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Translating at Work

edited by
Kaisa Koskinen

Translating at Work

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Translating at Work. Paraprofessional translation in organizations
Edited by Kaisa Koskinen

Translating at Work

Paraprofessional translation in organizations

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CHAPTER 1

Paraprofessional translation at work
An introduction

Kaisa Koskinen

This introductory article provides background to the collective volume on paraprofessional translation in organizations, setting the scene to individual chapters written by translation scholars and international business, organization and management studies scholars. This interdisciplinary joint effort stems from a decade of collaboration between some of the authors and aims to provide a theoretical and methodological framework and to showcase existing empirical work for those interested in studying paraprofessional translators, that is, people employed in other professional capacities who translate in the context of their work, allowing knowledge to travel, meanings to be shared and processes to move forward.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, interdisciplinarity, translation, translatoriality, translationality, organizations, workplace

Modern workplaces are multilingual (Angouri 2014). They are therefore also translation spaces. Translation practices in business organizations operating in a multilingual and multicultural context (i.e., the majority of companies) have increasingly been recognized as a ubiquitous and essential element of everyday work. Employees at different levels, from the CEO to the shop floor, engage in mediating between languages to complete their professional duties and to move things forward at their work. These employees, who are not hired as professional translators but end up engaging in various translation tasks in connection to their everyday work, serve as *paraprofessional translators*. This translation work constitutes a significant resource for organizations because it makes cross-border business, transfer of knowledge and learning possible. It also enables external and internal communication as well as knowledge brokering, and fosters a sense of engagement among staff and with other stakeholders. A language-aware organizational culture also increases motivation and a sense of inclusion among language-skilled employees by recognizing their translation competence and contribution (Back and Piekkari, 2024; Jakkula, 2024). However, this type of translation which

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is embedded in organizational activities and conducted by employees not labelled as translators is still under-recognized in research and organizations alike.

The goal of this volume is to shed light on the whos, hows and whys of translation practices conducted by paraprofessional translators in different organizational settings, with a strong emphasis on business life. In this introductory chapter some key premises and core concepts underlying the book project are discussed.

Paraprofessional translation and/in the disciplines involved

Language-sensitive research already has a long history in business studies, and the multilingual everyday life of companies has attracted a steady stream of research since the 1980s. Although language diversity in organizations is intrinsically associated with translation, in their overview of existing business studies research Hanson and Mellinger (2021) argue that this research has only begun to take stock of translation issues. This state of affairs is rapidly changing, and paraprofessional translation in business organizations has been increasingly recognized as a relevant and unique object of study in both international business (IB) and management and organization studies (MOS). Already in 2011, Piekkari and Tietze made a call "to introduce the vocabulary and concepts from translation studies in order to develop stronger concepts and frameworks for future research" (p. 268). Since then, theoretical and conceptual borrowing from translation studies (TS) has become a common feature in publications of the "language-sensitive" branches of these fields. The interest in translation as a ubiquitous form of language work in multilingual organizations now represents an important intellectual shift towards translation-sensitive research (Tietze and Piekkari, 2020) and towards a broader repertoire of cross-language methodologies.

The first collaborative effort by researchers in TS and IB/MOS to bring a translation studies perspective to this kind of translation work was made already twenty years ago by José Lambert, a key figure in early translation studies, together with his colleagues from organization studies, Maddy Janssens and Chris Steyaert (Janssens, Lambert and Steyaert, 2004). In their article they built on existing TS research to chart three possibilities for translation "climates" in companies and the ensuing translation strategies: mechanical, cultural and political language strategy. Their collaborative call for further development of companies' translation strategies was repeated ten years later. In a meta-analysis of then recent cross-language research in IB, Agnieszka Chidlow, Emmanuella Plakoyiannaki and Catherine Welch (2014) identified a widespread mechanist view of translation similar to the one discussed in Janssens et al. (2004). They used the concept of

equivalence to problematize this mechanist view and advocated for a more contextualized approach informed by theoretical developments in translation studies. Again a decade later, this current volume aims to respond to that call, both by bringing theoretical and methodological insights from TS, IB and MOS into the discussion and by showcasing a number of research projects with empirical data collected in a number of contexts.

