

**Fernando Prieto Ramos (ed.) (2020). *Institutional Translation and Interpreting: Assessing Practices and Managing for Quality*. New York: Routledge, pp. 230, £38.99. ISBN 9780367210236**

The book *Institutional Translation and Interpreting: Assessing Practices and Managing for Quality* enriches the literature concerned with communication across languages in and beyond institutions with a volume devoted not only to institutional translation, but also to interpreting in the same context. Edited by Fernando Prieto Ramos – director of the Centre for Legal and Institutional Translation Studies (Transius) at the University of Geneva’s Faculty of Translation and Interpreting (FTI), himself a former translator for international organisations –, the publication promises an information-laden endeavour as well as a soundly structured whole. The book delivers on both those aspects.

Looking at current institutional translation and interpreting research, this book is a valuable addition to the publications in this specialised field, including, more broadly, Koskinen (2008), Wagner *et al.* (2012), and Schöffner *et al.* (2014), on the one hand, and, for example, Vlachopoulos (2009), Svoboda *et al.* (2017), and Prieto Ramos (2018), on the other, when it comes to the specific aspect of quality in institutional translation. The book’s 15 co-authors represent several university and translating institution environments, of which the University of Geneva’s FTI is the most represented academic one, with six co-authors in the list of contributors. The editor has (co-)authored four of the twelve texts in the volume. All the authors bring impressive research foci and practical experience on board.

The first text is entitled “Assessing Practices in Institutional Translation and Interpreting.” Prieto Ramos introduces the book’s outline as well as the underlying methodology.

**Part I** – titled *Translation and Interpreting for National and Regional Institutions* – comprises five chapters. Chapter 1, “A Comparative Approach to Assessing Assessment: Revising the Scoring Chart for the Authorized Translator’s Examination in Finland,” authored by Leena Salmi and Marja Kivilehto, compares a recent iteration of the error-based scoring chart of the Finnish Authorised Translator’s Examination with an obsolete scoring chart. It also provides suggestions for further developing the current exam model. Although the chapter describes a meta-communication context rather than the practices of a ‘translating institution’ (in Koskinen’s terms), the findings are relevant for reflecting on the requirements expected of translators of official (e.g., judicial and administrative) texts.

In chapter 2, “Lexical Readability as an Indicator of Quality in Translation: Best Practices from Swiss Legislation,” Paolo Canavese aims at demonstrating that Swiss legislation, being inherently multilingual, can serve as an example (or even a “model”) of clear legal drafting. This hypothesis is being verified based on the aspect of lexical readability, using

empirical data. The chapter applies a (corpus-based) quantitative approach, the more specific features of which rely on guidelines concerned with clear legal drafting as well as on studies on legal Italian. Repeatedly, the chapter links many of its general statements to “Swiss legislation,” although it is primarily concerned with Italian. However, the chapter involves interesting insights and invites replication studies in other contexts. Indeed, as linguistic data in the corpus lie more than 40 years apart, future analysis might also address the development of archaic terms and phrases according to their relative value in time.

Chapter 3 by Flavia De Camillis, “Assessing Translation Practices of Non-professional Translators in a Multilingual Institutional Setting,” studies working practices of non-professional translators in a multilingual public institution in the province of South Tyrol (Italy). Adopting a double-staged methodological approach, the author used preliminary semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, the findings of which informed a subsequent survey (with an impressive total of 1,276 civil servants responding to a questionnaire). The results witness all sorts of approaches by civil servants who often act as non-professional translators to translating and translation quality. The respondents were generally found not to refer to guidelines or sets of rules and the interviewees had never heard of CAT tools in most cases. In sum, the study shows that, although translating is “absolutely widespread in the institutional system” (54), it is not approached in a systematic way by the institution, but rather by way of a “pell-mell institutional translation practice” (48). The concluding suggestions include the drafting of translation guidelines and organising internal translator training courses.

In chapter 4, a purely descriptive paper entitled “Translation in the Shadows of Interpreting in US Court Systems: Standards, Guidelines and Practice,” Jeffrey Killman surveys language access for limited English proficiency parties in United States (US) courts. The chapter “discusses relevant translation policies, standards and guidelines” at various levels in the US court system as well as “the various criteria they use to qualify practitioners” (63). The texts under scrutiny are divided into two groups, inbound and outbound, implying differing translation strategies. Practices in several US states are discussed. The author concludes that, although “it is difficult for courts in the US to establish uniform or highly developed translation practices,” all the advances discussed in the chapter point to “considerable progress [...] in court-related translation in the US context” (76).

