

## REVIEW

*Sylfeini Cyfieithu Testun: Cyflwyniad i Gyfieithu Proffesiynol* by Ben Screen, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru 2021, 266 pp.

Review by MARTA LISTEWNİK, PhD, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Ever since the mid-twentieth century, translation and interpreting have been among the key elements ensuring the protection of Welsh, allowing its speakers to lead a meaningful part of their lives in the minoritized language. In particular, after the 1993 Welsh Language Act and the devolution process that followed, the rapidly developing translation market in Wales created a demand for Welsh-English translators. As the two languages became increasingly visible side-by-side, issues of translation quality entered the public discourse. Most Welsh speakers are probably familiar with the humorous term ‘Sgymraeg’, which became widely used some 20 years ago to denote poor quality or even incomprehensible Welsh texts and ridicule bad word-for-word translations displayed in public space. On a more serious note, concern has been repeatedly voiced that insufficient quality of translation in some official contexts urges speakers of Welsh to choose texts in English instead. These difficulties may be at least partly explained by the insufficient professional training of translators, that could not keep pace with the growing market, and the scarcity of good resources. Thankfully, the last twenty years saw the emergence of a multitude of tools helpful for translators of Welsh, such as terminology portals, electronic corpora, online dictionaries, the spell-checking software *Cysill*, and the ever-improving machine translation engines. This has been accompanied by a significant amount of scholarly research on translation in Wales, including fields such as the history of translation, translation policies, error analysis and computer-assisted translation tools (see Miguélez-Carballeira et al. 2016:125-126). One area where a relative lack of resources has been quite visible is practical handbooks for Welsh speakers who wish to engage in the translator’s profession or improve the quality of their work. Among several helpful publications to date are the handbook on editing *Y Golygiadur* (Ifans 2006), the collection of essays about translation (including some practical guidelines) *Ysgrifau a Chanllawiau Cyfieithu* (Prys and Trefor 2015), and *Comparative Stylistics of Welsh and English* (Morris and Rottet 2018), which, however, discusses only examples of literary translation.

Ben Screen's *Sylfeini Cyfieithu Testun: Cyflwyniad i Gyfieithu Proffesiynol* [Foundations of Text Translation: An Introduction to Professional Translation], a comprehensive Welsh-language introduction to translation, is a most welcome contribution to the field. As pointed out by the author in the introduction, aspiring translators of Welsh had thus far to rely primarily on English-language guidebooks, based on a vastly different sociolinguistic context and cultural viewpoint. In his book, Screen addresses this issue by combining general guidelines for translators typically found in similar handbooks – albeit rarely in Welsh – with extensive research on the specific character of Welsh-English translation from both linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives.

As stated in the introduction, the book is primarily targeted towards beginner translators in Wales or those who only consider entering the market. Therefore, the objective of the book is not only to describe the fundamentals of written translation, but also to draw attention to the translator's role and the serious responsibility it involves in the specific context of a minoritized language. The detailed discussion of translation strategies and techniques that forms the core of the book is centred around the Welsh cultural context and focuses on aspects specific to the English-Welsh language combination. The book is divided into eight chapters, four of which are largely theoretical, and the remaining four of a more practical nature. The handbook follows a typical structure, providing theoretical and historical background before explaining specific techniques illustrated by real-life examples.

The first chapter presents an interesting and appropriately concise overview of the history of translation in Wales. The author pinpoints its milestones, such as the 1993 Language Act and the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales in 1997, which resulted in the aforementioned upsurge in demand for translation services, up to the current Welsh Language Standards determining the amount of Welsh used by organisations and companies. This section may provide new translators with important historical context and raise their awareness of the prolonged political struggle that ultimately led to legislation ensuring bilingualism in numerous spheres of life. The author also draws a key distinction between the typically described situation of translating between two mainstream languages and the process of translating between Welsh and English. While in the former, the main role of translators is to bridge the gap between distinct cultures, in the latter, translators operate within the same or nearly the same cultural context and their role is to ensure equality of the minoritized Welsh-speaking part of the society. Another fundamental characteristic feature of the translation market in Wales discussed in this chapter is that the vast majority of translations are done in one direction only: from Welsh into English. This places a special responsibility on translators, who need to possess not only excellent active knowledge of Welsh but also a deep awareness of their role in creating

linguistic standards and normalizing the use of the minoritized language on various levels.

The second chapter is more general in nature and invites the reader to reflect on the competencies and skills required from professional translators to help newcomers to the field decide whether they consider themselves suitable for the profession. Throughout this chapter, Screen emphasises the common misconception that becoming a translator requires no more than speaking two languages and deconstructs it by delving into a wide range of necessary linguistic and extralinguistic competencies. In doing so, he refers to major European frameworks developed so far within projects such as TransComp and European Master's in Translation. While this chapter may read slightly repetitive at times for someone well-acquainted with the field, it evidently takes great care that novices do not overlook the crucial aspects of the job and are aware of the complex mental skills and competencies involved.

