

Olohan, Maeve (2020) *Translation and Practice Theory*, London and New York: Routledge, 166pp. ISBN: 9781138200302 (pbk), £34.99.

A freelance translator's autobiographical essay on her experiences of being a freelance translator sets the foundation for Maeve Olohan's work *Translation and Practice Theory* (2020). Lina Mouzner, the freelancer, describes her experience from various aspects, from the ecstasy of discovery while working on a text, to her sense of powerlessness due to poor quality of source texts or low-income (1). Taking this story as a point of departure Olohan explains the main three elements comprising the Practice Theory (i.e., Materials, Competence and Meaning) as she believes that "this depiction of translation identifies a range of aspects that will be central to in the practice-theoretical view of translating." (3). Practice is defined as "embodied, materially mediated array of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki, 2) and as Olohan states, in this book, we look at translation practice in which translators are engaged through a different lens which entails "a shift away from a systems-oriented approach towards a situational, contextual focus" on translation (4).

As one way of configuring translation from a new perspective, that is Practice Theory, this book is divided into 8 chapters. Informed by Mouzner's depiction of translation practice before getting into more theoretical explorations, Olohan explains in Chapter 1, titled "From Product and Process to Practice" about translation practice from the traditional dichotomy of product-oriented and process-oriented translation. This chapter comprises of a comprehensive literature review of research on translation from the more traditional examples which focus mostly on translated texts or translations as products to the sociological and anthropological perspectives which are more practice-oriented and include translators as they work. This overview paves the way for Olohan looking at translation through the lens of Practice Theory in the book's later chapters, which she believes "stretches horizons of translation theory by proposing a holistic perspective that can help to explain the socio-material complexities of translation practice" (5). That is, in her view, Practice Theory fills gaps and covers points missing from the previous research in the field.

Chapter 2 called "Theorizing Practices" is a comprehensive account of Practice Theory, starting from theorizations and scholars, among them Theodore Schatzki (2002), Andreas Reckwitz (2002) or Elizabeth Shove (2017). Olohan also describes and analyses examples of applying theory within

various everyday practices such as eating, driving or drinking alcohol (27-30). She also scrutinizes professional practices of applying this theory, to then conclude that the three-elements model of Shove (2017) is best suited for the study of translation with a Practice Theory approach. In brief, this theory provides an image of practice as comprising of materials, competence and meaning, to which Olohan devotes the next three chapters of her book.

“Materials” as the first element of Shove’s model is the subject of Chapter 3. Materials are themselves divided into three sub-categories, i.e., infrastructures, devices, and resources, all of which Olohan critically discusses and examines from the point of view of translation practice. While “infrastructures” such as utility systems (e.g., heating, lighting, or ventilation systems in offices where translators work) are ‘in the background’ Olohan reminds us that they are very important as without them translation practice could be stopped. One example Olohan describes is power cuts or internet dis-connections (43). As for “devices”, Shove (2017, 195) describes them as “things in action”, that is what is directly and actively involved in a practice. Various technologies, such as hardware and software, and even internet are examples of devices at hand for translation practice to take place (43). Olohan then explains that there are resources which may not be directly involved in the translation practice but can be used and have impacts. Thermal energy is an example that individual translators may have the authority to decide about whether to use or not. It could be used for example in a translation office or for a freelancer at home and it can have environmental consequences. After discussing the above, Olohan provides an example of a device which translators may choose or not choose to use in their practice, Translation Memory (TM), a device that has evolved during years and continues to do so (49). She begins with describing the very structure of a TM as a database storing completed translations as Translation Units (TU), i.e., “a segment of a text in one language and a translation of that segment in another language” (50). As Olohan reminds us, such stored translations could be searched out and suggested by the system when there is a match and can function as one way whereby a translator can reduce repetition and increase the speed of translation. But this has turned into a weak point nowadays since matching at the level of these translation units could be under question. Olohan’s view is that “the notion of similarity at the sentence or sub-sentential levels alone being prioritized to the detriment of other dimensions seems remarkably limited and short-sighted” (54). In the end, it is not clear that storing translations and having access to previous ones is a privilege for every translator, since it is an option made more available through technology developers and they are

the ones to decide “how information will be represented and organized for translators to use” and there are also LSPs at work that “wish to control and quantify translator performance and achieve savings by reusing data in ways that are readily measurable” (55).

In Chapter 4, Olohan covers the second element of Shove’s model, Competence. She starts her chapter with discussion of concepts such as “knowledge”, “know-how” and “knowing in practice” (57-58). Moving from the general to the more specific, Olohan sheds light on two understandings of knowledge; the first is mostly the theoretical aspect, distinguishable from the practice and the second one tries to connect theory with practice; encouraging to act knowingly. And then complements her explanations with examples from tele medicine practice and its know-hows. She then convincingly argues that by analyzing translation as a knowledge-based practice, we recognize and do justice to an occupation which has always been treated as second-hand and ignored even today, especially when done by women. In the more specific discussions on “knowledge” and “knowing in translation” often known as ‘competence’ in translation studies, Olohan gives examples from various translation organizations or communities that have prepared frameworks or formulations for translators helping them for the practice of translation. She then explains while competence has been a topic of discussion in translation studies for years, earlier paradigms often promoted an idealized view of what a translator should know or what training programs should cover. In her view, notions of competence should cover various skills and sub-competences so that we can develop curricula for translator training based on the concept of competence in more realistic settings.

