Rink, I. (2020). *Rechtskommunikation und Barrierefreiheit. Zur Übersetzung juristischer Informations- und Interaktionstexte in Leichter Sprache*. **Frank & Timme. ISBN 978-3-7329-0593-5.**

Oxymoron?

At first glance, the connection between the terms *legal communication* and *accessibility* in the translated title of Rink's monograph "*Legal communication and accessibility. Translating legal information and interaction texts into Easy Language*" seems surprising, as it is generally accepted that this kind of connection is often perceived as an implicit contradiction and which even the author herself calls an oyxmoron. The additional information in the subtitle takes this surprise one step further while simultaneously alluding to a silver lining. Even though not yet fully established in translation studies, (intralingual) *translation* and *Easy Language* seem to be a conceptual pair that go together well and might prove to be an effective tool for bridging the gap between highly specialised legal communication and the communicational reality of Easy Language recipients (i.e. primarily people with mental and cognitive disabilities, since they have a legal right to participation in accordance with §11 BGG –Act on Equal Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities). Hence, it comes as no surprise that this is exactly what Rink describes in her monograph.

Her main desideratum is to describe accessible and functional legal communication and investigate possible ways to achieve it. In addition to her exceptionally thorough and sound theoretical foundation in all fields involved (legal as well as accessible communication, Easy Language, comprehensibility research, translation studies, linguistics), Rink also taps a 'triumvirat' of *perceptibility*, *comprehensibility* and *acceptability* as cornerstones of successful communication and understanding processes – as seen from a text perspective; she also applies her own innovative *barrier index*, which is the result of linking the communication barrier types and the recipients' requirements, as well as quantitative and qualitative *corpus linguistic analyses* from a monolingual German parallel corpus of legal-administrative source texts and their Easy-Language translations. Finally, a unique set of *translation strategies* is derived from all aspects as well as a *blueprint* for translations of specialised texts into Easy Language and a genuine *repository* for further empirical research in this field, especially with a focus on the recipients.

Firsts

This ambitious endeavour is the first of its kind. But this is only one of many 'firsts' included in the volume. It is unique in its methodological approach and the first in-depth analysis of legal communication in the context of accessible communication and Easy Language in Germany. It further attempts to show how to establish a common ground as an interface in expert-lay-communication, where highly complex specialised texts require translations that are extremely complexity-reduced and comprehensibility-enhanced, thus enabling participation in society and self-determination for people with limited perception and comprehension capacities. Furthermore, Rink takes a more holistic approach by considering features that have, as yet, been neglected, such as: acceptability, tonality and ways of addressing people. Finally, it is

also the first volume in a new book series *Easy-Plain-Accessible* edited by Hansen-Schirra/ Maaß (published by Frank & Timme, Berlin) that deals with a broad spectrum of accessible communication in all its facets.

Pluses & Chapters

In addition to the aforementioned features, this volume exhibits a number of 'pluses'. The author's high standards meet stringent implementation. The volume stands out and is formally convincing due to its aspiration for perfect operationalisation of scientific standards and reader guidance. In twelve very neat chapters, Rink leads the reader with transparency and discipline from the *why?* as the motivation for this piece of work via the *what?* and *how?* to the final conclusions. These aspects are manifested, for instance, in a systematic layout, exhaustive referencing, repetitive structural features and very helpful summaries at the end of each and all theoretical and analysis chapters. Finally, thanks to the strategically well-situated visualisations and overviews in the form of tables, Rink ensures the reader never gets lost.

Chapters 1-6 present the theoretical background and state-of-the-art in the different fields and disciplines involved. A first focus is on recent changes in the legal situation that allow for assertions on accessible communication offers for people with mental and cognitive disabilities. Other addressees with communication restrictions not caused by disability, like illiteracy or recent migration, do not benefit from the current legal situation, even though Easy Language is considered to be helpful for them, too. Here the author encourages a new discussion on addressees and an amendment based on current research findings.

One core chapter is *Chapter 2,* which models the cornerstones of the understanding process in a dichotomous relationship. Rink stresses the importance of the interplay among and between the 'triumvirat' for text intelligibility and their counterparts *perception*, *comprehension* and *acceptance* for successful communication on the recipient side. This is a common theme of the volume. From here, Rink enables the reader to follow this thread in a very structured and homogenous way; a way that is scientifically grounded at all stages and resembles a mantra throughout the volume.

