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## Between specialised texts and institutional contexts - competence and choice in legal translation

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Whereas legal translation was, for a long time, viewed mainly as a way to enable communication between neatly delimited legal orders, the focus of attention has moved to the production of multilingual law in a legal world characterised by multiple interrelated levels. In this context, legal communication – which has to meet the needs of experts and respect the rights of citizens – is the result of complex interlingual processes involving, but not limited to, translation. The legal field, with its practical and theoretical issues, should therefore prove particularly relevant to the perspective of *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts*.

The codrafting procedures and interdisciplinary professional profiles that have been developed in officially multilingual countries have led to the questioning, starting from the 1970s, of traditional notions of text and translation. Today, factors such as the harmonisation of law, EU multilingualism and international standards for linguistic rights are turning some peripheral questions into central issues, with epistemological implications for both law and translation studies (Glanert 2014). Academic research on legal translation has gained autonomy from research on specialised translation in general. It attempts to explore, among other questions, the influence and variability of institutional parameters, particularly as regards the intricate terminological problems that are characteristic of the field. This focus on institutional context is reflected, for instance, in recent collective volumes (see Tiersma and Solan 2012, and Cheng, Sin and Wagner 2014).

Since the practice of translation contributes to shaping the evolution of legal languages, systems and cultures, it is essential for translator training to look into how translation competence can be adequately defined and developed in the legal field (see Monzó Nebot 2015). One of the key features of this competence lies in

ensuring relevance and consistency in translation decisions. Given the complexity of legal orders, language varieties and communicative situations, these decisions often involve choice. They have to be well-informed if translation practice at the individual and institutional level is to have a positive influence on the quality of multilingual legal communication.

This view of legal translation as a specialised activity requiring expertise and involving choice in various highly specific institutional contexts is the main thread running through the seven articles of this special issue. They were selected from the papers presented at the first Transius conference, held in June 2015 at the University of Geneva.

In the opening article, Katia Peruzzo shows how translating national law texts into an international lingua franca leads to re-examining the notion of target language, taking into account the different institutional contexts in which a language is used. Her article draws on an academic research and translation project. A bilingual and interdisciplinary team was formed and a specific process was designed, involving the use of corpora, in order to tackle typical problems deriving from the special nature of legal texts. A primary concern was solving these problems with relevant and consistent choices in spite of pragmatic complexity.

From a broader angle, Sonia Halimi examines the interaction between national and international law on the one hand, and between national systems on the other hand, in the changing field of criminal justice, with a focus on Arabic terminology. For translators, multiple communication situations, complex conceptual relationships and the current lack of a coherent terminology at the international level mean that decision-making is contextual and relies, first of all, on good management of comparative specialised knowledge. The author proposes Frame Semantics as a theoretical basis.

Bringing together anthropology and translation studies, Martin Ramstedt illustrates how the notion of "cultural translation" can help to renew the way interactions between legal systems are described and analysed. His study proposes a methodological specification for this heuristic tool in order to approach the transposition of concepts from international law into local legal and linguistic contexts, focusing on the concept of "indigenous rights" in Indonesia.

The need to integrate multiple and changing parameters in decision-making is a challenge for translation practice and translator training. The following four articles elaborate on this subject. Lianhong Gao concentrates on the definition of curricular objectives. She proposes combining the results of scholarly inquiry into translation competence with an empirically-based study applying Q-methodology to the specific Chinese context.

The traditional debate about whether translators or lawyers are better qualified to produce quality translations of legal texts has been replaced by attempts to

define thematic competence more precisely and to draw implications for translator training. Daniele Orlando's study contributes to this discussion with a comparative analysis of errors made by translators and by lawyers, combining several methods.

Also in search of a sound theoretical basis for developing translation competence, Cornelia Griebel focuses on comprehension in the translation process. She specifically addresses the difficulties that legal texts, which are both specialised and institution-specific, entail for a reader who is not an expert in law. The aim of her study is to adapt more general models from cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics.

At the other end of the process, Gianluca Pontrandolfo's article deals with translation revision, a topic of growing importance in translation studies, as changes in professional practice increase the emphasis on quality control. The article provides an empirical study in a professional setting, involving participants with different profiles.

Finally, a review by Sara Laviosa echoes the opening article by referring to one of the main current trends in specialised, and particularly legal, translation: the use of corpora for professional, didactic and research purposes. This review introduces *New Insights into Corpora and Translation*, a collective volume edited by Daniel Gallego Hernández (2016).

Approaching the interdisciplinary study of legal translation from a variety of geographical contexts and theoretical, empirical and practical viewpoints, the authors in this special issue contribute to a deeper understanding of the knowledge and skills translators need in order to communicate effectively in multiple and complex situations. This competence must be not only specialised, but also critical and reflexive, if translators are expected to be actors in the evolution of multilingual law.

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