
CHRISTINA SCHÄFFNER
(ED.) *TRANSLATION AND
QUALITY*. Great Britain: Short
Run Press, 1998, 89 pp.

Translation scholars, regardless of their degree of interest in functional approaches to translations, will find this book particularly worthwhile. If not by Hönl's contribution to the academic debate on Translation Quality Assessment (TQA), the reader will be drawn by the singular format of the book. The idea of gathering together, in a single volume, distinct and opposing voices on the same matters is indeed to generate curiosity, to say the least.

Edited by Christina Schäffner, a lecturer in German in the Department of Languages and European Studies at Aston University, Birmingham (UK) and Co-director of the Institute for the Study of Language and Society, *Translation and Quality* tackles relevant issues for Translation scholars: the role that Linguistics plays in Translation Studies, possible approaches to TQA, the applicability of the Theory of Relevance and various nuances of the functional approach, advocated by the author of the central article in the book, Hans G. Hönl.

TQA in a functional perspective is the basis of the volume. Schäffner's editorial makes the editor's own position for a functional view on translation clear to the reader. Arguing

that every concept of translation quality is related to the criteria applied in its assessment, she brings the question of intersubjective reliability into the scene. In fact, awareness of the replacement of the distinction of good/bad by “pragmatically adequate” or “functionally appropriate” translations (02) leads us to question about the possibility of ever coming to terms with intersubjective matters in Translation Studies. As far as the linguistic model is concerned, the recent inclusion of textual, situational, and cultural aspects is praised by the editor, although she sees the role of text-types as still being underrated by the model. In such a context, the role of accuracy as a predominant issue in Translation Teaching is also questioned. As Schäffner is to reinforce later in her contribution to the debate in the third section of the book, a method of TQA based on the comparison of elements of ST and TT is also called into question. Contrary to what the reader could expect, she presents no effective suggestion of how it could be otherwise. Not surprisingly, however, celebrating the change of the focus from translation as text *reproduction* to translation as text *production* (01, her

highlights), she refers to arguments against functionalism as “subjective and highly emotional” (04).

Hönig’s paper, the article around which all the others in the book are written, deals with TQA from the perspective of a functionalist approach to translation. Hönig starts from the presupposition that “Models of TQA will (...) inevitably reflect an overall theoretical framework (or lack of it) and can be discussed in terms of such” (06). He introduces his paper pointing out that his considerations will be made upon “authentic examples of TQA as it is practised”. Hönig focuses his introductory theoretical discussion on the relation of contrastive linguistics with functionalism and he addresses key concepts such as Reiss’s text typology, Vermeer’s *skopos* theory and Nord’s loyalty, always making it evident that functional principles have been gaining larger grounds over contrastive approaches. Hönig’s main celebration, as far as the *skopos* theory is concerned, focuses on the turn from a source-oriented approach to target-oriented translations.

When mentioning Nord’s concept of *loyalty*, Hönig refers to his “principle of the necessary

degree of precision”, a concept he claims to provide the translator with a safe indication of what the readers of a translation have to know in a given context. Thus, when a “translation mentions everything that is important within the context of the sentence (...) the translation is semantically precise enough” (11). Although he refers to Nord’s loyalty as “a rather vague principle” (13), his own illustration of his “principle of the necessary degree of precision” does not make things clearer. It may be said to be just as subjective and the examples used to illustrate the principle are actually to be questioned in later sections of the book.

The question of power and what he labels “popular views”, i.e., *faithfulness and invisibility* (15), are also dealt with before he moves on to his considerations on Gutt’s approach to Relevance Theory. Although Hönig agrees with Gutt’s dethroning equivalence as a key concept for value judgements and his target oriented view on translations, he soundly disapproves of Gutt’s claim that no translation theory would really be needed since the Relevance Theory would perfectly deal with all processes involved in translational activities.

No wonder, since agreeing with such a view would imply dethroning functionalism altogether with other translation theories.

The point which raises the most inflamed discussion along the volume is Hönig’s distinction between two modes of TQA: *therapeutic* and *diagnostic*. Such distinction is brought about in the debate transcribed in the following section of the book and it is also severely criticised in some of the articles in the fourth section. Although Hönig uses extensive examples trying to clarify his proposed distinction, the reader is led to look for some entangled relations between Hönig’s confusing use of the terms and the way in which they are usually applied within the medical jargon. Scholars and translators may be led to wonder how to avoid the criticised therapeutic TQA - concerned with “symptomatic” errors - and how to validate the diagnostic TQA since it is based on the assumption that “if an error cannot be noticed by a relevant user then it is not one” (27). Hönig’s terminology setting apart therapeutic and diagnostic TQA is particularly discussed in Mark Shuttleworth’s article but it also pervades other articles in the book:

Bush raises questions regarding the relation between theory and translational practices and Andreman & Rogers's article deals with the application of Höning's principles to the training of translators.

Stretching the discussion towards another delicate point, i.e., the role of Linguistics in Translation Studies, Kirsten Malmkjaer's article brings a crucial contribution to the volume. She refutes Höning's statement that Linguistics is to find its re-integration into TQA "through the backdoor" (15) and advocates that linguistic evaluation is to be re-integrated "openly through the front door" (72). According to her, what is indeed needed is "to raise awareness of linguistic issues as linguistic, than to disguise them under the cloak of the preferred terminology of a particular approach (...)" (74 her highlights). Writing in more general terms, Newmark's article brings very harsh comments regarding Höning's criticism on accuracy and fidelity, which he labels as "fashionable" (76).

The last section of the book contains Höning's comments on the

responses to his previous article. Surprisingly, Höning does not address all the responses and he does not bother to justify his selection, or rather, his exclusion. This fact may be rather frustrating to the readers who would possibly be longing for some comments on Newmark's harsh response, for instance. Addressing Malmkjaer's considerations on the role of linguistics within TQA, Höning grants her the fact that "*linguistic considerations* do indeed support decision making strategies", although he also states that they cannot "*guide* such decision making processes" (88 his highlights).

Höning's conclusion makes his insistence on functional principles over linguistic-bound ones clear to the reader. Indeed there are passages in the book in which the reader is left with the feeling that some arguments could have been pushed a little further. However, the disposition of opposing ideas via such an inflaming strategy succeeds in exposing the plurality of perspectives to be taken into account when approaching TQA.

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