In the third chapter, Screen presents a concise and accessible overview of the theory of translation to give novice translators a meta-language to analyse the translation process and help them work in a conscious manner. This corresponds with the postulates previously voiced by Prys Jones (2015) about the need to focus on theoretical background in educating translators in Wales. Starting as far as the ancient times, the chapter discusses Cicero's and Horace's writings, moving on to St. Jerome's ground-breaking idea of translating "sense-for-sense". The author proceeds to describe the fundamentals of the modern theory of translation, including functionalism, Scopus theory, and the notion of equivalence developed by Jakobson and Nida. The discussion concludes with recent works by Peter Newmark and Monika Krein-Kühle. The latter author's work including an extended definition of equivalence (Krein-Kühle 2014:27) is mentioned as the main theoretical basis of the book, as it summarises the major points of Screen's volume by focusing on the wholeness of texts, specific language domains and naturalness of the output. Throughout this chapter, the author underlines the need to carefully consider readers of the target text and their specific needs, which is of great importance in the Welsh context and is elaborated upon in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Another value of this chapter is that it contains and proposes numerous Welsh terms for basic theoretical concepts in the field.

The next three chapters analyse the translation process step by step, offering plenty of real-life examples and proposing some theoretical principles tailored to the needs of English-Welsh translators. In Chapter 4, Screen stresses the importance of preliminary reading of the source text and suggests his own framework for the process, which involves four key aspects: the subject, the aim of the text, the format and order, and the language and register. In discussing those, in particular the aim and register, the author refers to specific examples highly relevant to Welsh. First, he draws attention to the need to communicate

with the public whose language skills vary considerably (literacy being generally lower than speaking skills). Consequently, a translator is required to navigate through the diverse Welsh registers and dialects, ensuring that the text is tailored to the reader while upholding appropriate linguistic standards. Another specific issue addressed is the cultural proximity of Wales and England and situations when cultural adaptation may or may not be necessary. As these problems are specifically Welsh and often omitted in English-language general literature, it is laudable that so much attention is paid to them in the book. Next, the author analyses different levels and shades of meaning, drawing on the work of Alan Cruse (2011). While giving practical advice on how to distinguish shades of meaning, Screen also pays attention to dangers particular to the Welsh context e.g. false friends, calquing from English, and the issue of Welsh terminology which may be unfamiliar to the general public. The final part of the chapter discusses metaphorical language, showing that idiomaticity occurs in almost every type of text and requires the translator's special attention.

Chapter 5 on translation strategies follows the pattern of the previous one as the author opens it by presenting a useful theoretical framework. While describing the various recognised translation strategies, Screen coins his own Welsh terms, such as *dynwarded* (which usually means 'imitate') for calquing and *ailgatergoreiddio* (lit. recategorising) for transposition. The author declares his hope that these clearly understandable terms will be "(...) much more memorable [than their English counterparts] as they describe better what a technique really involves" (p.110, translation mine). This idea of accessible terminology corresponds neatly with the general principles of translation emphasised throughout Screen's book: the clarity of Welsh terms matches the general stylistics of the language and ensures the repeatedly highlighted naturalness of language. Additionally, such terms indeed seem to be easier to learn than their English counterparts. After the theoretical introduction, the main part of Chapter 5 delves into specific examples, beginning with the analysis of erroneous translations, the so-called "noisy Welsh" (*Cymraeg swnllyd*). In this section, the reader is first presented with a faulty translation, which prompts them to recognise the challenge of comprehending such translations without the original. This is an important point to make with regard to the Welsh audience, who, if faced with a faulty Welsh translation, will naturally turn to the English text. The subsequent sections of Chapter 5 provide a useful set of rules to cope with translating complicated sentences. At this point, readers are directed to some valuable resources, such as the National Assembly for Wales parallel corpora. The multitude of examples in this chapter convincingly conveys the author's point about the numerous aspects that distinguish the Welsh language from English and require a special effort on the translator's part.

In Chapter 6 the author moves from the level of the sentence to a higher level of the text as a whole, discussing textual coherence, structure, and a holistic approach to a text. The aim of the chapter is to help students realise that the quality of a translated text is determined not only by accurate translation on the sentence level but also the “flow”, naturalness and usability of the whole text. Screen’s discussion of usability is particularly detailed, as he emphasizes once again the need to accommodate speakers with various levels of literacy and linguistic/cultural background. Incidentally, the author mentions that this is the first academic study discussing usability in the Welsh context, which undoubtedly fills an important gap. Part of this chapter is devoted to editing, proofreading and reviewing the text, which, as the author stresses, are an essential yet sometimes neglected part of the translation process. The final section refers to Cen William’s *Cymraeg Clir* (1999), a document proposing guidelines for effective communication with the general audience, similar to the Plain English campaign. These proposals correspond with the main idea of the chapter of a translator being primarily a *communicator* performing an important social role.

