

Bowker, Lynne (2023). *De-mystifying Translation: Introducing Translation to Non-translators*. New York: Routledge, pp. 216, £ 32.99/ 42.95 USD or Open Access PDF. ISBN 9781032109244 (paperback). DOI: 10.4324/9781003217718.

This review is written from a unique vantage point, insofar as *De-Mystifying Translation* first crossed my desk as a proposal (albeit under a different title). This fact is no secret; the author, Lynne Bowker, recognises my earlier reading of the volume in the acknowledgements section. The volume's evolution is impressive and shows her deliberate focus to provide an introduction geared toward non-translators – be they language students, study abroad participants, digital nomads, or those with a potentially international focus in their career, such as aspiring employees of multinational organisations or international business firms. The primary goal is laid out in the very title of the textbook – to demystify translation and interpreting, dispel myths associated with these cross-language activities, and provide a lexicon about translation and interpreting that enables readers to work with these language professionals regardless of their career path. Bowker delivers on her goal, providing a panoramic view of translation that is informed by current research in an accessible and reader-friendly format.

Many introductory textbooks on teaching translation are created to support aspiring translators in translation courses or programmes. These texts often focus on the skills needed to work as professional translators while developing the meta-language needed to talk about translation in academic and professional contexts. At times, introductory volumes have language-specific elements that focus on specific domains or areas of professional practice, while, in others, such texts focus on introducing students to the study of translation and interpreting as an academic discipline. Yet, as Bowker articulates in her opening remarks, *De-mystifying Translation* adopts an intentionally different approach that speaks to a much broader community – non-translators who have not received formal education in translation or who do not provide professional translation services. Given the ubiquity of translation and interpreting in society, Bowker's positioning of this volume for a general readership aligns with growing recognition of the importance of incorporating translation into conversations about communication and language use, which can include its inclusion as a so-called fifth skill in language learning courses (Colina & Lafford, 2017) or in literature courses (Pym, 2023). In some ways, this volume is an instantiation of Bowker's previous work that argues for a literacy of machine translation (Bowker & Buitrago-Ciro, 2019), providing a tangible means by which non-translators can develop an understanding of translation as a cross-language, cross-cultural activity. This type of volume appears all the more imperative given the explosive expansion and availability of large language models.

Bowker structures this volume to introduce readers to the practice of translation so that they might better appreciate translation in its many forms and dispel commonly-held beliefs that reduce this complex activity to a mere “linguistic matching game” (Baer, 2023). To this end, the volume is conversational in tone rather than being jargon-laden or filled with academic buzzwords that are otherwise opaque to the non-specialist. Initially, this choice might seem at odds with efforts to develop an understanding of translation studies; however, the goal is to talk *about* translation rather than serve as an entry point into



translation studies as a discipline. The decision to limit academic citations does not belie a lack of foundation, since the theoretical and scholarly underpinnings are observable throughout the volume. For instructors from translation studies, the connections to specific concepts will be readily apparent and can be easily paired with more theoretical readings. In other contexts in which translation is integrated into language programmes as a means to develop informed users of language services (Mellinger, 2017), instructors can draw on paired readings included at the end of each chapter.

Beyond the overarching structure and approach, the strengths of the volume are many. The introduction opens with questions that highlight translation's role throughout society, including subtitling and dubbing, anime and manga, as well as situations in which publicly available machine translation tools are used in restaurants, on holiday, or during travel. These examples are immediately recognisable and familiar, not only because they facilitate communication, but also since these are instances in which translation sometimes goes wrong, allowing for a humorous and relatable set of illustrative cases resulting from misunderstood song lyrics or issues arising during interpreting. The volume proceeds with a series of chapters that differentiate terms that are common parlance for those within translation and interpreting studies but are otherwise often confused by those outside the field. Bowker complicates some seemingly and alluringly simple concepts (e.g., equivalence) to illustrate the multifaceted nature of translation. Later chapters do the same in relation to technologies associated with machine translation, localisation, digital resources, and terminologies, moving readers through different levels of complexity that anticipate and debunk some common misconceptions surrounding translation as a profession and as a highly-skilled practice. The chapters are augmented with a range of exercises that provide quite a bit of variety for instructors and students alike, with additional “fun fact” call-out boxes giving additional factoids that stick with readers. The glossary is also highly useful, not only for the concise definitions but also for the cross-referencing to related terms.

The volume can certainly be read for independent study, although some of its value likely lies in its potential for its strengths to be addressed in a course as a point of discussion. As someone within translation and interpreting studies, this reviewer finds it hard to gauge whether readers working with the text independently will appreciate the depth of knowledge embedded within the volume. Key points are specifically outlined at the end of each chapter for readers to check their understanding of the text and to highlight the important topics raised throughout each chapter. A minor quibble with these key points is that they run at times more than a few pages and can feel somewhat repetitive from the chapter, which may be off-putting to readers who prefer a more narrative style of writing. For instructors working with the volume, key points are often a starting point for learning objectives, so the extension of these lists could also be difficult to navigate. Of course, these are minor critiques of a volume that has been successfully developed and implemented in Bowker's own course at the University of Ottawa.

In sum, I certainly recommend this volume as an introductory volume on translation for the non-specialist. The textbook makes an important foray into presenting translation studies scholarship outside of the discipline and enables instructors to quickly develop an introductory-level course for multiple constituencies. Written by a translation studies

specialist with a deep understanding of the unique nature of translation, *De-mystifying Translation* is a solid and important contribution that speaks to a broad audience who might otherwise not recognise the value and importance of translation.

References

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