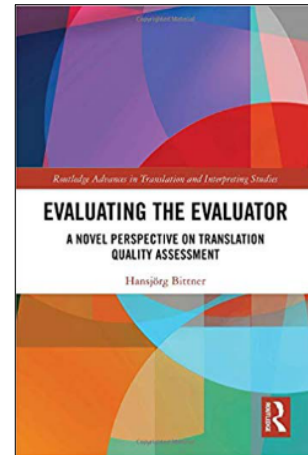


Hansjörg Bittner, **Evaluating the Evaluator: A Novel Perspective on Translation Quality Assessment**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2020, 281 pp., \$124.00 (hardcover).

Reviewed by

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As translation quality holds the balance in ever-accelerated cross-language communication in the global era, the book **Evaluating the Evaluator: A Novel Perspective on Translation Quality Assessment** by Hansjörg Bittner is a timely addition to the ongoing exploration of translation quality assessment (TQA) models. This book, based mainly on the adaptation of Julian House's concept of overt and covert translation, Gregor Betz's theory of dialectical structures, and a detailed analysis on examiners' reports of commented translations, creatively presents a dialectical, pragmatic, and more objective argument-based TQA approach that complements prescriptive elements of essential requirements with descriptive dimensions of case studies, thus revealing drawbacks in the current situation and demonstrating another way to better quality assessment and translation quality.

Against a background where translation is largely an intuitive process (Robinson, 1991), the introductory chapter presents the target of the book to develop a theory for translators to make translation decisions consciously and for evaluators to assess translation quality properly.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive analysis of different perspectives on translation quality. The main part is a critical review of four theoretical product-oriented assessment approaches. On the one hand, Bittner recapitulates their inspirational contributions, chiefly including the subjectivity reduction on a pragmatic-linguistic basis from Julian House, the practice-oriented "Weighted ARTRAQ Grid" from Malcolm Williams, the aspects matrix of textual properties from Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast and Klaus Mudersbach, and the employment of relevance theory to decision justification from Ernst-August Gutt. On the other hand, the author sheds light on the needs for more objective and holistic text analyses and for the reference to context- and culture-related difference of translation strategies, etc. Then, he offers a chronological overview of some 60 papers featuring theoretical accounts or empirical studies, to prepare the ground for his new TQA model.

In chapter 3, Bittner assumes preliminary solutions for some problems mentioned previously. First, he defines translation as a relative concept subject to factors of contexts, where the reliability of TQA is

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<sup>1</sup> This research is supported by China National Research Project for Social Sciences, under Grant No. 18BYY025.

believed as directly proportional to the number of relevant quality parameters known by evaluators. Second, after a clarification of the ambiguous distinction between overt-covert principles and their implications, Bittner makes another distinction between the relevance of overt-covert criteria before and after the definition of translation strategies, and then explicates the six criteria (genre, style, source text author, content, audience, overall text structure and layout) for which translation modes should be decided individually. Third, he presents three methods to attain objectivity: a systematic approach, an empirical basis, and quantification. Fourth, inspired by different perspectives on TQA, including Anthony Pym's concept of binary and nonbinary errors and Paul Kußmaul's differentiation between teachers' view and professional translators' view, the author establishes a target text-centered framework to analyze the evaluations of commented translations, which is expounded on in chapter 6.

In chapter 4, inasmuch as translation is supposed to involve countless decisions affected by numerous factors, Bittner tentatively develops the concept of a target text-centered "translator's daffodil" (Bittner, 2011; or "evaluator's daffodil," for their roles can interchange) to cover overlapping and inter-influencing factor groups at all aspects, thus helping translators or evaluators consciously make or judge translation decisions. To start with, he distinguishes factors relevant and irrelevant to TQA by defining the former as "directly related to the usability of the translation in its textual dimension" (p. 101), which is supplemented with a previously mentioned distinction between factors known and unknown to evaluators. After briefly discussing target text under such circumstances, the author specifies the six-petalled "daffodil" made up of source text, text form, client, translator, culture, and politics.