So far, the calls for interaction have mainly come from the direction of IB and MOS scholars, but it is clear that this interdisciplinary collaboration also benefits translation studies. The discipline has a strong tradition of studying professional translation and interpreting practices and practitioners, but professional translators and interpreters only cover a fraction of translation activity in societies. Over the past 15 years or so, the study of non-professional practices has therefore grown to cover a wide variety of activist, fan, ad hoc and amateur translating and interpreting and to probe their social relevance. This edited volume is a result of a realization that we may need to add further conceptual nuance to this binary model of professional/non-professional translation by making a clear distinction between volunteer forms of non-professional translation and another kind of translating or interpreting that takes place within an occupational setting, albeit not by people hired as professional translators. This paraprofessional translation work, i.e. written or oral translating alongside or as part of the task one is employed for, differs from non-professional translation that takes place entirely outside of paid work and employment contract. For example, organizational hierarchy and the employment contract often reduce the voluntariness of translation, and the genres are dictated by the needs of the employer and the task at hand, not the personal interests and agendas of those who end up translating (see also Koskinen, 2025).

In TS, paraprofessional translation in organizations is still an emerging area of interest with only a handful of prior empirical research explicitly looking into this phenomenon (e.g., Koskela et al., 2017; Muñoz Gómez, 2020; Jakkula, 2024). This volume is therefore primarily targeted at translation studies audiences, with an explicit aim of also "back-translating" ideas about paraprofessional translation generated by IB and MOS researchers inspired by TS back to translation scholars, and offering the related conceptualizations and theorizations as a new interdisciplinary lens for translation scholars who may recognize their existing data to include paraprofessional translation or who might wish to move in that direction in their new research designs.

This book is also a programmatic volume, bringing together the insights of the editor's decade-long collaboration with many of the contributors from within IB and MOS. It aims to collect in one place the theoretical knowledge that has already been accumulated, and a varied group of empirical studies operating with a variety of methods (such as interviews, fieldwork, survey, and archival mater-

ial). It ends with a concluding section that provides a critical commentary of the volume together with some ideas of where we authors, and hopefully many other scholars, might wish to go next. The two separate concluding chapters aim to highlight the multidisciplinary origins of this volume by charting the state of the art and relevant next directions for research both from the perspective of organization and international business studies (Chapter 16) and translation studies (Chapter 17).

The invited authors are an interdisciplinary mix of central voices from all these fields, and many of us have been collaborating around these topics for some time. A sense of shared understanding has therefore been building gradually, and readers will find some recurring views and key references across many of the chapters. Importantly, in the chapters that follow, authors are free to use, not use or challenge the conceptualizations presented in this introduction and in previous literature. Our collective aim is to move forward the understanding of translation practices at workplaces, not to create a dogmatic framework.

The line-up from outside translation studies consists of several key scholars in this area, and it is noteworthy that they are willing to address the TS audience to continue building disciplinary bridges. On the TS side, most research of paraprofessional translation has been done so far in journalism (on journalists as paraprofessional translators), and the insights gained in this area will be discussed in Chapter 5 (by Davier & van Rooyen) to strengthen the baseline of what is already known. Empirical case studies also bring together young scholars from translation studies and beyond, many of whom are co-authoring with more senior scholars. Authors and their cases also represent several cultural contexts and many languages. This mixture of voices aims to ensure a breadth of ideas and viewpoints.

On lingual and other translation

The seed for this current interdisciplinary volume can be dated back to the Spring of 2014, when I received an email from Rebecca Piekkari and Susanne Tietze, two renowned professors in international business and management studies respectively, who had been working on using translation studies research to better understand how translation operates in the multilingual life of multinational corporations (MNCs). They asked if I could comment on an article draft that they had been working on. I was delighted by the request, and surprised by the idea of people working in other fields being so open to translation studies (during the past decade I have come to realize this enthusiasm towards what TS can offer to other fields of study is in fact quite wide-spread, and while still always delighted I am nowadays less surprised to learn about interest in TS issues in other disci-

plines). I happily accepted the task, we discussed the paper at length, and the end result was that I was invited to join the author team. The publication of that article turned out to be a bumpy ride — as many interdisciplinary efforts tend to be — requiring numerous major revisions, reconsiderations and rethinking, until it finally came out online at the end of 2019 and in print a few months later (Piekkari et al., 2020).