Meaning as the last category of Shove’s model is the subject of Chapter 5, divided into “understandings”, “rules” and “teleo-affective elements” based on the research of Schatzki (2017a, 26). According to Olohan, the whole value or worth we ascribe to a practice shapes the understanding we have of that practice. She shows how this is exemplified in case of translation practice through an investigation of Language Service Providers’ (LSPs) articulation of translation services they offer and presents it in the form of a corpus. The author has gathered advertising content of the world’s top 100 LSPs in terms of revenues and analyzes them by corpus query tools, such as to find out more about the patterns of language usage and to highlight examples of how these LSPs understand their work and services as well as represent it. Rules, the second category covered in this chapter, are defined as what configures or articulates an acceptable practice,

translation in this case (77). As Olohan explains, (81) in the context of translation, rules are considered as more prescriptive than norms as defined by Hermans (1999). Next, Olohan describes the concept of teleo-affectivity, a concept based on human actions almost always having ends and purposes and this is what constitutes that action's teleo-affective structure. Questions such as "where am I going next?" or "how to get there?" (82) are important as having a purpose is what makes practices acquire a sense. She then gives examples from the translation practice to elaborate on these attributes of a practice, through which we get to some challenges that translation practice is faced with today, mostly as a result of the developments in Machine Translation which could threaten translators and force them to leave this practice if they want to earn a sustainable living. By potentially destroying or minimizing the tele-affective structure of this practice, a translator may ask: what is the purpose of this profession if I can't earn a living?

Chapters 6 and 7 cover the Connected Practices with the practice of translation, mostly in LSPs, from reviewing, revising, project management, vendor management and publishing. Olohan reminds us that there are so many interconnected practices within an LSP which depend on each other, and together complete the cycle of works, giving Post-editing Machine Translation (PEMT) as one example. She explores this example in detail in Chapter 7 alongside three elements of practice theory, i.e., Materials, Competence and Meaning. Configured through a Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) or MT interface, such tools still require additional embodied forms of knowing to function effectively. All forms of Machine Translation have changed the meaning of the practice in that the skills to use them were normally considered as a requirement for translators. Through PEMT practice however, Olohan proves any change in the practice of translation inevitably causes changes in all other connected practices.

In Chapters 8 and 9, Olohan sheds insights on the practice of translation in 4 LSPs by findings from her investigations. As research on translators and translation as a practice is considered as Ethnographic research, Olohan's very comprehensive account of ethnographic approaches within the context of translation and interpreting studies, its methods and its challenges are a very good source of information for those interested in this nascent field of translation. From the practice theory perspective, Olohan introduces ethnographic study of translation as an "emerging research agenda", which Olohan believes could be enlightening for researchers investigating "current and past translation practices empirically" (128).

In my view, this book is a comprehensive combination of theoretical and practical elaborations of the translation through the lens of practice theory. It will attract scholars and researchers from the fields of social sciences to consider translation as a practice that considers not only individual actions, but also social norms, systems and institutions. In fact, Olohan's approach intersects individualism and holism, by describing translation in the social world of today, away from the old established social theories of scholars such as Bourdieu or Lacan from another era. The main elements of the Practice Theory can help us investigate aspects of translation that may not otherwise be fully covered. Materials, infrastructures, tools, know-how, skills and the 'lived' meaning of the practice are key, but often overlooked elements of translation practice that we can discuss and examine under the umbrella of Practice Theory. In fact, the book is aimed to stretch the horizons of translation theory by introducing a holistic approach of Practice Theory that can help us elaborate on the various socio-material complexities of translation practice. In this regard, the way that Olohan combines practical investigations with academic research of other scholars, accounts of translation practitioners, perspectives of stakeholders such as freelancers, LSP managers, or other employees working in the realm of translation helps create a generative description of translation practice as a social phenomenon. By giving such practical details of elements involved in using Practice Theory, she also opens an enlightening window on what is going on in the realm of professional translation, especially in the United Kingdom and the European Union.

In addition to its rich content, the book is very well designed in that its categorizations and chapters are very systematically organized, starting with the theoretical issues before moving to the purely practical ones. More than 300 references testify to the systematic research resulting in this impressive piece of work. Olohan has taken an innovative approach, using valuable explorative reports, rich, up-to-date resources and research ideas. This, with its critical discussions make it a truly valuable book for translation teachers, researchers and practitioners alike.

To conclude, I heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in translation and translation research, particularly postgraduate students as this volume could spark new ideas for research. For scholars of Translation Studies, concepts such as social approaches to translation, translation practice in LSPs and its connected practices, machine translation or translation memories are presented clearly, with practical examples. One of the most important aspects of this book is how

Practice Theory itself is comprehensively covered, with details and examples to ensure deep understanding of it and the possibility of its use in further research. In my view, Olohan is introducing a new approach into translation studies and is opening new doors for research in the field of translation which is both practical and necessary.

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