From many one: novel approaches to translation quality in a social network era

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For decades, the fuzzy notion of translation quality has evolved parallel to the theorizations of translation and localization. From the early discussions on linguistic equivalence approaches to functionalist or discourse-based proposals, translation scholars have continually developed evaluation models grounded on their respective theoretical backgrounds. Nevertheless, their complexity and time consuming nature has often meant that they have not been fully implemented in professional contexts (Wright 2006). This gap between the Translation Studies and the Industry (Dunne 2006) can be witnessed by the novel and revolutionizing approach in social networking sites: the crowdsourcing of quality evaluation to a community of active users that vote on proposed translations. This approach, unthinkable a decade ago, seems to combine and distill some of the best aspects of several previous models that, in fact, did not explicitly indicate how to professionally implement their proposals (Colina 2008: 101):

1. It represents an actual implementation of reader-response evaluation practices (Nida and Taber 1969).
2. It seems to extract the subconscious set of cultural, linguistic, pragmatic and culture conventions expected by end-users in functionalist approaches (Reiss and Vermeer 1984; Nord 1997; Colina 2008).
3. And it resembles corpus-assisted approaches to quality evaluation (Bowker 2001) in that its objective is to bring to the surface the framework of expected collocations and colligations in the minds of a large number of users.
4. It represents a departure from error-based metrics as advocated by textual and pragmatic approaches.

Additionally, it seems to overcome one of the most pressing issues in this area: the subjective nature of a process carried out by an individual or a small group (Angelelli and Jacobson 2009; Wright 2006; House 2001; Hönig 1997). This paper analyzes the Facebook quality evaluation model in order to shed some light into its revolutionary impact on the theorization of translation evaluation. After a critical analysis of this model, the questions that this paper intends to answer are: (1) how does the Facebook model interrelate to previous proposals in Translation Studies? (2) is theory a pre-requisite in translation quality evaluation as indicated by House (1997:7), or can an evaluation model not grounded in Translation Theory lead to a translation products with the features that “satisfy stated or implied needs” (ISO 900)? (3) Given that technological advances are having a profound impact on the theorizations of translation (Munday 2008), how can this model help advance the much discussed debate on translation quality within the discipline?
References