This first collaborative article was directed at an international business studies audience, and it developed a dualistic conceptualization of translation that aimed at allowing the discipline to better take stock of not only the understanding of translation as knowledge transfer and translation of practices that was already widely accepted in the field (see Tietze et al., 2022) but also the kinds of linguistic operations across organizational and language boundaries that employees of multinationals engage in on a daily basis without often paying too much attention to it. In other words, in the writing process I went through the looking glass to find a parallel world that mirrored the one I was familiar with: for this audience, translation across languages tended to be a marginally interesting afterthought, often understood as a mechanistic technicality, whereas the translation of practices across organizational borders was seen as a transformative, agentic activity. In TS it had been, and still is, customary to foreground interlingual translation, and consider other forms of translations somehow marginal or secondary in comparison to this prototypical translation. The rise of audiovisual translation and other forms of translation across semiotic modes has shaped the field from the 1990s onwards, and the growing interest in first translation into local dialects and then accessibility issues has more recently also brought forward a renewed interest in intralinguistic translation (in particular translation into easy language), but in TS, the idea that interlingual translation is "translation proper" (Jakobson, 1959) still largely holds.

Some scholars have been actively reshaping this disciplinary understanding. While seeing translation as a phenomenon that expands beyond the linguistic process has long been a recognized subgroup of TS literature (i.a. Sturge, 2007, Tymoczko, 2007), the voices arguing for a more comprehensive understanding have become more prominent in recent years (i.a., Cronin, 2017; Marais, 2019; Vidal Claramonte, 2024). For example, Piotr Blumczynski's (2023) book on material and metaphorical translationality is explicitly framed as a counterforce for "the lingering linguistic bias" of translation studies (p. 5). These recent openings towards interepistemic (Vidal Claramonte), posthuman (Cronin), interspecies (Marais) and material (Blumczynski) translations testify to a growing impetus towards a wider understanding of translationality. However, as to where the field of translation studies as a discipline currently stands, I would still argue that theorizations that are founded on an enlarged concept of translation as meaning-

making across any kinds of boundaries are still quite rare in comparison to the bulk of TS research on interlingual translation.

In the world of IB and MOS, in contrast, these "other" translations were already commonly known in 2014 when our collaboration started. Translation scholars in organization theory have studied the translation of, among others, Total Quality Management, workplace democracy, Lean, Balanced Scorecard and medical innovations into new organizational, cultural and national contexts (for a longer list and references, see Røvik 2023, p. 92–93). Against this existing understanding of translation, it proved unexpectedly difficult to communicate a targeted interest in translation as a *linguistic* activity that crosses language boundaries. For quite some time in our writing workshops for the first joint article, I resisted labelling this kind of translation as "interlingual", in particular in the context of potentially contrasting this to the other, more agentic kind of translation. For a scholar schooled in the TS of the 1990s, this sounded like a reactionary reduction of the activity to its linguistic base and overlooking the cross-cultural and adaptive or user-centred elements that underlie any translation solution. But after reading repeated referee comments entirely missing the point we were trying to make, I accepted that in order to translate [sic] a TS understanding of translation to business studies audiences we needed to use the vocabulary that allowed them to appreciate its newness in comparison to the meanings with which they were already familiar.

The other fork of the two-pronged conceptualization in the article, the one we ended up calling "metaphorical translation", was equally problematic. There is not necessarily anything metaphorical about a transfer-translation of a business practice from one country to another, for example, and some of these translations may take the very material shape of remodelling entire production lines or other forms of reorganization. But we somehow needed to push the two meanings apart, artificial as the distinction was, to be able to compare and contrast them. I find it fascinating that Blumczynski's (2023) argument is the exact opposite to what we ended up using: he argues that lingual translation is in fact the metaphorical one, and the material transfers are non-metaphorical. This apparent disagreement is, in my mind, less significant than the deeper level of unanimity: in current theorizing about translation many scholars have a pressing need to somehow conceptualize the existence of both (inter)lingual and other kinds of translation, and to theorize on the similarities and differences of the two.

In the chapters that follow, authors examine both interlingual translation, i.e. translation across a linguistic boundary, and translation as knowledge brokering or meaning-making across organizational, national or cultural boundaries. Although the dualistic approach allows for distinguishing between the two, it is important to emphasize the limits of this simplified dualism. In reality, the two

are quite intertwined: interlingual translation always also contains transformative potential, and translating practices across boundaries rarely takes place without interlingual and intralingual translations.

In contrast to the first co-authored article, this volume is primarily directed at a TS audience. Although this current volume to some extent prioritizes the first goal of exploring interlingual translation in business organizations, the linguistic process of translation is less focalized here than what it was for the business studies audiences, as it is taken for granted that the TS readers will have this understanding of translation as an option readily available in their mind and a pre-existing predisposition to steer away from a reductionistic or mechanistic understanding of translation.

