



## REVIEW

**Federica Scarpa:**  
***Research and Professional Practice  
in Specialised Translation***

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Drawing upon “specialised/specialized translation” as the title in *Translation Studies Bibliography*, a comprehensive and regularly-updated database bearing over 30,000 annotated records in the field of translation studies (TS), merely 143 hits till the end of 2019 are retrieved, showing the very little attention the topic has gained. Among these literatures, apart from *Specialized Translation: Shedding the ‘Non-literary’ Tag* (Rogers, 2015), monographs are even more by their absence. Against this backdrop, *Research and Professional Practice in Specialised Translation* bridges the gap to some extent. Generally speaking, with nearly thirty years’ teaching, Federica Scarpa defines the boundaries and the characterising features of specialised translation, and offers a description of relevant theories. Some of the findings contribute to advancing the quality of different levels of the translation activity. Accordingly, this publication is characterised by pedagogical and academic nature, practical and theoretical values, and descriptive and prescriptive tenors.

More specifically, the book is comprised of four substantial chapters. The opening one, entitled “Introducing Specialised Translation”, outlines the disciplinary scope and the status quo of specialised translation. To begin with, languages for special purposes (LSPs), the object of specialised translation, are defined as language varieties featuring a degree of formality. Four major underlying factors influencing the internal linguistic variation are identified subsequently. With respect to the distinctive linguistic features of LSPs, texts of the kind embody the criteria of precision, economy and objectivity, and seven interactive lexicogrammatical features of the language of science. By the same token, a top-down approach is further employed to unveil their textual argumentative pattern, thematic structure and progression, and cohesion; syntactic nominalization, passive voice, verb tenses and interactional meta-discursive resources; as well as terminological monoreferentiality, transparency and conciseness and metaphorisation. It is also worth mentioning that the Anglo-American models dominate the discourses of science and technology, and specialised translation keeps flourishing in global language industry nowadays. More interestingly, though the remaining part of this chapter is devoted to discuss five sets of differences between literary translation and specialised translation, and debunks the misleading myths that the former is superior to the latter one, it is emphasised that there is a continuum between these two types of translation.

The focus of chapter 2, “Theoretical Issues in Specialised Translation”, screens out translator-related theoretical concepts of LSP translation based on the assumption that it is actually a translator-mediated communication and the translators’ knowledge of theory determines translation quality. The first dynamic notion of “equivalence”, which underlines the integration of linguistic fidelity and pragmatic consideration, is useful to describe the translations per se and guide the practical choices. As it is acknowledged that there is no supremacy of ST over the TT, another notion of “translation norms” within descriptive TS is valuable to explore standardised and prescriptive conventions governing specialised translation. To put it differently, finding translation features that are independent of any language pairs and text genres helps test the hypothesis of universals and the laws of LSP

translation. In light of translation being basically the reproduction of ST, there are points in the ST that cause processing “problems” and inadequate transformation as well. These are categorised into macropragmatic and cultural problems and microlinguistic and text-specific ones, which are connected to the rhetorical differences and structural and cognitive differences respectively. In what follows, by means of resorting to four fundamental “ethics” identified by Chesterman (2001), it is argued that textual and interpersonal responsibilities representing ethical values of clarity and truth, trust and understanding separately are required on the part of the translator.

The next lengthy chapter, “Translating Specialised Texts”, probes into the preparatory and operational phases of the LSP translators’ reformulation process and product. Apparently, in-depth reading of the ST is a very first consideration to make a translation-relevant analysis to satisfy the professional specifications. For this reason, this chapter opens with the introduction of parameters in the pre-reading section that influence the successful realization of translation goals, which generally fall into the categories of text and pragmatics. So to speak, the textual parameter pays attention to the adherence to intertextuality or the appropriate text models in the TL, and the pragmatic one focuses on the communicative purpose of the TT. On this basis, it’s the turn of the translators to select macrostrategies to be involved in actual production. Therefore, the remaining pages choose and elaborate two basic translation methods of literal translation and paraphrase. To coordinate with the earlier subdivision of the main language features of LSPs in chapter 1, the specific operations are further demonstrated from the highest textual level to the lower syntactical and lexical levels by displaying abundant cases between English and Romance languages, particularly Italian.