The last chapter of the first part is entitled “Developing an Evaluation Tool for Legal Interpreting Quality Control: The INTER-Q Questionnaire.” Using extensive literature (the references span over seven print pages), María Jesús Blasco Mayor and Marta Sancho Viamonte argue that, despite the emphasis on quality inherent in Directive 2010/64/EU on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings, “no

recommendations, guidelines or standards” (84) nor “quality assurance mechanisms” (87) are in place to control it. Against the backdrop of challenges of interpreting in courtrooms and police stations, with special attention given to Italy and Spain, the authors present an evaluation questionnaire called INTER-Q. This tested and validated tool disregards “linguistic output content” (100), but instead measures “observable behaviors” (91), including knowledge of legal terms or the interpreter’s manners. The study postulates that “INTER-Q is quite an objective evaluation tool” (98) requiring only minimal training for it to be used.

**Part II** of the book is devoted to translation and interpreting at international institutions and bodies. Here, the first chapter takes us to the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission. In “Every Second Counts: A Study of Translation Practices in the European Commission’s DGT,” María Fernández-Parra aims at “providing some empirical data about the everyday work of [DGT] translators” as well as highlighting “several aspects of institutional translation which clearly set it apart from other types of professional translation” (111). The empirical data stems from 88 hours of in-situ observing of 11 translators (selected on the basis of a call for participation) from eight DGT language departments, supported by cognitive surveying methods as well as interviews. The study resembles a mirror directed at real-life translators and their tasks, resulting in a captivating record of translator’s daily routines. Apart from translation activities, some search practices (subsumed under the label ‘Terminology Activities’) are described in more detail, including consultations of “specific translation requirements [...], instructions [...], conventions,” etc. (124). The results show a rather fast-switching mode of work: “Of the [11,097] activities observed, [...] 88.6% lasted less than one minute” (124), often taking a few seconds only. The study shows that all the translators work in a highly customised environment and are expert users of translation software. The chapter concludes with suggestions for updating translator training curricula.

The seventh chapter is entitled “Ensuring Consistency and Accuracy of Legal Terms in Institutional Translation: The Role of Terminological Resources in International Organizations” and was authored by Fernando Prieto Ramos. It makes a case for terminology consistency, especially in legal acts translated in institutional settings. It presents the results of lexicometric analyses of three legal terms in English-Spanish translations in a corpus of 606 texts published between 2005 and 2019, involving three international organisations. After a predominantly quantitative approach to the corpus data which enabled the calculation of intertextual variation rates, a qualitative assessment was carried out focusing on intratextual consistency and accuracy of terms. Subsequently, correlations were established as per periods and originating institutions. The author rightly highlights that “higher inconsistency levels are not necessarily coupled with lower accuracy” (146) as “the nature and function of the term in each text may

justify more or less tolerance to synonyms” and points to the “unpredictable nature of internal terminological variations” (138).

The next chapter (8), “Corrigenda of EU Legislative Acts as an Indicator of Quality Assurance Failures: A Micro-diachronic Analysis of Errors Rectified in the Polish Corrigenda,” written by Łucja Biel and Izabela Pytel, deals with corrigenda, a legal instrument aimed at formally rectifying errors in EU legislative acts. The method applied is both quantitative and qualitative, studying the correction rates as well as the nature of corrigenda and the corrected errors. The quality aspect is all the more pronounced, as “EU legal acts are subject to the most rigorous quality assurance requirements” (153), involving compliance with translation guidelines and consistent terminology. Polish language versions of a specific type of act (regulations) were surveyed over two periods of time (2004–2006 and 2015–2017). The finding that the number of corrigenda grew over the second phase is aptly interpreted as evidence of the increased importance and awareness of this legal instrument. Error categories were surveyed; those related to terminology and phraseology were singled out and broken down further. High correction rates were observed in basic legal acts and a relatively high number of drafting errors were identified. Some of the findings, such as unpredictability of rates of incidence, unstable terminology and intra- and intertextual inconsistencies, show an interesting connection with those of the previous chapter.

