



Book review

Bittner, H. (2020). *Evaluating the evaluator: A novel perspective on translation quality*

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Due to its complex nature, providing a comprehensive framework for translation quality assessment (TQA) has always been a challenging task. To address this gap, many scholars spared no effort to provide a framework, approach or theory from philosophical, linguistic, and cultural perspectives, like those by Williams (2004), House (2015) and Reiss and Vermeer (1984), to mention but a few. According to Drugan (2013: 35), “theorists and professionals overwhelmingly agree that there is no single objective way to measure quality”. In the same vein, Dong and Lan note that “translation evaluation [. . .] remains one of the most problematic areas of translation studies as a field of study” (2010: 48). Notwithstanding, there is no consensus among scholars in this regard. Yet it remains one of the most interesting but controversial research areas in Translation Studies. Bittner’s book presents the historical trajectory of this concept by critically reviewing the eclectic and up-to-date viewpoints of Translation Studies scholars, investigating the pros and cons and applications of each. The book under review consists of seven chapters, each of which investigates a specific topic relating to translation quality assessment.

Chapter one (*the introduction*) discusses how theory can help translators to adopt certain conscious strategies during the translation process so that they are enabled to provide arguments for and against different potential solutions (p. 1). The author argues that if the critics, evaluators, or revisers of translations aim to provide more objective translation quality assessment, they need to go through some prescriptive approach and take the context and conditions of translation into account. The author rounds up the chapter by highlighting the importance of translation quality, noting that “it is key to the success or failure of cross-language communication” (p. 2). At the end of the introduction, the author provides an overview of how each chapter addresses its specific topic.

Chapter two (*The Quality of Translation: Different Approaches*) provides a review of selected contributions to the discussion of translation quality by House (1997 and 2015), Williams (2004 and 2009), Gerzymisch-Arbogast (1994), Gerzymisch-Arbogast & Mudersbach (1998), as well as Gutt (1991). The main aim is to shed some light on the advantages and disadvantages of the views put forward by these authors. At first, the author investigates House's (1997) model of translation QA and notes that equivalence is at the bottom of House's theory because it arises from the "double-binding nature" of the source and target text (House 1997, p. 24). The author discusses the main concepts of House's model, i.e. covert and overt translation, cultural filter, field, tenor, and mode. He argues that House's (1997) model has some pitfalls such as overlapping categories, difficult applicability and subjectivity. But he demonstrates that House's approach can help to reduce the impact of subjectivity in evaluating translation.

Next, the author considers Williams' (2004 and 2009) Argumentation-Centred Approach, which focuses on the argument structure of a text rather than individual words and phrases. The approach has two major argument macrostructure features: claims and grounds. The focus on argument structure helps to reduce subjectivity. According to Bittner, "any critique of Williams's approach must take into consideration the comprehensive practice-oriented goal of the overall model" (p.15). He argues that this approach reduces subjectivity and evaluation time. Finally, the author argues that the most serious problems of Williams approach is his marginal reference to translation strategy and failing to address the cultural aspects of translation (p.16). Then, the author discusses Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's and Klaus Mudersbach's process-oriented approaches by introducing three translation methods called 'spektra', 'Relatra', and 'Holontra' (p.17). Gerzymisch-Arbogast's method is based on incorporating text passages with what she calls 'aspects'. These aspects are textual properties with variable values or different levels of manifestation. The author highlights two minor shortcomings of this method: It is very time-consuming, and the question of a translation strategy is not given enough prominence (p. 21). The author demonstrates that Gerzymisch-Arbogast's approach is clearly more useful in an academic environment than in a professional translation environment. Regarding Ernst-August Gutt's theory in TQA environment, the author believes that it is certainly worth considering as a tool that can be used in combination with theoretical models dedicated to TQA, and it may well serve as a complementary tool. The author discusses other approaches such as Reiß's (1971) holistic TQA approach, Van den Broeck's product-oriented method (1985), Barghout's (1990) rhetorical model, Al Qinai's (2000) reception model, and Lauscher's (2000) text-oriented approach, to name but a few.