Instead, what has been seen necessary to emphasise in the context of translation studies is that in this volume we are **not** studying professional translators and translation departments that many companies and organizations house (for an analysis of professional translation based on IB and OS literature see Hanson & Mellinger, 2021). Hence, the relatively new label of *paraprofessional translation/translators*. The focus of our attention is on those who are not hired to act as (interlingual) translators but do that either sometimes, often or constantly to move things forward and to mediate knowledge transfer in their areas of responsibility. They are not professionals of translation, but they are not non-professional translators, either, as they are clearly operating in a professional capacity, and in a paid position.

This move to introduce a new category, aiming at targeting researchers' analytical gaze to a group of people and bundle of activities that has previously remained under-studied, can be seen to mirror a similar move made recently by Kjell Arne Røvik (2023) who has, on the basis of his extensive reading of TS literature, recently proposed a "translation theory of knowledge transfer", focusing on the concepts of translation and translator in an explicit aim of unsettling and reinvigorating what he sees as the normal science phase of knowledge transfer research. In such phases of disciplinary inertia, he argues, it is useful to retheorize the area by reconceptualizing and reframing the topic. He reframes knowledge transfer as translation, and those involved in it as translators (p. 15, 106) and he then moves on to analyse how a translation theory lens will allow a new perspective on knowledge transfer.

Røvik has no need for the concept of paraprofessional translation in his monograph on knowledge transfer; for his purposes the distinctions of professional or non-professional translation are not relevant. In TS, professional translation still remains the normative and prioritized setting to an extent that a phenomenon that by definition exists outside it needs to be labelled differently to remind readers to not expect an analysis of professional translators working

in translation units of the MNCs, nor to mix the kind of translation practice researched here with, for example, volunteer fan translation in online communities (i.e. non-professional translation). The focus of this volume is narrower.

It remains to be seen to what extent the TS community will see paraprofessional translation as a relevant separate category or a lens that allows for meaningful retheorizing of translation. In the future, the labels may well be changed to new categorizations that are deemed more useful. But for the current purposes and for the current stage of TS, it seems necessary to emphasize that this volume aims to shed light particularly on those actors and activities that take place in businesses and organizations by paid employees hired primarily for roles other than professional translators and interpreters, and that while the primary focus is on interlingual translation, also other forms and modes of translation are taken into account in some contributions in a manner that reflects a longstanding tradition in the other disciplines involved in this current project of enlarging the remit of translation studies in an interdisciplinary manner. Authors of the empirical case studies have been free to choose how they delineate the field they observe, but they have been asked to be transparent about the extent of their translation concept so that it will be clear what kinds of translation work are observed in each case.

What counts as translation?

Translation work can involve communicating, modifying and adapting knowledge and practices, or it can focus on communicating, modifying and mediating verbalized content in written or spoken form, or multimodally. These processes can take many forms, and be shaped in many ways, but they also share some fundamental similarities: in both cases there is (1) some pre-existing "source" or "original" that is being transferred from its local context, (2) a mediating actor or actors operating in an in-between, boundary-crossing role, and (3) a target context to which the arriving element is matched. That is, features typical of translation. In this volume priority is given to interlingual translation, but "the other" translation concept is not outside the scope of analysis either. This insistent binding of the two can best be seen as a fruitful touchstone: to focus on one, it is necessary to forge a distinction between the two, but it is also equally relevant to tease out the similarities of the two kinds.

One defining feature of interlingual translation in paraprofessional contexts is that it does not necessarily follow the codified practices and norms of professional translation. Similar to multilingual practices outside of workplaces, paraprofessional translation is often more fluid and more fragmented than translations com-

missioned from professional translators (Koskinen, 2025; see also Chapter 2 in this volume). The same flexibility of action seems to be true of knowledge transfer; sometimes it may mean full organizational overhaul of operations, in other cases more minor adjustments are made (Røvik, 2023).

Observing translation in everyday life alerts scholars to the manifestation of multifaceted variations of multilingual practices with a translation angle. The desire to also account for the less structured end of the scale of translation practices has led scholars to seek new terminological solutions. For example, Ciuk, Śliwa and Koskinen (Chapter 11) introduce a division between *big-T* and *small-t translation*, and this is also taken up by Liu et al. (Chapter 9). In Chapter 2, Koskinen moves in the opposite direction by proposing *translatoriality* as an umbrella concept. In contrast, Muñoz Gómez (Chapter 10) resists this impulse of neologisms and argues that it risks reducing the meaning of 'translation' to an unnecessarily narrow sense. This is a valid point often raised by translation scholars when new terminology is being introduced (see also the discussion of journalistic translation terminology in Chapter 5 by Davier and van Rooyen). What we are witnessing is attempts to add precision to accounting for all elements of data, and to differentiate between the more confined understanding of interlingual translation in the realms of literary translation, institutional translation and professional translation practice, and the fluid multilingual practices in which we engage in our everyday life. Several scholars have been identifying these two kinds of practices. It may make sense analytically and methodologically to find ways of naming them. This general goal is also shared by Muñoz Gómez, who chooses to differentiate between *translation* and *translating*. We may have different preferences in terms of making the distinction, but authors dealing with paraprofessional translation data seem united in their sense that something dissimilar to typical professional practice habitually takes place.

