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TRANSLATION AND PUBLIC POLICY: INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES AND CASE STUDIES

Edited by Gabriel González Núñez and Reine Meylaerts, Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2017, 178 pp, 12 B/W Illus., £105.00 (hardback) ISBN 978-1-138-69744-7, £20.00 (e-book) ISBN 978-1-315-52177-0

In the volume, titled *Translation and public policy: Interdisciplinary perspectives and case studies*, Meylaerts and González Núñez assembled eight interdisciplinary papers that focus on the role of translation in public policy. These views are founded on Meylaerts (2011:744) who argues that “[t]here cannot be translation without translation policy” (pp. 11, 59). The papers make valuable contributions from each of the areas of specialisation to the developing discipline of translation policy.

Meylaerts and González Núñez commence by noting that the concept *policy*, like *translation*, is not easy to define (p. 1). They write that attempts to define policy lack because they do not include all of the elements in a list that Jenkins provide (p. 2). Furthermore, Meylaerts and González Núñez define translation policy as “a series of intentionally coherent decisions on translation or translation activities made by public and sometimes private actors in order to resolve collective linguistic and translation problems” (p. 2). Diaz Fouces (p. 58) refers to James Holmes’ map in elaborating the objective of a translation policy, which is to give informed advice to others in defining the place and role of translators, translating and translations in society. Language policy thus provides answers to “what needs to be translated in a given socio-cultural situation or what is the social and economic position of the translator and what it should be” (p. 58).

The papers advocate for the development of translation policies where such policies are not in place. These policies may be implicit or explicit, based on the laws of various states and institutions involved. Meylaerts and González Núñez note that implicit or explicit translation policies affect a wide range of disciplines and topics, including



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those covered in the volume. i.e. justice in the society (De Schutter); minority rights under international law (Mowbray); language planning (Diaz Fouces), language policy evaluation (Gazzola & Grin); lingua franca in academia (Robichaud); language access in the judiciary and local government (González Núñez); and higher education (Du Plessis).

In the second chapter “Translational justice: Between equality and privation”, De Schutter advocates for the role of translation within linguistic justice. He argues that the role of translation received less explicit attention in linguistic justice theories (p. 15). While De Schutter grants that translation does play a role in linguistic justice theories, the argument he makes is that these theories have not dealt with the issue of translation on its own but rather as part of the rights that language groups are or are not entitled to. De Schutter refers to rights such as subsidies aimed at mother-tongue education and the right of national minority groups to access public services in their own languages at the respective government agencies (town hall and the police). He makes use of Meylaerts’ (2011) argument that there can never be language policy without translation policy to describe the question on translational justice. He also admits that, as much as looking at linguistic justice from a translation perspective, this focus would not change the linguistic justice field. De Schutter further regards translation issues as constituting a proper subdivision of linguistic justice, and an explicit focus on translation may thus change current positions and create space for some new insights. In so doing, De Schutter suggests three possible theories of translational justice, namely, the privation theory, full translational theory and the multilingualism-with-limited-translation theory (p. 15). Within these suggested theories, he distinguishes between two interests that are central in linguistic justice, namely, identity and instrumental interest. (p. 17). The first suggested theory advocates for monolingualism and sees translation as a temporary solution (p. 19). The second theory sees translation as an issue associated with identity and argues for both autonomy, which regards languages and cultures as our choice packages, and linguistic dignity, which emphasises the importance of equal dignity and parity of esteem among all language groups. The third theory is the multilingualism-with-limited-translation-theory (the dual theory), and it takes note of several identity-interests in translation that can be served by language policy that highlights autonomy and dignity as the most important interests. This theory also considers non-identity interests of which efficiency, democracy and equality of opportunity are regarded as the most important ones.