Definition and theoretical foundations of Easy Language are the main topic of *Chapter 3*. Next to the discussion of Easy Language rules and principles, the most interesting part is the finding that Easy Language translation strategies such as addition (texts become too long) and reduction (texts become too trivial) often lead to dysfunctional communication. Hence, the prototypical realisation of successful communication proposed by Rink has to be *retrievable*, *perceptible*, *comprehensible*, *correct* and *functional*, which is much more difficult to achieve in specialist text scenarios than in most others. This is mainly because communication asymmetry is one of the main features of expert-lay-communication, where communication with people with communication restrictions is not even explicitly intended. Therefore, Rink feels justified in supplementing the existing classification based on Kalverkämper (1998) in *Chapter 4* accordingly. Also introduced are the main characteristics of legal communication with anticipation of potential translation problems at all linguistic levels (lexical, syntactical and textual). From the findings alone, it is hard to say which level causes what kind of problems with respect to comprehension and processing costs. For a more complete picture, systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) would have been worth looking at. Furthermore, information vs. interaction texts are defined as making information available and creating knowledge vs. accessing existing knowledge and initiating follow-up action.

Chapter 5 deals with communication barriers of Easy Language recipients. Here, Rink applies the communication barriers developed by Schubert (2016) and expands on them by adding

the media barrier. Another highlight (and another first) of the volume is the modelling of the so-called barrier index, which maps communication barrier types on recipients' requirements and unites them in a table for clear presentation. This is the first overview of and first approach to classification and quantification of the requirement profiles for Easy Language recipients (apart from the author's article (Rink, 2019) in the *Handbuch Barrierefreie Kommunikation* prior to this monograph).

With a view to translation in *Chapter 6*, Rink conceptualises translation into Easy Language as overcoming communication barriers in a translation-specific setting of translational action according to Risku (2009) and Holz-Mäntärii (1984). She offers three translation strategies (linguistic, conceptual and medial) on a meta level considering the 'triumvirat', illustrates the complexity of the translation process in the context of legal expert-lay communication and points out the high degree of professionalism that is needed to fulfill these demands with regard to text production.

Chapter 7 marks the end of the theoretical input, summarises the results from the previous chapters and lists the theses that have been formulated so far. Furthermore, the concrete research desiderata that will be investigated on the basis of a corpus using corpus linguistic means are listed as well. The comprehensive description of the corpus and the method follows in *Chapter 8*. The corpus is based on a pilot project from the Ministry of Justice of Lower Saxony "Leichte Sprache in der Niedersächsischen Justiz", and includes a qualitative range of different texts including information and interaction texts, which are classified with regard to their parameters, with the focus here lying on the text's parameters.

At more than 200 pages, the analyses of the source and target texts in *Chapters 9 and 10* leave nothing more to be desired. In her typically meticulous manner, Rink investigates the source texts in line with the classification from *Chapter 4* along lexical, syntactical, textual and pragmatic levels as well as on a quantitative basis regarding the linguistic features. In terms of the target texts, the criteria for analysis are predominantly the aforementioned requirements: perceptibility, comprehensibility and acceptability. Using examples, translation dilemmas are presented as well as corresponding functional and dysfunctional solutions depending on the interaction between perceptibility, comprehensibility and acceptability.

Chapter 11 is dedicated to the theses from *Chapter 7*. These are processed accurately and very systematically. Some can actually not be proven or verified by means of the corpus analyses and remain a research desideratum. In the final chapter (*12*), in addition to a summary and an outlook from a corpus linguistic perspective, a critical reflection of the method as well as a critical discussion about the corpus, its suitability and its shortcomings might have been expected (McEnery & Hardie, 2011). But, this in no way diminishes the achievements of this volume, one of the major benefits of which is definitely the meta-level suitability of the translation strategies for legal communication in Easy Language. Rink outlines and presents a blueprint which can transfer the basis of the cornerstones perceptibility, comprehensibility, acceptability and action-orientation (if necessary) to other specialised texts in the context of accessibility. With regard to Easy Language translations in this context, the instances where the focus is solely on the word and sentence levels is hopefully a thing of the past. Rink postulates that for successful communication, planning from the text level is indispensable. She creates a rather holistic approach that includes the person, the tonality and the means of address as important instruments with regard to acceptance and the resulting linkability of the texts. And this is the final plus!

Silver lining

To sum this all up, this is an excellent examination of the text perspective and a valuable piece of work for all text creators and researchers involved in legal expert-lay-communication, language barriers and accessible communication, both in terms of the theoretical foundation and practical outcome as well as the method used. To present the first monographic contribution to the field of accessible legal communication was one of the author's underlying motives. The result is more than impressive. She creates a more holistic perspective, provides us with a best-case scenario of how to use translation strategies, even on a meta level, and confirms without doubt the need for professionalism in dealing with the discussed text scenarios.

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