Another element that has proven relevant in paraprofessional context is downplaying the distinction between written and oral modes of delivery, that is, the traditional distinction between translation versus interpreting. While some paraprofessional contexts will no doubt clearly operate with one but not the other, it is also very common to find combinations of both and also other modes brought into play in communicative encounters. In the following, authors have been given liberty in terms of making or not making this distinction in their chapters, and in their data collection and analysis.

Another aspect that gets repeated in empirical findings is the lack of visibility and recognition of paraprofessional translation. Muñoz Gómez (Chapter 10) opts for the term "unrecognized translation" to refer to the translating and interpreting that goes undetected, and she also discusses explicit translation and implicit translating. Davier and von Rooyen (Chapter 5), operating within actor-network

theory, talk about blackboxing and unblackboxing, and Jakkula (Chapter 12) discusses the implicit translation policy of a company. Similar observations of implicit practices have been made before. For example, Kankaanranta et al. (2018) discuss the opposition of frontstage official language used in corporate communication and the backstage working language of the staff. Their Goffmanian analysis highlights issues of hierarchy, power and inclusion and the demand for emancipatory corporate language policies (see also Wilmot 2024).

Paraprofessional translators as organizational actors embedded in ecosystems

This volume is very much centred on human translators. It therefore represents a decidedly human take in our posthuman times. In translation studies, this kind of translator focus is one longstanding approach in sociology of translation. In business studies the central, if not hegemonic, status of interviews also naturally steers research in a human-focused direction. At the core of many of the chapters in this volume are the paraprofessional translators: their roles, their tasks, their experiences and attitudes as well as their understandings of what they are doing and how what they are doing links to other tasks and goals they have, and who they are working with or translating for.

In our first joint article, Rebecca Piekkari, Susanne Tietze and I (2020) argued, based on the then existing evidence of case studies, that paraprofessional translators working in multinational corporations are likely to exhibit more agency and more freedom of manoeuvre than professional translators. This volume aims to dig deeper into the varied organizational settings and hierarchical positions paraprofessional translators may have. Evidence is still scarce, and variation is likely to be abundant. In the empirical case studies presented in section II, paraprofessional translatorial actors in different organizational contexts have been interviewed, observed and surveyed, and authors are reporting on what they have discovered so far. As we are getting to know these actors and the ecosystems they inhabit, we will gain a more fine-tuned understanding of the varying degrees of agency, levels of competence and linguistic and translatorial resources, degrees of voluntariness in the translator roles, and the paraprofessionals' emotions, self-efficacy and motivations with regard to taking on translatorial tasks and performing translatorial actions (on translatorial action, see Chapter 2).

This volume also leans heavily towards an understanding that organizational actors are embedded in their organizational contexts, and their paraprofessional activities make sense with respect to their local environment, their "natural habitat" (Koskinen 2008, p. 3). The concept of the translation ecosystem (Wedlin and

Sahlin, 2017; Westney and Piekkari, 2020) is offered as one broad theoretical framework for empirical research into interlingual and organizational translation as well as boundary-crossing more generally (Chapter 7). It seeks to enable the study of interlingual and organizational translation together, within the same theoretical framework (for an application on a contemporary case see Liu et al. in Chapter 9; for a historical case see Wurm in Chapter 8). Ecosystems are nested: the multinational corporation (MNC) can be seen as a translation ecosystem, engaged in translating activities, and the MNC itself is nested within a much larger global translation ecosystem. The ecosystem approach therefore integrates the micro-perspective of individual paraprofessional translators, the meso-perspective of organizations whose operations rely on translation, and the macrolevel of the larger social, cultural and linguistic contexts that influence translators and translation processes.

In ecosystems, the mere need for translation already indicates that a boundary has to be crossed, and this recognition renders the boundary visible. The translation ecosystem framework can shed light on the previously fairly unrecognized activity of crossing organizational, functional and knowledge-based boundaries. Focusing on the ecosystem and on those who inhabit it can also pave the way for a better recognition of the individuals contributing to this often hidden activity and of the translation competences they possess. With its emphasis on contextualized knowledge, the ecosystem approach can assist in uncovering the richness of forms, functions and features of paraprofessional translation.

