

***Deborah Cao, Translating Law. Clevedon, UK:
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Abstract:

Translating Law is the outcome of ten years of research as well as the author's first-hand knowledge as an interpreter and translator. Dr. Cao clearly defines, illustrates and discusses ways of bridging bias within the interdisciplinary dialogue involving broad but complex discursive communities like law and linguistics in the translation of legal documents in "various languages and legal cultures" (p. xi). The challenging but well-grounded study draws on a careful and updated selection of references in order to fulfil the goal of both "studying legal translation as an intellectual pursuit and a profession" (p. xi) and fostering users' translation competence. It is Dr Cao's purpose to illustrate the knots and bolts of translating legal texts in a postmodern paradigm, necessarily reflecting and having an impact on, as she rightly puts it in the preface, "the diversity of human as well as non-human lives, the life of the Other, and of many" (p. xi).

As the author herself states at the outset of the book, the corpus of this study is wide ranging. It covers private legal documents, domestic legislation and international legal instruments, with a focus on idiosyncrasies across languages, such as Jewish/Hebrew, Italian, American/Australian/English, German, French and Chinese, "without oversimplifying the complex and interdisciplinary nature of the problems involved" (p. 3). This is particularly relevant because different legal systems in the world, i.e., The Common Law and the Civil Law, are at the core of legal, linguistic and discursive choices. Despite the fact that translating law differs from translation in other domains in a number of variables, briefly but systematically pointed out in the book, it is the author's claim that law "is translatable despite the various inherent difficulties" (p. 5).

Furthermore, and among the book's major claims, stand out the author's discussion and comprehensive illustration of the translator's development of multiple competencies in an interdisciplinary scope so as to bridge the confinements of "legal jurisdictions and linguistic groups" (p. x). To put it briefly, the legal translator is supposed, on the one hand, to know how participants in the legal discursive community "think and write and why they write the way they do" (p. 5), while resorting to sub-technical lexis. On the other, the legal translator needs "to be sensitive to the intricacy, diversity and creativity of language, as well as its limits and power" (p. 5). Hence, it is argued that "translation is the product of a total act of interlingual and intercultural mediation involving the interactions of different variables in situational contexts" (p. 5).

The book comprises seven chapters. It is systematically organized and moves in a logical fashion, from defining concepts, followed by an appropriate illustration in several linguistic codes and contexts, to their critical appraisal. The book is reader-friendly and addresses both experts and non-experts in different fields and discursive communities, given the way subject matters are presented, in terms of style, content and argumentative force. Moreover, it offers a comprehensive but theoretically-grounded account of the variables involved in translating law. And the end chapter notes provide readers with further and useful data on related matters, thereby reflecting the author's concern, explicitly stated at the outset of the book: overview of theoretical issues and practical guidance in order to overcome the "tension between legal certainty and linguistic indeterminacy" (p. 7).

Scholars of any language, linguists, legal translators, translation researchers, lecturers and students would

certainly benefit from this study as it points to specificities in legal translation in several domains in a crosscultural and interlingual perspective (Bathia et al. 2005). These may be equally regarded as a starting point for further research in the realm of discourse analysis, contrastive linguistics, not to mention studies in legal-related domains.

Keywords: *Translation of legal documents*