

**INSTITUTIONAL TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING. ASSESSING
PRACTICES AND MANAGING FOR QUALITY, BY FERNANDO PRIETO
RAMOS (ED.)**

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Since Julianne House’s seminal paper (1977), proposals such as those of Sonia Colina (2008), Malcolm Williams (2009), Gloria Corpas Pastor (2006) or, more recently, Madeleine Schnierer (2020) are only a few examples of the growing scholarly attention devoted to translation quality assessment and control. As globalisation demands increasingly larger amounts of text to be handled in short periods of time, quality has in fact become a critical issue, most especially in institutional settings producing documents of a sensitive nature, often with direct impact on peoples’ lives.

Intended to shed light “on institutional translation and interpreting settings in order to identify quality gaps, needs, best practices and actions for improvement”, *Institutional Translation and Interpreting: Assessing Practices and Managing for Quality* covers a variety of approaches to translation policies and practices in key institutional settings, such as court houses, legislative bodies and international organisations. Despite such variety, however, all the contributions focus on practical, replicable research, including surveys, interviews and direct observation, which may be easily adapted to other types of setting.

The volume is divided into two sections, each comprising five chapters. In chapter 1, “A Comparative Approach to Assessing Assessment: Revising the Scoring Chart for the Authorized Translator’s Examination in Finland”, Leena Salmi and Marja Kivilehto take the assessment model of the Australian National Accreditation Authority for Translators and

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Interpreters (NAATI), as a starting point in order to improve on a previous error-based scoring chart used to assess translator certification examinations in Finland. In view of the wide variety, and often the complexity, of the charts currently used by the industry, the chapter describes a noteworthy effort to produce a system that “is clear and easy to use, and makes it easier to reflect the error type” (p. 20), as clearly defined criteria hopefully leading to “more uniformity, impartiality and equality in assessment” (p. 22).

Paolo Canavese’s “Lexical Readability as an Indicator of Quality in Translation. Best Practices from Swiss Legislation” approaches the sensitive issue of clarity in legislative texts, as well as the repercussions of such clarity in the quality of their translations. Arguing that clear legal drafting is of particular importance in multilingual settings, Canavese analyses a corpus of Italian versions, usually resulting from translations from German or French, of Swiss legislation produced since the 1970s. By observing a tendency towards the use of plainer language in the Italian version, the author concludes that lexical readability is not only important to ensure higher quality translation of source texts, but also to make legal texts more accessible, thus improving communication between citizens and institutions.

Also dealing with a multilingual setting, Chapter 3, by Flavia De Camillis, focuses on institutional non-professional translations in the Italian province of Bolzano, where German has co-official status together with Italian. “Assessing Translation Practices of Non-professional Translators in a Multilingual Institutional Setting” discusses the results of interviews and surveys conducted among civil servants, who, though for the most part unqualified, carry out translation tasks as part of their daily activities. The chapter sheds light on surviving translation practices (no use of CAT tools or of systematic revision), although the relevance of those findings is yet to be established through an analysis of the quality of the translated texts thus produced.

In contrast with the traditional focus on court interpreting, court translation services provided to limited English proficiency parties have been organised and regulated fairly

recently in the United States. In “Translation in the Shadows of Interpreting in US Court Systems. Standards, Guidelines and Practice”, Jeffrey Killman gives a detailed account of the variety of translation practices in US courts, including the ways in which those services are managed (whether by in-house translators or by third-parties), the resources and support made available to court translators, the translation processes to be followed (i.e. mandatory source and target text revisions), and the qualifications required from those professionals. In spite of a high degree of heterogeneity across the country, the production of a number of state guidelines related to court translation bears witness to a growing concern with the definition of and compliance with quality standards.

Quite different is the situation described by María Jesús Blasco Mayor and Marta Sancho Viamonte in chapter 5. In “Developing an Evaluation Tool for Legal Interpreting Quality Control. The INTER-Q Questionnaire”, the authors point out that, although the European Union has enshrined the right to an interpreter as a procedural guarantee, “no systems have been developed or put into operation to evaluate the real performance of interpreters working in courtrooms and police stations” (p. 84). In order to, at least partially, make up for the lack of organised registers and examinations in many member-states, the chapter puts forward a questionnaire (INTER-Q) to be completed by legal professionals working with interpreters. Intended to objectively measure the professional behaviour of legal interpreters, INTER-Q’s usefulness, however, seems rather limited, only taking into account the interpreter’s general demeanour, as observed by parties who are unable to determine the quality of his/her linguistic performance.

Section II opens with an account of DGT translators’ daily routines. María Fernández-Parra’s chapter, “Every Second Counts. A Study of Translation Practices in the European Commission’s DGT” details the translation workflow at the Directorate-General for Translation, explaining the ways in which different tasks are incorporated into fairly standardised, cost-effective processes, which allow for an output of over two million pages

of translated text. DGT is therefore put forward as an example of best practices, to be followed by other international institutions.

In “Ensuring Consistency and Accuracy of Legal Terms in Institutional Translation. The Role of Terminological Resources in International Organizations”, Fernando Prieto Ramos analyses terminological consistency and accuracy by following the occurrences of three legal terms and their different translations into Spanish, in both institutional terminological resources and translated texts produced within three major international institutions, namely the European Union, the UN and the World Trade Organisation. The results show that asymmetries in the legal systems involved increase the number of inconsistent or inaccurate renderings, even in well-established terminological resources, such as IATE and UNTERM.

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”, by Lucja Biel and Izabela Pytel, addresses “the potential of corrigenda to give an insight into the nature of [...] quality issues in high-profile legal documents” (p. 150). By going through the Polish corrigenda published in two 3-year periods, the authors investigate the quantity and quality of corrections introduced, particularly in what concerns terminological and phraseological issues, even within a single document, showing an “alarming” degree of unpredictability that may “adversely affect the certainty of law” (p. 168).

Co-authored by Fernando Prieto Ramos and Mariam Sperandio, “The Impact of Translation Competence on Institutional Translation Management and Quality. The Evidence from Action Research” describes two action research projects that empirically confirm the benefits of introducing translation expertise into translation management in organisations, regardless of their size. The results of the study show a massive error reduction and the consequent improvement of translated texts, as well as a drop in intertextual inconsistencies due to terminological harmonisation, with no significant budgetary impact.

The chapter also highlights the importance of professional quality translation, not only for the dissemination of accurate information, but for the image and reputation of institutions.

The final chapter, “Interpreting at the United Nations. The Effects of Delivery Rate on Quality in Simultaneous Interpreting” also provides empirical confirmation of a fact usually experienced by simultaneous interpreters –the correlation between the speed of delivery and the interpreter’s performance. The authors, Lucía Ruiz Rosendo, Mónica Varela García and Alma Barghout, conducted a research study involving ten UN interpreters. While acknowledging that omissions may be a deliberate strategy used by interpreters, the study finds that, as delivery rates grow, omissions of arbitrary segments increase, which may compromise meaning. The authors also highlight the implications of these findings for interpreter training, as coping with high delivery rates is a mandatory requirement in today’s market, and leave important recommendations to raise awareness among speakers about the relevance of this issue for the intelligibility of their messages.

In all, the ten chapters open up interesting research lines worth pursuing further, particularly in the field of interpreting (though only two chapters deal specifically with this topic), which traditionally has not received the same amount of attention as translation. In addition, translation and interpreting teachers, students and practitioners may find practical, down-to-earth examples addressing issues that are bound to frequently come up throughout their professional careers.

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