Chapter three (*Preliminary Assumptions*) explores TQA. By presenting some definitions of translation quality assessment as well as translation quality, the author discusses various concepts of quality and the way it is measured, and discusses how we can attain good quality in translation practice. Citing Lauscher, the author maintains that theoretically judging the quality of a translation "is ultimately a matter of agreement and consensus" (Lauscher, 2000, p. 149). Then, he considers Juliane House's notion of overt and covert translation. From the author's point of view, the principle underlying the overt-covert distinction is theoretically more vivid than that of definite explanation provided by House. Taking into consideration the concept of subjectivity and objectivity in translation evaluation from a philosophical aspect, the author analyses the alternatives yielded by translation quality assessment to identify the extent to which the TQA

process can be objective. By bringing up different attitudes on how to evaluate translations, the author introduces a method that can be used to analyse the evaluations of translation. At the end, the author offers his own suggestions as to how subjectivity in TQA can be reduced.

Chapter four (*Quality Factors of Translation*) offers a discussion of TQA theory and different factors which may impact on the quality of translation. By proposing the concept of 'Translator's Daffodil' (p. 157), the author highlights the dynamic nature of translation, situation, translator's competence, and other factors such as Nord's extratextual ones. The author subdivides the factors into the client and the translator. The factors relating to the client are analysed under 'client roles', 'deadlines', 'glossaries', 'specifications and stipulations', and 'motivation' (Table 4.3 p.133). In the translator group of factors, the translator's qualifications, competence, and motivation as well as any translation tools such as computer-aided tools (CAT) are discussed. The author also tackles cultural and political factors such as norms, censorship and power structures as well as how these aspects have an effect on the quality of the translation product.

Chapter five (*The Principle of Argumentation*) highlights the need for argumentation in translation evaluation by providing a framework within which argumentation can be used to specify the quality of translation. The author adopts the framework from Klaus Schubert's notion of the decision-making process and applies it to translation so as to obtain a translation strategy. The author argues that only when the quality of a translation solution is supported by arguments can it be certified. He then demonstrates that the argumentation process adopted its main elements from Gregor Betz's theory of dialectical structures, providing a useful tool for the statement of translation quality.

In Chapter six (*Evaluating the Evaluator*) the author applies his proposed argument-based TQA theory to a corpus, namely, examiners' reports on commented translations written as part of a bachelor's degree course by focusing specifically on argumentation as an essential key to TQA. The corpus comprises the translation of a 3,000-word text and a detailed analysis of the source text and a commentary on the individual translation decisions. Using both descriptive and prescriptive approaches as a complementary element, he determines the criterion used to analyse the reports and provides the results of the analysis. The main aim is to get to a primary impression of whether and to what extent the examiner's reports meet the scholarly expectations of good translation quality assessment. Regarding evaluating the evaluator, the author argues that we need to take some aspects into account, including time constraints and informal argument. The author ends the chapter by providing his analysis of the results and claiming that evaluators do not apply an explicit evaluation framework, and neglect some factors in translation process.

Chapter seven (*The conclusion*), argues that the author has benefited from Juliane House's theory, Hans Vermeer's principle of relative relativity, Christiane Nord's extratextual and intratextual factors of translation, Anthony Pym's minimalist translation competence model, and Gregor Betz's theory of dialectical structures in combination with Klaus Schubert's elements of the decision-making process to furnish the extra-translational basis of his approach to translation quality. The author contends that the argumentative TQA approach can be used by translators, evaluators, and translation scholars. The different uses of argument-based TQA theory is depicted in Table 7.1. (p. 275). The writer also indicates that his findings cater for argumentation and translation strategy and could be used as a framework in TQA. He maintains that the main application of argumentative

TQA theory lies in evaluating real translations as it has no limitation regarding evaluation of text types because its translation-independent argumentative foundation. Regarding his TQA theory deficiencies, he mentions that “TQA theory cannot quantify the results of the evaluation and is unable to determine what overall mark the translation should get” (p.276). He asserts that his TQA theory can be used along with quantitative TQA approaches to assess translation quality. Finally, he demonstrates that the argument-based inspiration can be useful in machine translation (MT) approaches as well.

In summary, the book provides an in-depth overview of some of the main recent and highly invaluable contributions to TQA, while considering their applications, advantages and disadvantages. The volume is recommended to anyone interested in TQA who wants to approach the subject from different angles and apply it in practice. It is a detailed account of TQA both in theory and practice.

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