Only some of the chapters take on an ecosystemic approach, but all share a commitment to understanding the human paraprofessional actors. We also have a shared appreciation that people are skilled and resourceful, and they can be expected to find meaningful ways of dealing with the challenges of crossing boundaries in the ecosystems in which they work. We therefore avoid approaching paraprofessional translation with expectations and measurements of success borrowed from professional translation, aiming to understand it from its own premises.

The flip side of the focus on people is that while many chapters mention translation technologies and the often new affordances that they have, this volume largely sidesteps addressing the increasing role of translation and communication technologies. It is only in Chapter 5 on journalistic translation and Chapter 13 on hospital librarians where non-human actors such as available technologies are extensively discussed. Both these chapters build on Actor-Network Theory, a framework that explicitly also includes non-human actors in the analysis.

The desire to understand actors in their contexts also leads to a prominence of qualitative approaches. Fieldwork, interviews and archival research dominate the empirical part, and also the two survey-based Chapters (14 and 15) lean heav-

ily towards open-ended questions. This is to be seen as a strength and a necessity. At this point, exploring a fairly unresearched and as yet still somewhat undefined activity, explorative methods are needed to create a baseline of understanding. Once the contours and variation of paraprofessional translation practices are better known, combining and complementing qualitative approaches with large scale statistical designs can be more robustly designed.

Overview of the chapters

The book is divided into three parts. The first part lays conceptual foundations and offers a number of avenues for theorizing about paraprofessional translation and translators. Chapter 2, 'Paraprofessional translators as translatorial agents' by Kaisa Koskinen aims to provide a background and account for what is known so far about paraprofessional translation and those engaging in this activity, and it offers the concept of translatoriality as one way of accounting for the variability of multilingual practices. It is followed by 'Zooming in, zooming out on paraprofessional translators: A translation ecology perspective from organization studies and international business' (Chapter 3), Rebecca Piekkari and Susanne Tietze's similar account on how this phenomenon has been and could be approached in international business and organization studies. To illustrate how translation plays out in the ecosystem of a multilingual corporation they conduct a restudy of an ethnographic study of a Kazakstan bank.

Chapter 4 by Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen, an international business scholar, provides a synthesis of TS and IB approaches. He asks 'Are boundary spanners in international firms paraprofessional translators?' and provides a nuanced answer that acknowledges the overlapping areas but also appreciates the unique aspects of each category. A similar endeavour on the specificities of journalistic translation as seen from the perspective of paraprofessional translation is performed by two prominent TS scholars in this field, Marlie van Rooyen and Lucile Davier. In Chapter 5 'Learning from news translation research to unblackbox paraprofessional translation' they chart the substantial body of research into journalistic translation. Informed by Actor-Network Theory they aim to offer conceptualizations and methods that can benefit translation research in sister disciplines, such as organization and international business studies.

Chapters 6 and 7 are intended as proposals for potentially useful theoretical frameworks for studying paraprofessional translation. Koskinen's focus on translation policy research designed on the basis on Bernard Spolsky's classic tenets of language policy (Chapter 6) stems from her own experiences of having found it applicable in contexts of low institutionalization which by definition contain

low degrees of explicit management of translation work in a manner typical of paraprofessional translation environments. The ecosystem approach developed in Chapter 7 then aims to support analytic contextualization of these paraprofessional translation environments. It is a reprint of 'Crossing Borders and Boundaries: Translation Ecosystems in International Business' (Westney et al. 2022), an invited Perspective essay for *International Business Review*, reproduced in this volume with kind permission of the publisher. Its explicit target audience is therefore international business researchers, and its contribution lies in productively bringing together enriching viewpoints form both organization studies and translation studies and in building an ecosystem model that would accommodate both kinds of translation approaches.

The second part contains eight reports of empirical studies into paraprofessional translation in different contexts. It opens with a historical study of a cross-border company by Andrea Wurm (Chapter 8). The study builds on a combination of a holistic ecosystem approach from Chapter 7 and a microhistorical zooming in on a central boundary spanner who played a key role in the gradual institutionalization of the paraprofessional translation practices in the company. Chapter 9, 'Synergistic and strategic translation work: Navigating translatorial spaces in multinational corporations' by Linyu Liu, Rebecca Piekkari and Susanne Tietze also takes up the ecosystem approach and provides a contextualized account of the various spaces for both interlingual translation and knowledge transfer as seen from the perspective of the Chinese subsidiary of a Finland-based multinational corporation.