In chapter 5, Bittner contemplates the principles of argumentation for potentially better translation solutions. By mainly taking advantage of Gideon Toury's culture-dependent definition of translation and Hans Vermeer's relativity principle, he begins with a claim that translation decisions should be made by translators consciously and reconstructed by evaluators within an argumentative framework based on a posteriori criteria. Then, he provides a consistent three-step decision-making process: the reader-oriented determination of an overt or covert framework, the adoption of a source- or target-oriented strategy, and further specifications. Next, the author draws on Gregor Betz's theory of dialectical structures to establish an objective method of analysis and evaluation. Finally, this dialectical approach is implemented in TQA after simplification, according to which translators should seek out right arguments from the translation situation to make reasonable decisions, while evaluators should fully understand source texts and discern mandatory arguments when assessing translators' decisions.

With the evaluation framework and TQA principles set out, chapter 6 offers a thought-provoking evaluation on examiners' reports of commented translations. In terms of methodology, Bittner describes the formal characteristics and compares TQA requirements with actual approaches at the aspects of "source and target" (hints of the evaluation procedure), "errors and achievements" (possible classification and weighting measures, prevailing evaluation perspective), and "evidence and arguments" (discussion of translator's intention, kinds of arguments, potential misjudgments, provision, and justification of better alternatives, argument description based on "translator's daffodil"), for which he correspondingly proposes 13 questions and three hypotheses. Then, he gives a detailed account of the answers and conclusions based on data analysis. The final results show that, compared with aforementioned TQA requirements, most

evaluators lack an understanding of translators' intention, an explicit evaluation framework, and a full consideration of essential contextual factors, which may lead to inappropriate criticism.

The concluding chapter reviews the theories and examples facilitating the new TQA model, which in return provides an argumentative basis for them. Moreover, the author clarifies its practical usage respectively for translators (as producers or evaluators of target texts), external evaluators (as evaluators of target texts or retranslators of source texts), and translation scholars. Eventually, the book ends with a suggestion for cooperation with other TQA approaches.

By elaborating a clearly structured argument-based TQA model and illustrating it with visualized diagrams, tables, and case analyses in different settings (especially academic ones), this book has proved its strength in terms of theoretical, practical, and pedagogical significance.

First, unavoidable as subjectivity is in quality assessment, the author constructs systematic TQA criteria within the framework of "translator's daffodil." Based on dialectical argument structures where three discursive goals (dialectical coherence, burdens of proof, and robustness) should be realized, this model can be utilized to elucidate decisions made in the translation process and TQA, thereby helping external evaluators complete more objective quality assessments when in combination with empirical studies and quantification, and helping translators (as evaluators of his or her own translation) achieve intersubjectively verifiable satisfactory translations.

Second, while relativity, the assumed underlying principle of the new model, signifies the necessity to describe complex translation situations based on a posteriori criteria holistically and dynamically, and the necessity to strive for better translations perseveringly, the prescriptive requirements stipulated by translation scholars and the coherent rationale in this book, including curbing subjectivity, reader orientation and justification with reasonable arguments, form a point of departure for actual translation and evaluation practices.

Third, the book is conducive to translation teaching and evaluator training. To begin with, Bittner proposes the development-oriented decision-making process to consciously define translation strategies, during which student translators' and teacher evaluators' competence of generating and selecting solutions will be largely enhanced. Afterward, he demonstrates the indispensability of source text analysis and translation commentaries in understanding translators' intention, which shows the importance of reflective learning in portfolio approach (Johnson, 2003). Finally, the author accentuates the vital role of positive evaluation in boosting students' confidence for their creative solutions, according to which evaluators can develop a goal-directed teaching system (i.e., from better personality to better performance).

Certainly, there are some suggestions for further editions or publications. For example, as external evaluators are required to comprehend translators' intention, we should doubt the effectiveness of evaluators' implicit assumption when there is no source text analysis or translation commentary, which may be worse when the translation is accomplished collaboratively or many years past.

Besides, the new model hasn't covered some important areas yet, such as peer review or the psychological cognitive process. It's worth mentioning a comparable book entitled *Quality Assurance and Assessment Practices in Translation and Interpreting* (Huertas-Barros, Vandepitte, & Iglesias-Fernández,

2019) that explores the effectiveness of peer feedback and observational methods like Think Aloud Protocols, which can be complementary with the book under review.

All in all, with noticeable contributions to the growing body of research seeking a more objective, comprehensive, and practical TQA model, this well-written book is inspiring for all translators, evaluators, and translation scholars.

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