

Drugan, Joanna (2013). *Quality in professional translation. Assessment and improvement*. London: Bloomsbury. ISBN 978-1-4411-7664-6. SFR 49.90.

Reflections on the concept of quality are a classic in Translation Studies. Less common is the existence of work on the topic as ambitious and as true to reality as Joanna Drugan's book. Ambitious, because it examines a plethora of settings: the book takes in almost all contexts in which professional translation occurs. And realistic because the work is based on direct observation of what goes on in these settings, without making assumptions or showing any sign of prescriptive intent. The author's aim is to provide a review of different approaches and to offer an overview of the range of quality assessment practices that actually occur in the workplace, so that the agents involved in the sector can recognise their own experience and compare it with other models in a broad framework, namely, that of the entire industry (p. 4).

The book is divided into six chapters, plus a brief introduction that serves not only to introduce the topic but also to point out to the reader that the work would not have been possible without an empirically-based study. The data come from hundreds of interviews and questionnaires (p. 3) that were completed from 2004 onwards during visits by Drugan herself to numerous service providers, clients, companies and agencies, both public and private. The volume also contains a glossary of acronyms, a topic index, a list of references and a list of notes. Each time a note is referred to in the text the reader has to look it up at the end of the book: it would perhaps have been more useful to include the notes at the foot of the corresponding page. The following paragraphs provide a summary of each of the chapters.

Chapter 1, on the evolution of the industry since 1990, provides a realistic account of the translation market. The description is based on innumerable data (which no doubt make it realistic) and covers practically all topics of interest for professionals in the field: productivity, tools, workload, diversity of settings, and so on. The order in which each subject is presented is to be praised: first the topic itself is addressed and subsequently its relevance to the concept of quality. One slight shortcoming is in the section on the effect of stress on translation quality, which fails to mention the thesis by Bart de Rooze (2003) dedicated to precisely this matter.

Chapter 2 begins by listing the reasons why there are no models for quality common to both academia and the professional context. It is somewhat surprising that Drugan maintains that there are only four widespread models of Translation Quality Assessment (p. 46): Conde (2009, p. 89), for example, provides an overview of various others. In the discussion of the translation process, reference could have been made to Cognitive Translatology and the potential that this new approach offers for studying this issue (see, for example Muñoz Martín, 2010, p. 146). Towards the end of the chapter, Drugan talks about two concepts that come from the industry, namely, "quality assurance" and "quality control". Although the review does not set out to be exhaustive, some mention should be made of the concept of "total quality", which abounds in the relevant literature, as well as a brief historical explanation of how each concept replaced and improved upon its predecessor throughout the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the book is sufficiently comprehensive and it is never possible to cover every single topic to the same depth.

Chapter 3 looks at the effect that electronic resources have had and continue to have on the quality of translations and the associated processes of creation. The first part of the chapter

provides an overview of tools available and is perhaps not as interesting as the second part, which focuses on the relationship between these tools and the concept of quality. I found section 3.2 especially relevant in its description of how the work flow in translation companies has evolved. An example of this development can be seen in what project managers take quality to mean: it is not merely a matter of the final product but is relevant throughout the entire translation process in the successive stages of quality assurance and control. In my opinion, this is one of the most insightful chapters of the book, garnished as it is with reflections taken directly from the observation of actual professional practice described in glorious detail (see, for example, p. 105 and p. 112).

In the following two chapters Drugan reviews and classifies various models of quality, both top-down and bottom-up. The former are dealt with in chapter 4. Drugan begins with a specific example, explains the pros and cons, describes the settings (public and private) where such models are applied and how they are most commonly applied (large or small scale, subject area, etc.), and closes with recommendations about which situations are more suited to each model. The material is presented effectively, with a straightforward structure and extensive coverage. The scope of the data is impressive, although it should be mentioned that occasionally the differences between various companies are not completely clear. Drugan herself recognizes (p. 154) that at times the real situation does not entirely match any of the models described: often a mixture of various models is used. Whatever the case, it would have been useful to include some sort of comparative table to allow the reader to observe the differences between companies more clearly.

Chapter 5, in turn, deals with bottom-up models, which Drugan considers to be on the rise. One of the most important achievements of this book (which sets it apart from other attempts to address the topic of quality in business) lies in its description not only of bottom-up systems but also of their special relevance to the concept of quality. Once more, a wide variety of examples is given from the different areas where these models are used: Drugan mentions Wikipedia, Mozilla, the ProZ forums, the well-known success of Facebook and its mixed model, and so on. The author suggests (pp. 180-181) that the "traditional" industry should adopt the positive aspects of bottom-up models and apply them to current models. This chapter contains the most interesting ideas in the book, such as the discussion of how new reading habits promoted by modern technology will affect the notion of quality, rendering it more flexible. However, the author probably goes beyond the mark when she foresees a future in which it will be possible to translate only whatever a majority of people will read.

In chapter 6, the conclusion, Joanna Drugan forwards some of the book's most important proposals, such as the idea that any system will improve in efficiency if the client's expectations are known beforehand. Drugan maintains that familiarity with the different company models described in chapters 4 and 5 would help a consumer in choosing a service provider, although this idea seems somewhat optimistic since clients rarely go to so much trouble. On another note, the references given to describe universities as out of touch with the industry are patently outdated, and the current situation differs from the picture painted in this chapter, at least in countries like Spain. Also, Drugan's claim that the use of on-line tools – such as the ProZ forum – may contravene the profession's ethical standards seems to be somewhat of an exaggeration. Finally, the closing pages of the chapter (section 6.3) are truly inspiring in pointing out numerous research possibilities in the form of innovative and stimulating proposals.

In summary, *Quality in Professional Translation. Assessment and Improvement*, is essential reading to discover how quality is understood in professional settings. As such, the book will be of interest to those who come to the field of translation from various angles (students, teachers and researchers), but especially to translators and companies. Both groups will find reflections on visibility, subjectivity, scalability, reception, effect, and client, to name some of the issues addressed in this work. The concept of quality is no longer just a classic in Translatology, as was mentioned in the opening lines of this review, but also has a direct, relevant link to almost all the other classic topics in the discipline.

References

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Tomás Conde
Universidad del País Vasco
tomas.conde@ehu.es