

Imre, Attila. 2020. *An Introduction to Translator Studies*. Brașov: “Transilvania” University Publishing House. ISBN 978-606-19-1285-8, pp. 218

Book review

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Ever since the emergence of Translation Studies as an independent academic discipline about four decades ago, this field has produced a huge amount of literature dealing with the theory, the practice and the research of translation. As noted by Dam and Zethsen (2009), the studies published as part of this field have been mostly interested in issues specific to translation understood as product, on the one hand, and as process, on the other, being concerned to a considerably lesser extent with the persons who actually create the translated texts and who are involved in the translation process – that is, the translators. However, this deficiency is about to be remedied, because, with the sociological turn in translation studies (cf. Snell-Hornby 2006), growing attention has been paid to the translators as a social and professional group (Dam 2013).

Against such a background, in 2020, Dr. Attila Imre, Professor at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, published a book which, as the author himself explains in the Preface, has “the translator as the protagonist” (p. 11). The book, entitled *An Introduction to Translator Studies*, sets out to explore the old territory of translation in terms of this new approach focused on the person performing the translation activity. More specifically, Dr. Imre provides a comprehensive view of the process of translation management in the 21st century, when translators must cope with a wide range of challenges determined either by the development of technology

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and even the threat of being replaced by it, or by the urge to remain competitive on the dynamic translation market.

After the Preface, which acquaints the readers with the purpose of the study, as well as with issues of thematic and structural nature, the book is logically organized into five main chapters, followed by an additional chapter in which the author presents his conclusions. It must be noted that each of the five main chapters ends with a set of tasks representing starting points for discussions and projects connected to the topics explored there.

In chapter 1, *The Importance of Translation*, Dr. Imre makes some terminological clarifications, explaining that, throughout his study, translation is primarily approached as a product, a service, and a craft (i.e., a business), while the translator is, to a large extent, a service provider. Even if the author claims that he does not intend “to plant a further book in the fertile soil of theoretical approaches, but to focus on the person who might have been ‘behind the scenes’ for centuries” (p. 17), this chapter makes a valuable contribution to the theory of the field due to the deep insights and the new perspective that it provides when discussing a series of issues that are central to Translation Studies, such as different definitions and approaches to translation, the concept of equivalence, the role of culture in translation, translation as an act of communication, the importance of the English language for translation, or the influence exerted by technology on the theory and practice of translation.

The second chapter, entitled *Translator Management*, goes deeper into the concept of “translator-centredness” (cf. Hu 2004, in Imre 2020: 61), discussing it from various points of view: types of translators, elements making up the translator’s competence, the character traits which, in addition to the knowledge-based ones, are included in the translator’s job profile, and, finally, the knowledge and the skills that ensure the effective self-management in this profession. The information contained in this chapter is very useful for the translator, as the author provides not only theoretical evidence, but also facts of a very practical character, such as statistics, suggestions for successful self-advertising (CV, business cards, websites) and for good time management, or data (i.e., guidelines, names of websites or tables) concerning price calculation according to several variables.

Chapter 3, *Managing Cont(r)acts*, starts from Gouadec’s claim (2007: 328, in Imre 2020: 127) that “translators must be able to communicate and interact efficiently and amiably with a variety of people”, and looks at the options that are available to the translators in order to contact new clients, on the one hand, and in order to maintain contact with the regular ones, on the other. The author comes up with very useful suggestions concerning ethics in the case of various types of contact with potential and regular clients, from the traditional mail, phone call or text-based e-mail, to the more recent video call, social networking and cold contacting. Additionally, the readers find here recommendations on how to negotiate and to conclude a contract with the client. One of the conclusions of this chapter is that the professional service provided by the translator can lead to happy and satisfied clients,

but research is still needed to investigate “translator’s job-related happiness” (Liu 2013: 54, in Imre 2020: 146).

In chapter 4, devoted to *Translator Status*, Dr. Imre initiates an objective and honest discussion on the actual low status of the translators, examining the factors which contribute to this undervalued position, and suggesting some possible counterbalancing measures which involve both attitudes and conscious actions. The problem is that hopes for the improvement of the translators’ status seem to depend more on clients, governments, or other external factors than on the translators themselves. However, in spite of presenting “rather bleak prospects on translator status” (p. 172), in the end of the chapter the author points out that this situation does not have universal validity, depending on factors like the geographical area in which the translation business is located, or the type of text that must be translated.

Following a similar line of reasoning, the last chapter, *Translators and Ethics*, explores the possibility of establishing a code of ethics that should regulate the translators’ course of action in various situations, and, consequently, could contribute to improving the status of this profession. There have already been some attempts in this respect, and a good illustration is the Hieronymic oath proposed by Chesterman (2001), in analogy to the Hippocratic Oath made by the doctors. The author discusses a series of principles that should be included in a well-drafted code of ethics for translators, but admits that, even if such codes might work in theory, “there are too many challenges to be functional in practice” (p. 189). The rapid development of technology, the great number of translators without proper qualifications, and the lowered language expectations associated with global English are presented as elements which not only challenge the adoption of a code of ethics designed for professional translators, but also make it have a limited binding force.

The book ends with an Appendix, which comprises some models of certification statements in English, Romanian and Hungarian, as well as two proposals for a code of ethics meant to regulate the activity of the professional translators, namely the American Translators Association Code of Ethics and Professional Practices and Chesterman’s universal Hieronymic Oath.

To conclude, Dr. Attila Imre’s book, *An Introduction to Translator Studies*, appears in a context in which the phenomenon of globalization and the technological revolution have led to a concept of translation that differs considerably from the one previously described by the theory of the field. This recent context also represents a new stage for the translators, who, as the author explains, are in the middle of an interaction with multiple factors influencing each other. The comprehensive description of these factors shape the idea that translators must be aware of the multitude of competences and responsibilities expected of them, and, to a similar extent, must respect certain professional ethics and norms. Due to the fresh theoretical perspective that it provides, and to the useful practical suggestions that it makes, this book represents a necessary tool for the more or less experienced translators, as well as for the translator trainers, who can develop numerous ideas about how to make the teaching process relevant for the real world of translation practice.

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