

The pursuit of happiness and successful translation: How to effectively translate sanaciones milagrosas, a self-help book, for the US market.

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The pursuit of happiness and successful translation: How to effectively translate sanaciones milagrosas, a self-help book, for the U.S. market



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Abstract

Until recently, there has been little research on “self-help” books – not to mention the translation of this type of literature. However, today, the importance of the self-help industry is undeniable. In the United States sales reached \$11 billion in 2013 (Schulz 2013), while in Latin America one in five books sold belongs to the self-help category (Papalini 2007). An important point to keep in mind, however, is that “what we call selfhelp or self-improvement literature is not a monolithic genre. Throughout most of this century, many different types of self-help literature co-exist, overlap and compete” (Mur Effing 2009: 129).

Indeed, there are many sub-categories that fall under the umbrella of “self-help”. It is clear that the above figures reflect a significant reality in today’s world; namely, the need or desire to seek happiness, inner peace, contentment, or whatever one chooses to call a state of general well-being. A deeper look into this literature genre reveals why it is so successful. Self-help literature is composed of many different approaches, as mentioned above, but Bergsma (2008) defines the overall genre as “all books that serve the aim of coping with one’s personal or emotional problems without professional help” (qtd. in Yilmaz-Gümüs 118). To take one step further into the bigger picture, a defining characteristic of self-help books according to Butler-Bowdon is that they relate to “the broader personal development aims of self-knowledge and increasing happiness” (2003: 2). And there is the key to understanding the undeniable draw of self-help literature.

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