Chapter 9, “The Impact of Translation Competence on Institutional Translation Management and Quality: The Evidence from Action Research,” co-authored by Fernando Prieto Ramos and Mariam Sperandio, addresses an interesting experiment of introducing management practices in two institutional environments initially relying on a “scattered approach” (177) based on outsourcing and non-professional in-house translation. The interventions involved procedural and managerial steps of engaging a qualified translator, implementing revision practices stemming from the ISO 17100 standard, and resorting from non-professional to professional translation. The results, derived from an error analysis of a total of 89 Spanish target texts and their English originals, provide evidence that “introducing translation expertise [...] can have a particularly critical bearing on translation quality” (5).

The last numbered chapter has the title of “Interpreting at the United Nations: The Effects of Delivery Rate on Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting.” In it Lucía Ruiz Rosendo, Mónica Varela García, and Alma Barghout delve into simultaneous interpreting (SI) practices at the United Nations (UN) as part of a broader study series on SI speed and quality vis-à-vis speakers’ delivery rates in institutional settings. The research for this particular contribution involved playing, at varying speeds, pre-recorded speeches in English which were interpreted into French as well as surveying strategies in order to find out how the interpreters coped with the varying delivery speeds. The study showed that “a challenging delivery rate has a

negative impact on interpreter performance,” including “loss of meaningful information” (204). The findings have implications both for interpreter training, suggesting that coping strategies should be included, and for institutions, which should provide appropriate working conditions, for instance by implementing public speaking guidelines.

The last text of the volume, the editor’s Conclusion entitled “Managing for Quality: Practical Lessons from Research Insights,” highlights the aspect of professionalism, coupled with competence and qualification, in translation and interpreting. This can be seen as a re-iteration of the aim mentioned in the Introduction, that is, bridging what many perceive as a gap between academia and the industry. In this section and, in fact, with the entire edited volume Prieto Ramos shows that the hypothesised gap has been done away with already. In one of the concluding sentences, the author aptly summarises that “[i]n all the organizations examined [...] *consistency and conformity to institutional conventions* constitute, together with accuracy, the most distinctive feature to be preserved in managing translation and interpreting quality” (211), which implicitly accentuates the preponderant weight that these standardisation mechanisms already have in institutional translation.

Although the book’s main focus lies in translation, which is covered in eight out of the ten main chapters, one of its assets is the inclusion of interpreting in the study of institutional practices. Another is the partial focus on institutional translation in national and regional contexts (cf. Part I), thus adding valuable insights to existing research on this aspect. Apart from that, perhaps not surprisingly, most of the chapters refer to what has been recognised as one of the specific features of (some contexts of) institutional translation, that is, translation policies, manuals, or style-guides (Schäffner *et al.* 2014). Another common denominator here is the issue of translator/interpreter training and qualifications. Several chapters include practical recommendations for both professional certification or courses and university training.

A multitude of roles, including court translators, conference interpreters, quality managers, project managers, unqualified translators/interpreters, as well as a similarly broad array of services, involving in-house translation and interpreting, outsourced tasks, revision, translation assessments, training courses, etc., are surveyed. Quality is considered from the point of view of required competences, process, and product. Case studies from several countries – for example, from Finland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the US – are explored, and institutions surveyed include the EU, the UN, US courts, the World Trade Organization and other international and national organisations or bodies. While the editor rightly points out that “it is difficult to empirically map practices in such a diverse and fragmented landscape” (3) and although research approaches are varied, the book still bears the editor’s harmonising touch and shows a shared interest in

methodological rigour that is visible in the design of empirical studies and the interpretation of data.

It is probably a sign of a relatively mature subfield of institutional translation (and interpreting) research that the book does not revisit the debate of what 'institutional translation' is, how it can be defined, and what it is not (consider, for example, Koskinen 2014). Similarly, very few contributions venture to define the notion of 'quality'. This may be due to the fact that part of the debate (albeit still unfinished in Translation Studies) has taken place in sources that the book refers to. Additionally, it may be related to the envisaged target group, which comprises not only translation scholars, but also practitioners. While the former still seem to struggle with 'quality,' since this notion is blurred, or an "elusive construct" (195), the latter will also have dealt with it extensively, but probably need to consider it undisputed, at least within their respective areas of practical operation.

As reflected in its title and mentioned several times elsewhere in its pages, the book was created around the aim of shedding light on current translation and interpreting practices in institutional settings and this is what it delivers on abundantly. On the whole, the volume is an indispensable resource for translation scholars, translation and interpreting practitioners/managers and also students; it is a must-read for all who are interested in the multifaceted and compelling area of institutional translation and interpreting – theory *and* practice.

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