We present here an unconventional translation theory book that differs from other previously known and applied reference works in the field of Translation Studies. This difference is reflected not only in the interpretation of the process of thinking about translation, but also in the fact that it describes many other tasks that are important in the translator’s work. Attila Imre addresses a new field of research, whose importance was also emphasized previously by Andrew Chesterman (2009). This new field of research is now beginning with the name – Translator Studies – which differs from the name Translation Studies, the most well-known and accepted name primarily by researchers in linguistics. The author positions the translator in the centre of translation, seen as a language industry activity. Previous research has primarily focused on the translation of texts, during which translators have sought to establish some sort of equivalence.

The author reasons why a book with this approach is needed:

1. The IT revolution has increased the demand for translations.
2. Previous criteria posed to translations are re-evaluated.
3. The demand for translation in previously common fields, such as literary translation or cultural text translation, has shifted towards industry, commerce, and audiovisual entertainment, in accordance with new societal challenges.

Attila Imre interprets translation as a service, and in order for the various services to be effective, translators should not have only language proficiency, but also competencies enabling them to remain competitive and perform the special tasks required by a changed social environment. We note that such an approach is not alien to translation theory literature, as we have previously encountered similar suggestions, for example in the skopos theory (Vermeer 1996). According to the skopos theory, translation is a type of activity in which the key issue are the criteria set by the client regarding the target language text (TL), an idea also developed by Christiane Nord (1993). However, Nord replaces the skopos with the translator’s commission. In her view, this commission determines what expectations must be met by the end result of the translation process, i.e., the TL text. Being aware of the content of the book presented here, we can add that the translator’s commission can be determined by numerous factors, deriving from current social requirements or directly from the criteria posed by the client (cf. Joó 2005: 49, Simigné Fenyő
2006: 166-167). In Imre’s book, the central role is given to the presentation of the translator's person, activities, competencies.

The book consists of six large chapters. We shall make comments on the parts that we have considered most important.

Equivalence of source and target language texts has been central in the 20th century translation theories. Confirming the argument of Albert (2011: 599), the author states that although the adequate reproduction of the source language in the target language is a prerequisite, the demands and orders of the customers and clients are of the utmost importance, and it is the translator’s experience that creates the matching equivalence. This is also consistent with Nida’s (1964) equivalence types, which can be formal and dynamic (see also Klaudy 1994). The author also makes reference to the denial of equivalence (Snell-Hornby 2006) and Venuti’s opinion (2000: 470), according to which acceptance in the target culture is the most important aspect in text translation. However, the 21st century is more interested in pragmatic considerations than in theoretical ones.

The book also briefly discusses the definitions of translation and concludes that the various theories bear witness that even linguists do not agree on the purpose and circumstances of translation. That is why there is a need for introducing the so-called umbrella terms, such as language services, in this case.

While examining the concept of translation and presenting various theories in parallel, Attila Imre finds that the concept of translation is so complex and subjectively evaluated that reassessment is necessary. Due to the 21st century IT revolution, further translation means are necessary, such as Machine Translation (MT) or Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT).

The author considers that translation is a language industry service (cf. Gouadec 2007), thus – along with the translator’s professional competencies – a much greater role than before is played by:

1. register knowledge of the specific domain, besides basic linguistic skills;
2. user-level knowledge of ICT tools;
3. knowledge of various translation systems and handling real knowledge and misbeliefs associated with translations carried out with these tools etc.

The translator has to pay attention not only to the translation process, but also to all the parts of the service: for example, commissioning contracts, delivery of final target language texts to the customer, tracking translation fee transfer etc.

The author dedicates a separate subchapter to language power. He observes that the entire world, languages included, are controlled by economic interests, thus the languages spoken in economically more powerful countries will be more popular. The new virtual communication spaces opened by the Internet have a major role in this process. The author highlights the relationship between the English language and translation. Together with the spread of the Internet, the English language globalisation is visible in almost every area of economy.

In our view, the sub-chapter “Translator Competence” is an extremely important part of the book, as the translation profession requires various and specific types of translator competence. The most important types of competence are the following:

1. translation skills and ability;
2. knowledge;
3. linguistic competence; here the author discusses the following sub-
competence types: translation into one’s native language, bilingualism,
cultural competence and domain competence, where the translator may need
extended knowledge of professional working languages, technical skills
(e.g., the ability to use hardware and software) or dealing with people in
certain specific fields;
4. research competence, which combines research, acquiring and processing
information, necessary not only for understanding the source language text
content, but also for creating an adequate target language text;
5. technical competence, which requires the translator’s constant updating, since
technology is constantly developing, so specialized translators have to do
constant checks of CAT-tools;
6. finally, translation competence is an important umbrella term, as it best
reflects the concept of the translator as a mediator (cf. Simigné Fenyô 2006).

In the subchapter “Technology and Translation”, the author writes about the
technological revolution that resulted in the very rapid spread of computers in the
20th century. With the spread of machine translation, the role of translators has
completely changed as well, as they have to handle and control this technology.
The author presents a brief history and usability of Machine Translation and
Computer-Assisted Translation. He notes that – at least for the time being –
Machine Translation cannot entirely replace human translation, as it often yields
inaccurate texts.

A further chapter discusses translator management. It often happens that the
translators themselves have to deal with the various tasks and marketing that
precede and follow translations, and this turns them into project managers as well.
The chapter also contains a detailed discussion on the translator’s self-
management, which should be a daily activity (Hemera 2008: 3).

Self-promotion is vital in all fields where there are potential clients (e.g.,
personal websites, Facebook, or targeted e-mails); the preparation of a logo,
business cards, and other promotional material often requires investing money and
energy.

The author deals in a separate chapter with the management of cont(r)acts,
that is with both contacts and potential contracts, which play an important role in
the translators’ activity.

Translators must deal with the status-lowering factors too, of which the most
important is the so-called market disorder. Besides the continuous competition
among translators, this also includes the fact that unqualified translators ask for a
lower price than the qualified ones, so it is difficult to exclude them from the
labour market: there are always clients who decide on the choice of a translator
exclusively on the basis of price offers.

The final chapter of the book is about the ethical aspects of translation. The
most important elements of the Translators Code of Ethics are related to the
principles of text translation and the attitude towards partners. The translator’s
most important task is to find the balance between faithful renditions, target
standards and client expectations. As translators are service providers, the
translation becomes a product; hence translators are bound to their clients by
written and unwritten rules, such as fidelity, quality assurance, deadlines etc.
The introductory list of abbreviations and acronyms is very useful, helping the readers to understand the content of each book chapter. The Appendix includes a rich bibliography and various documents belonging to the work of a translator.

We consider Attila Imre’s book a reference work in the field of translation training, as it includes all essential aspects required for professional translators in their successful activity as entrepreneurs.

References


