text oriented" or a "foreignizing" translation. But what are the consequences of this in terms of indication of register and associated situation type? Obviously, the foreign term points to a foreign social setting. What readers make of this will be variously conditioned by any first-hand experience they may have of French cultural conditions and perhaps by any popular-cultural representations of French culture to which they may have been subject. Beyond that, however, it is possible that this term is essentially mute in terms of connecting readers with a particular situation type. English speakers without any French will typically have no clear sense of when, where and for what communicative

purposes French speakers would choose to use this term. This would seem to be the view of translator Sandra Smith who, in the interview with the *Guardian* newspaper mentioned previously, explained she chose not to use "maman" because it "didn't really tell the reader anything about the connotation". Against this, it is possible that, by using the term, Ward has in some way extended his readers' semantic range. Perhaps the co-text is sufficient to give readers at least some sense of the meaning of the term in French and thereby, if only in a very small way, to add to their meaning making potential this inter-lingual facility. I must admit to finding this latter possibility somewhat unlikely.

5. Attitudinal invocation

I now turn to considering consequences for the attitudinal positioning of the reader potentially associated with this variation across the different versions. I rely here on work within the appraisal framework on what is termed "invoked" attitude (see, for example, Iedema et al. 1994; White 1998, 2004, 2006; Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005) . The concern here is with formulations which indirectly rather than explicitly act to convey positive or negative assessments of people, objects, happenings and situations — formulations which via suggestion, allusion or association position those addressed to adopt a positive or negative attitude. White (2016: 3) provides the following as an example of material which functions to invoke attitude.

> George W. Bush delivered his inaugural speech as the United States President who collected 537,000 fewer votes than his opponent. (*The*

Of this, he notes,

> There are no explicitly negative (or positive) terms in this utterance
> and yet it has the potential to activate negative assessments of the US
> presidential election processes and/or the Bush presidency, at least
> for those readers who bring to their interpretation of the text certain
> expectations as to how elections should be decided in democracies
> such as the United States. These attitudinal assessments are
> "invoked" rather than "inscribed" in that they arise via processes of
> implicature, and not via explicit assertion of attitudinal values.

In the context of 1st-person fictional narrative such as *L Étranger*,
invocation of attitude will typically be considerably more complicated
than this linguistically, involving additional layers of implication and
association, due to the complication of multi-voicing — i.e. the words
on the page are both those of the novelist, Camus, and his fictional
narrator, Meursault. Thus we are dealing with potential for the reader
to be positively or negatively disposed towards Meursault, to approve
or disapprove of him, to empathise with him or feel alienated by him,
and so on, on the basis of what we imaginatively take to be
Meursault's own words — on the basis of what the author presents
him as having to say about his own behaviour, experiences and
feelings.

A survey of not only literary-critical treatments of the novel (in its
original French and in translation) but also the many student essays,
blog posts and course notes about the novel now available online,
provides ample evidence of the potential for Meursault's own words to
trigger attitudinal assessments by readers, even while, interestingly,
readers apparently differ quite markedly in what that attitudinal

assessment is. Thus, for example one set of online study notes indicates the novel's opening paragraph evoked a strongly negative assessment for the note's author. He/she writes,

> "Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know." This is how the book starts. Seriously. No, we're not kidding. So, right off the bat we know that this guy's mom died today. Or maybe yesterday. But the point is that he (our nameless narrator, for the moment) doesn't know, which makes him seem callous and (our new favorite word) detached. (http://www.shmoop.com/the-stranger/part-1-chapter-1-summary.html)

Later in the same set of the notes this author asserts that Meursault "is a callous jerk who can't even cry for his mother". Similarly a "sample" essay on *L Étranger* provided at the "direct essays" web site (http://www.directessays.com) claims, "In *The Stranger* Albert Camus depicts the main character Meursault as an amoral, insensitive and callous individual."[9] Against this, the literary critic, Christopher Collins, indicates that, for him, the opening paragraph evokes the following by way of ethical assessment.

