Tayebi, M.R. (2025). [Review of book: *Translation and community*, by M, Taibi]. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E,12. https://doi.org/10.51287/cttl202523*

Book Review

Mustapha Taibi. (2024). *Translation and community*. Routledge. pp.viii+214. eBook ISBN: 9781003367741. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003367741

Mustapha Taibi's *Translation and Community* (2024), part of the *Routledge Introductions to Translation and Interpreting* series, stands as a comprehensive and practice-oriented textbook that redefines the role of translation in community settings. It responds to a growing need in multilingual societies for ethically guided, accessible, and inclusive communication between institutions and linguistically minoritized populations. This pedagogically rich volume, consisting of eleven chapters, bridges functionalist translation theory with real-world application, firmly situating community translation within broader discourses of social justice, agency, and access.

Taibi begins the volume in **Chapter 1** by establishing community translation as a distinct and socially embedded field. He positions it not as a sub-branch of general translation but as a unique practice characterised by its service to local, multilingual publics—particularly migrants, refugees, and low-literacy populations. Drawing on Skopos theory and user-centred frameworks, he articulates the social mission of community translation: to make public discourse functionally accessible. A key contribution here is the introduction of a four-tier quality assurance framework involving societal structures, institutional cooperation, translation practices, and post-translation feedback. Taibi also highlights the risks posed by non-professional translation in high-stakes scenarios, calling for institutional support and professional training.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the translator's professional identity, dismantling the reductionist view of translators as neutral linguistic intermediaries. Instead, community translators are framed as intercultural mediators, social agents, and ethically aware professionals operating within asymmetrical power dynamics. Taibi underscores the importance of reflexivity, cultural literacy, and the ability to balance institutional imperatives with audience needs. Notably, he differentiates community translation from activist translation, arguing that while the former is often institutionally embedded, it nonetheless carries a social justice ethos, especially when

translators must advocate for equitable communication without overt ideological positioning.

In **Chapter 3**, Taibi transitions to practical concerns, discussing translation briefs, text typology, and strategy selection. Anchored in functionalist theory, this chapter equips readers to analyse various text types—informative, operative, expressive—and tailor strategies accordingly. Taibi emphasizes that translation choices should be dictated not by linguistic equivalence but by the communicative purpose and user profile. He urges translators to treat briefs as interpretive rather than prescriptive tools, and to deploy strategies such as modulation, transposition, or simplification based on context. Importantly, ethical tensions emerge when briefs conflict with accessibility goals, requiring translators to make value-laden decisions in service of the community.

Chapter 4 focuses on public messaging, a genre of significant social impact. These texts—ranging from health warnings to civic notices—aim to influence public behaviour and must be adapted for clarity, immediacy, and cross-cultural resonance. Taibi recommends strategies such as explicitation, simplification, and cultural substitution to ensure that messages retain their persuasive function. The chapter also explores the importance of visual elements, media constraints, and collaboration with stakeholders, reinforcing the idea that translators are not mere technicians but communication advisors with the authority to reshape message design when necessary.

Chapter 5 addresses regulatory texts, which are more rigid and prescriptive than public messaging. Here, the stakes are higher: legal obligations, entitlements, and bureaucratic procedures must be conveyed precisely and intelligibly. Taibi warns against over-simplification that could distort legal meaning, emphasizing the translator's dual loyalty—to institutional accuracy and user comprehension. He introduces the ethical triad of *loyalty*, *legitimacy*, and *liability*, highlighting the legal and social risks of mistranslation. Importantly, he calls on institutions to involve translators early in the document design phase to avoid inaccessible or exclusionary source texts.

Chapter 6 delves into culturally sensitive texts, covering themes like sexuality, domestic violence, religious discourse, and political correctness. Taibi demonstrates that such content requires translators to exercise cultural mediation with discretion, ethical sensitivity, and awareness of audience norms. Drawing from politeness theory and sociolinguistics, he offers strategies including euphemism, amplification, and

generalization. For example, when translating materials about sexual health or abuse, the translator must ensure intelligibility without violating cultural taboos. This chapter's strength lies in its insistence that translators cannot rely on one-size-fits-all strategies but must tailor decisions to each audience's values and context.

Chapter 7 expands the discussion to dissemination media, asserting that how a message is delivered is just as important as what it says. Taibi examines the linguistic and textual differences between oral and written communication, as well as audiovisual, subtitled, and social media formats. He introduces register analysis (field, tenor, mode) to show how medium impacts style, tone, and structure. Notably, he advocates for multimodal dissemination—e.g., combining print leaflets with subtitled videos—to accommodate different literacy levels and preferences. The translator is thus redefined as a multimodal strategist, capable of advising on the most effective communication format.