In chapter three “Translation as marginalisation? International law, translation and the status of linguistic minorities”, Mowbray gives an account of how international law affects state obligations regarding translation. He highlights that different fields of international law implicitly and explicitly require translation in various circumstances, particularly in communication between linguistic minorities and the state. This observation may also be linked to Meylaerts’ (2011) observation on the importance of translation policy. Mowbray notes that some provisions of international law needs translation to ensure that all individuals are treated equally. For instance, Article 12(2)(d) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the right to health for all, especially for vulnerable or marginalised groups (p. 33). In addition, Mowbray refers to Article 2(1) of the Covenant, which prohibits discrimination based on language. With the latter article, she argues, international law requires states to provide at least minimal translation to ensure that linguistic minority groups who do not speak the language spoken by the doctors have access to medical services (p. 34). The Report on UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues also indicates that “public health information should be available in minority languages” (p. 34). Such non-discriminatory

provisions, she argues, have had limited impact on states' translation policies, which means that theoretical and practical constraints on these provisions limit their application to discrimination on the basis of language. In addition to these provisions in international law are provisions that promote translation as a means of protecting minority identity and culture. The European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities is one such instrument, which recognises the importance of language for minority groups. Article 5 acknowledges the importance of language as an "essential element" of minority identity and culture. It also encourages the use of translation as a means to protect these core interests in language (p. 40). Article 10 and 11 of the Convention also make provision for translation as far as minority languages are concerned whereas Article 15 makes it possible for national minorities to participate in cultural, social and economic life in their own languages. Lastly, the set of provisions in international law that Mowbray refers to focuses on translation as a means of facilitating democratic participation by minority groups.

Mowbray argues that international law supports the development of translation policies that aim to integrate linguistic minorities. Nevertheless, it may negatively affect linguistic minorities because it functions as a framework that furthers the marginalisation of linguistic minorities. Mowbray finds that while international law has seemingly good intentions (i.e. to ensure that linguistic minorities are included in the democratic processes), its implicit support for limiting the number of languages in the public sphere may further marginalise minority groups and exclude them from active participation in matters that affect them daily, which actually is the essence of democracy.

In the fourth chapter "From language planning to translation policy: looking for a conceptual framework", Diaz Fouces seeks to outline an overall structure for the study of translation policy. As a point of departure, he provides a review of categories of language policy and planning. In so doing, he argues that these language-management practices do not pay much attention to the important role that translation plays within the process of language management, reiterating Meylaerts' (2000) observation regarding the role of translation in language policies, i.e. "There is no language policy without translation policy". Thus, Diaz Fouces continues to highlight the value of translation practices on the policies that are at the basis of language-planning programmes. Furthermore, Diaz Fouces notes that these practices are vital for the programmes themselves, and it might thus be reasonable to refer to them as translation policies. Diaz Fouces also identifies different types of policies in relation to how linguistic diversity is organised in a specified territory. One of the main purposes of this chapter is to link the role of translation to language training.

In the fifth chapter titled "Comparative language policy and evaluation: criteria, indicators and implications for translation policy", Gazzola and Grin address the utility of a comparative approach to the study of language policy. They also provide a framework of some of the characteristics of this comparative approach. Furthermore, the authors stress the need for evaluating language policy and give detailed guidelines on how this evaluation is to be structured. It is worth noting that Gazzola and Grin make a very good observation regarding the presence or lack thereof of translation policy in an attempt to solve some problems that authorities encounter. They write that, even in contexts where explicit written policies do not exist, "there is always a default policy" because governments and administrations cannot operate without using at least one language. Thus, there is a need to make decisions, whether implicit or ad hoc, on what to translate, for whom and where. Gazzola and Grin claim that the search for the problems listed above may benefit from Comparative Public Policy (CPP).