> The first sentence of *The Stranger* records an event almost banal. Yet a merely ordinary man might affect an emotion, believing emotions to be expected of him at such a moment. Meursault will not falsify the record, and for that he gains our admiration. We sense in him the noble Roman fiber. (Collins 1991: 178)

In play here, we see the role of what can be termed "cultural frames" (see for example Don 2016) in providing the basis or conditions for such attitudinal inferencing. Since there is nothing by way of explicit indication by the novelist as to how the reader should view Meursault attitudinally (or even that the reader *should* view Meursault attitudinally), the reader calls on her/his own

culturally-conditioned notions about what is "expected" or "appropriate" behaviour upon receiving news of the death of one's mother, versus what is "untoward", "inappropriate" or "transgressive" behaviour. This process of attitudinal inferencing is ultimately intertextual in the broadest sense of the term, since we form such values as a result of the multitude of attitudinally and ethically charged texts we encounter as we develop our language facility ontogenetically over a lifetime. It is this multitude of texts by which readers acquire the "cultural frames" which they reference when undertaking such attitudinal interpretation.

The material cited above, then, clearly indicates that for many readers this opening is attitudinally charged, and, intriguingly, that the text evokes diametrically opposed assessments of Meursault in different readers. Since this is not a literary-critical paper, it is not my purpose here to interrogate the specifics of the arguments for either interpretation, as are offered in such commentaries, notes and essays. It is, however, germane for me to consider whether the variants we have observed across the different translations might have different attitudinal potentials—i.e. be more or less likely to trigger positive or negative assessments of Meursault. For this purpose I focus on the first few sentences of the opening, provided again here for ease of reference.

Table 2. The opening sentences of Camus' *L'Étranger* − multiple translations

1. Stuart Gilbert (1946)	2. Joseph Laredo (1982)	3. Kate Griffith (1982)	4. Matthew Ward (1988)	5. Sandra Smith (2013)	6. Google translate (2016)
Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure.	Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know.	Mother died today. Or maybe it was yesterday, I don't know.	Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know.	My mother died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know.	Today, Mom died. Or maybe yesterday, I do not know.

As we have seen, these variants clearly share a potential to invoke an attitudinal assessment of Meursault by dint of what readers see as the apparent dispassionateness of his response to the news of his mother's death. For some this is apparently an aberrant lack of emotion, while for others it indicates a heroic refusal to dissemble. It is arguable, however, that beyond this commonality (i.e. his being presented as unusually dispassionate), the differences between the versions do have some potential to position readers somewhat differently. Again, the "mother" variability is significant here. Thus, Messud (2014) contends that versions with just "mother" "inscrib[e] in Meursault from the outset a formality that could be construed as heartlessness". Along similar lines, Smith contends that her choice of "my mother" is less likely than just "mother" to alienate the reader from Meursault, suggesting a more "normal" affectual bond between mother and son: "Meursault is speaking to the reader directly. 'My mother died today' seemed to me the way it would work, and also implied the closeness of 'maman' you get in the French" (Jordison 2013).

It seems, therefore, that at least for Messud and Smith, "Mother died today" construes a social situation involving a son who is emotionally distant from his mother while "My mother died today" construes a situation involving a son who is less aloof and more emotionally affected. On this basis, we might conclude that the "Mother died today" variant has a greater potential to invoke in the reader a negative assessment of Meursault, by reference to social norms as to how sons should feel about their mothers, and the "My mother died today" variant a lesser potential. Arguing along similar lines, we might interestingly conclude the Google translate version, "Today, Mom died", has the lowest potential to invoke a negative assessment—by such an expression the text construes a son who is

more "normal" in indicating a close emotional bond with his mother. We can also conclude that, in its use of the foreignizing "maman", Ward's version is essentially neutral or inert in this regard, since for the English speaker, unfamiliar with French, the term presumably connotes neither closeness nor aloofness.