Chapter 8 centres on the translation of personal official documents, such as birth certificates, educational diplomas, and identity records. While often categorized under legal translation, Taibi argues that these texts fall squarely within the domain of community translation due to their role in enabling migrants to access rights and services. The chapter addresses certification standards, translation typologies (full vs. extract), and institutional requirements across jurisdictions. Functionalist approaches still apply but are limited by the need for formal and semantic accuracy. Challenges include terminological ambiguity, illegible documents, and divergent naming conventions, all of which require translator discretion and intercultural sensitivity.

In **Chapter 9**, Taibi turns to translational resources. He classifies tools into traditional (dictionaries, encyclopaedias), corpus-based (parallel texts, translation memories), and technological (machine translation, generative AI). While acknowledging the efficiency and ubiquity of AI tools, Taibi offers a measured critique: these tools often underperform in low-resource languages and culturally nuanced content, especially where accessibility is key. He calls for critical engagement, guided use, and post-editing literacy, especially in educational settings where over-reliance on technology might impede the development of translation competence.

Chapter 10 emphasizes the need for revision, particularly of peer translations. Drawing on Mossop's taxonomy and the AUSIT-FECCA Guidelines, Taibi defines

revision as a systematic and collaborative process central to quality assurance. He distinguishes it from editing and proofreading, arguing that revisers must assess accuracy, fluency, register, and audience alignment. Examples illustrate common issues such as calques or mismatched tone. Taibi also addresses the ethics of revision: how to critique constructively, respect translator autonomy, and preserve collaborative learning. His pedagogical message is clear—revision is a social act, not a solitary task, and must be integrated into translator training programs.

Chapter 11 concludes the volume by focusing on teamwork and community engagement. Taibi moves beyond the solitary translator model to envision a collaborative ecosystem involving revisers, subject-matter experts, commissioners, and community stakeholders. Drawing on situated learning theory, he promotes participatory translation models where translators build trust through immersion and dialogue with the communities they serve. He advocates for egalitarian team dynamics and curriculum designs that include internships, service learning, and community-led feedback loops. This chapter reframes translation not as isolated text production, but as socially embedded action.

The book *Translation and Community* is a critical milestone in the development of community translation as both a pedagogical field and a professional practice, which has historically been underrepresented. Taibi draws from sociology, communication studies, and public policy to contextualize community translation within broader societal frameworks (e.g., language rights, social equity). This interdisciplinary lens adds depth to the discussion. Unlike general translation manuals, this textbook offers an integrated approach that blends theoretical clarity with applied insight, explicitly designed for use in translator training programs.

Taibi's emphasis on the empowering role of community translation for minority and marginalized groups (e.g., migrants, refugees) distinguishes it from other works that treat translation as a neutral or purely linguistic activity. Through its systematic coverage of text types, ethical challenges, dissemination strategies, and institutional dynamics, the book elevates the role of the community translator to that of a reflective, ethical, and context-sensitive professional.

One of the book's most valuable contributions is its sustained focus on accessibility—not only in terms of linguistic clarity but also in relation to cultural inclusivity, media awareness, and public impact. Taibi's functionalist and user-

centered framework helps students and practitioners understand translation as a form of intervention: not neutral, but necessary; not invisible, but integral to equitable communication in multicultural societies.

At the same time, the volume invites critical reflection on the translator's visibility, the ethical boundaries of intervention, and the responsibility of institutions in shaping translational effectiveness. While the book could benefit from deeper engagement with postcolonial theory or multilingual hegemony, these omissions do not detract from its overall merit. Also, the book prioritizes the translator's perspective but rarely incorporates direct input from end-users (e.g., migrants, refugees) on how translations impact their lives. Including testimonies or participatory research findings would ground the theory in lived experiences. Additionally, the ethical dilemmas of community translation (e.g., balancing accuracy with accessibility) are acknowledged but could be explored more critically, perhaps with contrasting viewpoints from practitioners, as well as the ethical implications of MT in community settings (e.g., privacy concerns, quality control) could be discussed further. Still, this work remains methodologically rigorous, ethically grounded, and pedagogically innovative.

In sum, *Translation and Community* offers a compelling vision of translation as a collaborative, ethical, and socially impactful profession. It should be required reading for all who study, teach, or practice translation in the public sphere. More than a textbook, it is a call to action for translators to assume their role as facilitators of equity and inclusion in our linguistically diverse world.

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