In chapter six, titled “Political philosophy and scientific translation: When individual interest does not translate into collective benefits”, Robichaud stresses the importance of having a global *lingua franca* within the scientific world. He postulates that a common language is a necessary tool and may play a pivotal role in the production and dissemination of knowledge. He gives an example of English, which is currently the dominant scientific language. Nevertheless, Robichaud argues that English may overtake local languages at national level within different states. Thus, he encourages the use of local languages in research, emphasising the need for recognition of good translation work, among other reasons, as a way to ensure that the languages are protected. It is also in the interest of the collective that incentives that face scientists and researchers are modified in order to ensure that both English as a global *lingua franca* and local languages do not lose their precision. He highlights the importance of translation in the process of preserving local languages. The chapter concludes by noting how translation may contribute to the preservation of local languages in the research world, i.e. translating research documents in local languages will ensure that they stay relevant.

In chapter seven, titled “Educational interpreting as an instrument of language policy: The case at a ‘historically Afrikaans’ South African university”, Du Plessis analyses the relation between language policy and language services, particularly at the University of the Free State (UFS). According to Du Plessis (p. 138), the UFS’ 2003 language policy does not make provision for a fully integrated language service. He advocates for a fully institutionalised language service in order for the services to be sustainable. Du Plessis describes an institutionalised language services as a service that is “fully integrated in the institution’s day-to-day functions as determined by its language policy” (p. 133). This sustainability, he says, may be attained only if the language service can be merged with the overall institutional aims, if the service forms part of the institution’s language strategy and if it is fully integrated in the day to day activities of the institution. He argues that the UFS’s 2003 Language Policy does not satisfactorily meet these requirements. Thus, the interpreting service at the UFS is “semi-institutionalised” and may be regarded unsustainable. Du Plessis also claims that “[i]nterpreting and translation could fall away at any time” because their sustainability at the UFS is based on “affordability”. The university was in the process of reviewing its language policy when the paper was written, and Du Plessis raises concerns regarding challenges that may face the revised language policy, for instance “reconciling the new policy with the demands of transformation and maintaining diversity”.

In the last chapter, titled “Law and translation at the U.S.-Mexico border, Translation policy in a diglossic setting”, González Núñez, describes translation policies found in the judiciary and local government in the city of Brownsville, on the border between the U.S. and Mexico. According to González Núñez, this city is bilingual with most of the residents speaking Spanish rather than English. However, due to the city’s history of colonisation and domination (by English), Spanish adopted a lower position than English as the latter enjoys privileges such as the language of the courts and local government (p. 155). Thus, national advances led to the provision of widespread language accommodation for individuals with limited English skills. González Núñez submits that this accommodation takes place through translation and interpreting at both the courts and local government. However, these two domains, González Núñez describes, follow different approaches. The courts have explicit translation management rules, which he argues allow them to ensure quality assurance (p.160). For its part, local government has no explicit translation-management rules (p. 161). Thus, translation practice is a result of pragmatic problem solving by those who encounter

communication challenges with people who are less proficient in English. Bilingual employees tend to step in to bridge the linguistic gap. This is an ad hoc solution, which González Núñez argues will not enable local government to ensure quality assurance. He suggests that written rules must be created for interpreting and translation in order for bilingual areas to improve their policies.

The book makes a needed contribution to the emerging “field” of Translation Policy from different disciplines. Descriptions from the various disciplines provide a framework from which detailed research on Translation Policy can be conducted. Firstly, the authors who contribute in this volume concur with Meylaerts that, indeed from their different areas of specialisation, “there is no Language Policy without translation policy”. In an attempt to emphasise the importance of translation practices, these scholars provide several suggestions (theories - De Schutter; frameworks – Diaz Fouces, Gazzola and Grin; fully institutionalised language services – Du Plessis) which may or may not work especially in multilingual states. Furthermore, Robichaud’s observation on the importance of having a global *lingua franca* in the scientific world is good in that it draws the scientific world closer together. However, he also encourages the use of local languages in research at national level to ensure that these languages do not lose their precision. This observation is valuable especially for multilingual states (most African countries have been struggling to develop local languages to be utilised in the scientific world). Lastly, Gazzola and Grin points out that, though an explicit translation policy is not necessarily present, one is always implied. Thus, though it is ideal to have an explicit translation policy (see González Núñez), the fact that language policy cannot exist without a translation policy suggests that one may be implied.

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