There are two other points of variation across the versions which are of interest with respect to their attitudinal potential. Firstly there is the variation between "I can't be sure" (translation 1) and "I don't know" (translations 2-5) as Meursault indicates his lack of knowledge about when his mother died. Arguably "I can't be sure" is indicative of vagueness or lack of concern by Meursault for the specifics of his mother death, which may again be indicative of a detachment or indifference on his part. This may be more likely to trigger a negative assessment than the more definite "I don't know".

Finally there is Google's placing of "Today", as a marked Theme, at the beginning of the first sentence, obviously setting this translation apart from the other versions, where it comes at the end of the sentence. By this choice, the Google translation presents Meursault as having location in time rather than his mother as the reference point or point of departure for this initial utterance. The sentence is "about" timing rather than his mother. It is possible such an orientation may more strongly trigger a negative assessment by the reader of Meursault, as abnormal in this informational orientation. Certainly, Bloom hints at such a possibility when he advocates in favour of sentence initial "Today", along the following lines.

> Rendering the line as "Mother died today" completely neglects a specific ordering of ideas that offer insight into Meursault's inner psyche. Throughout the course of the novel, the reader comes to see that Meursault is a character who, first and foremost, lives for the

moment. . . . What matters is today. The single most important factor of his being is right now". (Bloom 2012)

Interestingly we see here the potential of a textual feature (a marked Theme) to contribute to the triggering of an attitudinal invocation, when in combination with other attitudinally suggestive material. That is to say, it is possible that the markedness of this way of beginning the sentence (and in fact the novel) acts as some sort of alert or flag to the reader that there is something attitudinal at stake here. (For more on the flagging or indirect invocation of attitude see Martin and White 2005: 67 or Don 2016.)

6. Intertextual relations with the source text

The discussion to this point has demonstrated the kind of insights available to comparative analyses of translations when we reference the notions of instantiation, realisation and register as formulated by Halliday and other SFL scholars. To conclude, I now turn to some consideration of the relationship between these translations and the source text, which is provided below, followed by a word-by-word translation.

> Aujourd'hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas. J'ai reçu un télégramme de l'asile : « Mère décédée. Enterrement demain. Sentiments distingués. ». Cela ne veut rien dire. C'était peut-être hier. (Camus 1942: 1)

> *Today mother/mom/mum/mater died. Or perhaps/maybe/possibly yesterday, I do not know. I received a telegram from the home: "Mother deceased/passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Regards/Faithfully*

Yours/Yours Sincerely." This means nothing. It was
perhaps/maybe/possibly yesterday.

Considering the language with respect to indications as to register
and associated situation type, we can conclude the following. In its
use of "maman", the text is ambiguous with respect to the nature of
the communication being undertaken and hence the mode— i.e. in
terms of whether this is some sort of diary entry[10], a record of the
inner thoughts of the speaker/writer or a communication addressed
to some ultimate audience. The translations which use "mother" or
"mom" maintain this registerial ambiguity while, perhaps
paradoxically, Ward's translation retaining the source-text "maman"
actually doesn't carry this sense, for the reasons outlined above (for
an English-speaker without access to French, the term is essentially
"inert" registerially, apart from specifically locating the communication
in a "French" setting). By her use of "my mother", Smith produces a
version without the source text's ambiguity, and for this reason her
translation might be assessed, with respect to this issue of mode, as
less commensurable with the original than the other translations (i.e.
her version lacks the source text's ambiguity).

As discussed above, with respect to the source text's "maman",
English does not provide a term which is registerially commensurate
with the original in terms of indicating who the speaker is (adult
versus child versus young child) and what the narrator's relationship
is with his parent (more or less intimate/formal; more or less
affectionate/aloof.) We can say, therefore, that the "untranslatability"
of the source text is obvious as this point.