Estefanía Muñoz Gómez's approach is founded on translation studies. Her chapter 'Translation and translating in a multilingual IT customer service unit' (Chapter 10) is based on ethnographic fieldwork in an IT company with customers in many countries. She looks into everyday interactions in detail, showcasing how translation scholars' analytic eye for textual nuance can tease out findings that can supplement observations and interviews. In contrast, Chapter 11 by Sylwia Ciuk, Martina Śliwa and Kaisa Koskinen builds on the strengths of collecting a comprehensive interview data set. 'Beliefs and practices in paraprofessional translators' work: towards a conceptual framework' zooms in on the attitudes, ideologies and beliefs about translation work of more than forty paraprofessional translators in different sectors of business in Poland. The authors offer a tentative typology of conceptions of translation among the interviewees. Chapter 12, 'The implicit corporate translation policy' by Maria Annukka Jakkula again zooms in into the everyday life of a company. It is an empirical twin chapter to the theoretical chapter on translation policy (Chapter 6). Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork Jakkula traces what kind of an emergent translation policy one can discern as having grown from everyday multilingual practices in a company headquarters.

Chapter 13 by Elisabetta Geromel-Lister and Jérôme Devaux takes the readers to another organizational setting and translation work, that of hospital librarians. The chapter 'Spaces of translatoriality within hospital knowledge departments in England' uses Actor-Network Theory, more specifically the concept of oligopticon, to chart how these knowledge workers operate across languages to collect relevant medical data. Moving on to university life, Helmi Marttila and Johanna Vaattovaara return to the questions of translators' attitudes. 'Paraprofessionals' approaches to subtitling work: insights from a university context' (Chapter 14) reports on a survey of teaching staff's insights into the unexpected and largely unwanted role as subtitlers of their own lecture videos. Finally, Chapter 15 authored by Juho Suokas, Esa Penttilä, Juha Lång, Erja Vottonen and Helka Riionheimo provides an overview of 'Paraprofessional translation in research'.

Chapter 15 also lays bare the metalevel or two-tier processes in this volume: while we authors are observing, analyzing and theorizing practices we have encountered in the field, we are all also paraprofessional translators ourselves, translating between disciplines and across languages. We have deliberately aimed to make this visible by allowing the original languages of datasets show through in the English reporting. It has also been intentional that all authors have been free to choose their methods of doing this. This has allowed us to experiment with different methods and showcase a number of possibilities for making translation more visible in research.

The volume closes with two reflexive and forward-looking commentaries, answering the question "What next?" from the perspectives of OS and IB, on the one hand, and of TS on the other hand. In Chapter 16, Susanne Tietze, Rebecca Piekkari and D. Eleanor Westney work collaboratively to provide a business studies lens to what has been achieved so far in paraprofessional translation research and where we might find important new avenues for future research. The volume is concluded by the editor's Afterword that aims to do the same form the perspective of TS. A shared desire of all authors has been to produce a volume rich in new ideas, interesting and relevant viewpoints and inspiration to get involved in this interdisciplinary endeavour of learning more about paraprofessional translation at work.

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PART I

Theoretical and methodological insights

CHAPTER 2

Paraprofessional translators as translatorial agents

Kaisa Koskinen

Paraprofessional translation, that is, translatorial activities performed by people who are employed in another role but also act as translators, is an emerging area of interest in the interstices of translation studies, international business, and management and organization studies. In this chapter, the aim is to provide a summary of the work already done in these various fields and to discuss what is already known of this activity and its historical roots. One core feature of interlingual paraprofessional translation is its flexible nature. This has led to a desire to develop new terminology that would not be too restrictive in empirical analyses. Using Holz-Mänttäri's classic theory of translatorial action as a stepping stone, an overarching term of translatoriality is proposed to cover the whole spectrum of translation-relatedness one can encounter in multilingual workplaces. The usefulness of the concept of translatoriality is tentatively tested also for contexts where a "translation as knowledge transfer" approach is used, and the results are promising in the sense that features of translatoriality seem to map quite easily to previous findings of the nature of such translation processes.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, paraprofessional translator, translatorial action, translatorial agent, Holz-Mänttäri, translatoriality, translanguaging, habitual translation

Background

Translation studies has for quite some time already operated with the binary conceptualization of professional vs. non-professional translation. Research into non-professional translation practices has enlarged the coverage of translatorial phenomena and brought forth a number of new perspectives (for example, the role of motivation) as well as shed new light on some old topics (e.g., norm-constructing processes and collaboration). However, binaries are also restrictive. In my own research, around the year 2014, I began to encounter several cases of