The three chapters dedicated to the translation process are well-designed and comprehensive. The only aspect that I found somewhat lacking was an exploration of the topic of linguistic norms in Welsh, especially the allowed degree of anglicisation of the text on the lexical and grammatical level. This is a large issue regarding minority languages such as Welsh, with the growing number of new speakers and the increasing influence of English on the lexicon and structure. The examples discussed in the book are rather straightforward in this respect, referring to fairly obvious instances of inappropriate interference. For example, when discussing a literal translation of an English idiom “tall order” as “*archeb hir*” Screen comments “The translation is obviously a failure. Any Welsh speaker would tell you this. And why? The reason is that the translator understood the literal sense of ‘tall order’” rather than the collocative meaning (...)” (p. 92, translation mine). There are, however, many much less transparent cases, where a specific type of interference from English is extremely widespread in everyday language. One of the most notorious cases in this respect is Welsh phrasal verbs, constructions that are often discouraged in prescriptive literature as calques from English (see Rottet 2005, Rottet and Morris 2018: 219-272). Discussing borderline cases like this would engage students of translation in an important debate about what constitutes a linguistic norm and how and by whom are linguistic norms set. It would be interesting to consider how easily young translators raised in a bilingual environment characterised by frequent calquing, borrowing, and code-switching can adapt to the monolingual norm prevalent in the translation market.

Chapter 7 refers to the all-important question of digital literacy of translators, sending the reader beyond traditional aspects of the profession into the present

technology-focused reality. After providing an informative overview of the most important digital resources, such as automated translation systems, translation memories and terminology bases, the author gives a detailed account of the history and evolution of automated translation in Welsh and comments on the quality of these systems. In the following discussion of translators' digital literacy, Screen strives to destroy myths about the dangers of using machine translation while also highlighting areas where caution is necessary. It is certainly important for guidebooks like this to emphasize that trainee translators should recognise the valuable assistance that these resources can provide, rather than viewing them as a threat that could potentially erode the profession. Yet, it can never be stressed enough that while working with the help of a machine, the translator must remain critical and cautious of possible pitfalls. This section appears to be highly relevant given the current intense discussions on AI, and while the chapter concludes with a positive outlook into the future, it necessarily leaves some questions unanswered due to the extremely rapid changes in technology since the book's publication.

The final Chapter 8 attempts to gather the most typical examples of unsuccessful translations, based on reports from entry examinations held by Cymdeithas Cyfieithwyr Cymru (the association of Welsh translators and interpreters). Screen presents the results of a study in which he identified the main themes in these reports. As these themes reflect the content of the previous chapters, the analysis of translation errors found in the reports summarises the main points made in the course of the volume. The author finishes the chapter by encouraging translators to join associations, believing that it fosters their constant professional development and enhances competitiveness within the market. While the idea behind this chapter is interesting, the very academic character of the study and relatively little new information introduced makes it perhaps the least appealing one for the reader, especially since another summary of the whole is contained in the author's closing remarks. The final bibliography is supplemented by a useful list of references for students of translation including general and specialist guidebooks, theoretical studies, journals of translation, grammar books, and dictionaries. The list is very extensive and well-designed (although I believe in the dictionary section it would be worth adding *Gweiadur*, the easily accessible online version of *Geiriadur Cymraeg Gomer*, about the existence of which many people seem unaware).

Overall, the handbook has a clear and well-thought structure that guides the reader step-by-step along the path to successful translation. This undoubtedly is the volume's advantage over its predecessor *Ysgrifau a Chanllawiau Cyfieithu* (Prys and Trefor 2016), which as a collection of papers by various authors was rather fragmentary. Screen's volume strikes the right balance in terms of length and detailedness. The fact that it is written in the Welsh language cannot be

overestimated; in particular, the theoretical discussions and introduction of a number of specialist terms in Welsh is in itself a step towards normalising the language in all spheres of life, a principle that the author articulates throughout his work. In that sense, those parts of Screen's book that rely heavily on sources in English are in themselves an example of top-notch translation in which the author transfers the knowledge into the Welsh context and shows his proficiency in terms of language and content. This of course does not diminish the originality of the book, as its main focus is not to offer completely original material, but rather to excel in its intended purpose of providing comprehensive guidance for translators of Welsh. One can only hope that the handbook will become widely read and used.

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