In indicating Meursault's certainty as to when his mother died, the
source text is definitive here. Meursault indicates he "does not know"
if it was yesterday or today. All the translations correspond with this,

with the exception of the first 1946 translation by Gilbert, where Meursault is only "not sure" about when his mother died. Perhaps we might consider this difference so slight as not to have any significant communicative consequences. Alternatively, as I have suggested above, it may contribute to a sense of Meursault as impassive and disconnected and hence, when additional text comes into play, act to position at least some readers to view Meursault negatively. At least for this brief moment in the text, the source text (and the other translations) are not quite so attitudinally charged as Gilbert's text. (I note in this regard that this is not a consistent feature of Gilbert's translation. As a number of scholars have observed (see for example Kaplansky 2004), Gilbert's translation includes a great deal of "explicitation", not only elaborating on the source text but adding entirely new material, with the global effect of producing a Meursault who is significantly less disconnected and alienated than Camus' Meursault.)

7. Conclusion

In this paper, therefore, I sought to make a contribution to the debate around the translations of the opening to Camus' *L Étranger* and, through this, to offer new insights into how SFL theory can enhance analyses directed at understanding the communicative effects of variation between different translations of the same source text. It is hoped the discussion did demonstrate that a focus on such differences, rather than on the relationship between the target texts and the source text, does have value in a translation-studies setting. More specifically, via an analysis of the *L Étranger* translations, I demonstrated the more general principle that, in some cases,

inter-translation variation－even if it involves only a few words－ may entail a difference in register, and hence the social situation being construed by the text. I also showed how inter-translation variation may result in texts with a different attitudinal charge, i.e. texts with different potential to position readers attitudinally. I am proposing, therefore, that these notions of the instantiation-realisation matrix and of invoked attitude can prove extremely useful for translation-studies work, both with respect to comparisons of different translations of the same source text and then with respect to relating these translations to their source text. Of course, there are numerous other lines of variation by which multiple translations may differ－clearly many instances of variation do not have implications for register or for attitudinal potential. These obviously need to be attended to as well, if such comparative analyses are to be comprehensive.

NOTES

1. For example, in an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper, Sandra Smith, the translator of the latest English-language version of the text described Camus' style as "simple in the extreme" (Jordison 2013). Similarly Kaplansky (2004) described its style as "concise" and "parsimonious".

2. Translator Sandra Smith stated in an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper: "The new translation was actually my idea as I had found the previous translations lacking in certain key respects" (Jordison 2013)

3. For example, in discussing the merits of *mother* or *mommy* as a translation for maman, Bloom (2012) asserts that "neither ring true to the original" and rejects *mom* on the grounds that there is "something off-putting and abrupt about the single-syllable word." While such propositions may be useful and insightful, they nevertheless are not grounded in any systematic theory of language or translation.

4. In the case of the *L'Étranger*, this could be of considerable cultural and potentially diplomatic significance if, as Messud (2014) suggests: "Albert Camus's *L'Étranger*, carries, for American readers, enormous significance in our cultural understanding of midcentury French identity."

5. Book publishing marketing and copyright arrangements mean, of course, that British

residents will not have easy access to the American translation, and vice versa for residents of the US. The same arrangements mean that residents of India and Australia will likewise have access to only some of the translations—the British editions.

6. Note that Hood and Martin's use of the term "commitment" is very different from the use made in earlier SFL literature. For example, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 604), use it in the following way: "Unlike the logical and experiential manifestations, the interpersonal manifestation does not represent the Sayer or Senser; rather it enacts the speaker's opinion—an enactment of his or her degree of *commitment* to the proposition. . . " (my emphasis)

7. Dialectally and nationally, the spelling "mom" construes her as north American, just as "mam" would construe her as from northern Britain or Ireland, and "mum" as from southern Britain or Australia. Thanks to Chris Cléirigh (personal communication) for this observation.

8. I note in this regard, that the original French ("Aujourd'hui Mama est morte") is interpreted by Vincent, in a commentary on the book, as indicating that Meursault is making an entry in a personal journal—"le narrateur (Meursault) semble écrire un journal" (Vincent 1990: 19)

9. The Google online search engine, accessed August 1, 2016, produced 11,600 hits of pages which included both "Meursault" and "callous"

10. As indicated in a previous footnote, at least some readers of the source text interpret this as being a diary entry.

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