

Cavagnoli, S. (2009). Fabrizio Megale (2008). Teorie della traduzione giuridica: Fra diritto comparato e Translation Studies (Theories on legal translation: between comparative law and Translation Studies). *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, 12, 223-224.

<https://doi.org/10.26034/cm.jostrans.2009.629>

This article is publish under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International* (CC BY):

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



© Stefania Cavagnoli, 2009

Fabrizio Megale (2008) *Teorie della traduzione giuridica: Fra diritto comparato e Translation Studies (Theories on legal translation: between comparative law and Translation Studies)*. Napoli: Editoriale, 168 pp. 20€. ISBN 88-634-2065-3

Megale's book fills a gap that has been pointed out for years by a large number of scholars and professionals. Its main purpose is to explain the theories of comparative law and applied linguistics, giving particular attention to some studies on translation that would need an interdisciplinary approach, as Megale often highlights throughout his work.

This seems to be the main goal of the book and in the preface the author explains it very clearly to his two main addressees: jurists and linguists. As he clearly states, it is his intention to "contribute to a dialogue between these two categories which are involved in the study of legal translation (jurists and linguists), concisely providing linguists with theories on comparative law and giving jurists some theories on translation studies" (p.9), although we shall be reminded that linguistic theories go well beyond the realm of translation studies.

In his book, Megale distinguishes two subgroups within the main group of linguists: translators and experts in translation. This distinction is particularly relevant as the book is also addressed to jurists, who often tend to label all those involved in the study of languages as linguists. Both the structure and the size of Megale's book make it a valuable tool for courses on legal translation, as well as introduction to law, its conciseness being a very important and appreciable feature.

The book is organised in six chapters and it aims to encompass all the important aspects which are related to its overall topic. Unfortunately, when going through the index, one of the biggest problems seems to emerge which will be later confirmed by a deeper analysis: a lack of cohesion. An extremely high number of important issues and aspects of both legal and linguistic knowledge are raised and their coverage remains partial. The result is that Megale deals with some aspects too synthetically and with others perhaps too deeply: the description of semantics, for instance, which constitutes an essential part of the studies on legal language, is summarised in a few lines whereas other issues are treated more systematically (considering the overall size of the book).

However, the most problematic aspect of the volume is probably linked to the use of quotations: Megale makes frequent use of excerpts from other authors and this can be considered in a very positive way, because he is able to give readers a wide overview on what has been discussed and developed in the field of comparative law (even if mostly regarding private law) as well as in applied linguistics, mainly pragmatics and translation

studies. However, the numerous quotations from many different authors and works are not always interconnected, and this can occasionally generate confusion with the reader, who may lose track of the structure and the purpose of the section he is reading.

The bibliography is divided into two main sections, one devoted to works on law and the other to publications on linguistics and translation. This is certainly of great help to students, although it makes it difficult to find the right space for those works which have a truly interdisciplinary nature and structure. For a future edition, a section on legal linguistics could perhaps be envisaged, although it is important to point out that the bibliography is, on the whole, very rich and updated.

The third chapter of the book, on the other hand, sounds somehow surpassed. It deals with legal language and treats it as a language for special purposes. In order to do so, it relies on rather old definitions of 'special' or 'specific' language, whereas in the field of law a number of interesting studies have been carried out and accompanied by useful terminology which ought to be used and discussed. Among them is the definition of 'specialised communication,' which encompasses a large number of pragmatic features of the legal linguistic act.

Finally, a remark ought to be made about the section on translation in chapters four and five, where the author presents the theories and practices of legal translation. The application of the theories which are taken into consideration precedes any general overview on them, although it seems that it might have been better to proceed in the opposite way.

In the end, it is important to point out that the translation processes are mainly observed from a terminological perspective, which is, in the examples quoted by the author, the main area comparative jurists work on. This, however, leads to overlooking the textual features which are, nonetheless, extremely important to translators and translation scholars. The book lacks a proper conclusion, which might have been helpful to give cohesion to a volume whose main objective is to provide an interdisciplinary approach to a wide-ranging and complex topic. However, it stands out as a very good starting point for the interdisciplinary investigation of issues and domains—like legal linguistics—which are of interest to diverse scholars and professionals such as jurists, linguists and translators.

Stefania Cavagnoli, University of Macerata
stefania.cavagnoli@unimc.it