Chapter 4, “Quality in Specialised Translation”, strives to evaluate the efficacy and efficiency of nonliterary translation more objectively. At the outset, the industry-wide international standards on quality of the translation process, such as European ISO 9000, are reviewed, thus highlighting the paramount importance of the competencies of the specialised translators. Depending on whether the assessment is made, parameters for assessing quality of the LSP translation products are roughly divided into the double complementary theoretical-didactic and professional perspectives. The one followed by translation theorists and trainers considers textual accuracy and readability, while the other is reception-oriented and focuses more on adequacy and acceptability. As quality is related to time, cost and use of the TT, the following subsection differentiates three levels of quality as deliverable, revisable or informative. What’s more, revision is quite necessary to guarantee and improve the quality during translating, so the author distinguishes it from editing and proofreading, and elaborates three pairs of revision from the procedural point of view, namely bilingual vs. monolingual, complete vs. partial, pre- and postdelivery. And the revision brief specifies the responsibilities belonging to the translator and reviser. In addition, the final part moves on to translation errors that revisers look for during revision, whose deep-seated causes lie in four traditional ones like time pressure as well as the burgeoning crowdsourcing model. By referring to the error clas-

sifications and evaluation models from the early-mentioned two perspectives, the author finally proposes a functional-oriented sort of translation errors to measure the quality of translations ranging from 300 to 350 words.

In an attempt to provide a thorough blueprint for specialised translation studies, the book bears a lot of prominent merits. The most striking contribution lies in the shift of the dominated research approach to LSP translations. To delve into the earlier retrieved items from *Translation Studies Bibliography*, terminology remains the most studied aspect of the translation of specialised languages. Terms are arguably a key and the most identifiable feature of LSPs, but as is evidenced by the author, other aspects of specialised translation such as the theoretical issues enjoy the equal crucial importance as terminology. More importantly, the author takes the stance that there is not a clear-cut discrepancy between specialised and literary translations, and lays a particular emphasis on the functional and cultural approaches. In so doing, the actual potentialities of this topic are uncovered, and the mistakenly-perceived bias on the ostensibly less-valued LSP texts are being altered.

In second place, it brings the societal status of specialised translators and the most relevant studies to the fore, thus deepening the human-centered nature of any translation activity beyond the pure linguistic dimension. Since the advent of “cultural turn” of TS and Pym (1998: ix) appeals, “only humans have the kind of responsibility appropriate to social causation”, translator studies have increasingly attracted TS scholars’ interests but are overwhelmingly concerned with literary genres. By contrast, the book places the central active role of nonliterary translators under the assumption of LSP translation as a professional service activity, and considers their complicated psychological matters and accompanying sociocultural factors such as end-users and other agents’ participation. To this end, it contributes a lot to enhance the due status of LSP translation, a subbranch of the discipline of TS, and enrich the research frameworks of TS.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned achievements, the book would become more appealing if a few aspects are reconsidered. First of all, though the contents are thorough to entail issues in pre-, while- and postsection of translating LSP discourses, the reception of the translated texts in target contexts are relatively less explored. As “an important part of any translation is its audience” (Ameri et al., 2018: 436) and empirical surveys on translational reception emerge, the incorporation of descriptive discussions among readerships by conducting experiments or questionnaires is likely to promote the work to a higher level. The second inadequacy rests with the not so reader-friendly design of writing structures. On the one hand, as already mentioned, the book consists in four body chapters but lacks a conclusion to considerably help readers look back on the ideas throughout the book and other promising aspects deserving further study. On the other, the references are listed both at the end of each chapter and the whole book, which results in overlapping.

Taken as a whole, the book under review is no doubt one recommendable resource for professionals, novice graduates and practitioners who are eager to fully appreciate the science and arts of specialised translation and applied linguistics.

## References

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