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translatorial activities that did not seem to fit in either box: 19th century bilingual council meetings of Tampere (i.a. Koskinen 2017), contemporary bilingual meetings of a regional body (Koskela, Koskinen and Pilke 2017) and, finally, the entire ecosystems of headquarters (HQ) and subsidiaries across the field of international business (Piekkari, Tietze and Koskinen 2020). People engaged in written and oral translation in these cases were not translation professionals, but they operated in some other professional or official capacity. It did not seem entirely accurate to define their mediation work as non-professional, as this was not a hobby or leisure time activity, and although it could sometimes be seen as a more or less volunteer activity, it was still volunteering within the organizational context and coloured by their other organizational roles. More typically, translation was not an optional choice to volunteer on. It was needed to move things forward and to keep everyone onboard, and doing the necessary translating was a role assumed by or assigned to some participants.

This uneasy fit has led to breaking the binary model with a third option and examining translation at work (i.e. in a professional setting) not performed by professional translators but by other employees (non-professionals with respect to translation but professionals in other fields) as a separate object of study. This tripartite division has been argued for by Sergei Tyulenev, in 2014. In the one paragraph on this third categorisation of paraprofessional translators (whom he also calls paratranslators), he discusses "those people whose jobs are not directly translation- or interpreting-related who do translate or interpret" (Tyulenev 2014, p. 75; see also Pym 2011, p. 85). Tyulenev mentions journalists and flight attendants as prime examples, and he also raises the question of how to deal with translational activities in multilingual communities. Building on his initial thoughts, it is argued here that it indeed is meaningful to single out translating at work (in jobs that are not directly translation- or interpreting-related) as a particular area of translation worthy of its own empirical examination and theorization (see also Koskinen 2025).

Further, contemporary workplaces are more often than not also multilingual communities and hence also translation spaces in the sense of needing to create multilingual practices for social purposes and to recognize that many members of staff are "living in translation" (Cronin 2006, p. 61). Moreover, it is rational to assume that in different professions (journalists, flight attendants and many more) translation needs emerge that are likely to share some features and be different in other aspects, as the goals and purposes of different professional contexts will colour the translation processes and practices in particular ways. That said, it is also important to accept that the categories are porous. For example, many trained translation professionals are employed in non-translator positions where they engage in paraprofessional translation, naturally bringing their pro-

fessional translation competences to play, and some of the paraprofessional translation work is indeed entirely voluntary, and therefore in many ways close to non-professional translation practices.

Undoubtedly, all translation — professional, paraprofessional and non-professional — have some unifying features, but there are also significant defining differences that warrant separate treatment. By definition, paraprofessional translation takes place at work, and this creates a number of constraints as organizational roles and hierarchies, contractual issues and management powers may restrict the agency of the paraprofessional translator (for a more detailed discussion see Koskinen 2025). At the other end of the organizational hierarchy, high status can be used to leverage significant translatorial freedom and agency, as was exemplified by a subsidiary manager's way of using translation as a tool to resist HQ control in a case study by Logemann and Piekkari (2015). Norms and ethics of professional translation are not of primary importance for paraprofessional translators, perhaps even not known to them, as they have not been acculturated to these, neither in their training nor at work. Instead, they may be strongly bound by some other professional ethics that guide their professional conduct and, by extension, also their translation work related to the aims and goals of the organization.

Since the mid-2010s, a number of insights into paraprofessional translation have already been accumulated. The first of these is the realization, a surprise to me at the time, that a significant part of the existing research into paraprofessional translation work in organizations had and has been done outside translation studies, in international business (IB), management and organization studies (MOS). Already in the 1990s, it had been recognized in IB literature that some employees serve as 'language nodes' (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999) and engage in translation work beyond their formal job role (Piekkari et al. 2013).

A significant amount of research on the phenomenon that we call paraprofessional translation has been published by IB and MOS scholars, with more or less explicit engagement with TS research. Much of existing research is interview-based, following the disciplinary traditions of these fields, and often the role of the interlingual element of the translation process is largely overshadowed by other cultural and organizational boundaries the translators are crossing. For example, an insightful study of translating corporate social responsibility reporting from headquarters to foreign subsidiaries by "subsidiary translators" (Gutierrez-Huerter et al. 2020) uses interviews rather than the resulting reports as their main source of data and overlooks the role of crossing a linguistic divide as part of the translation process. This lacuna indicates that there is a wealth of new insights to be uncovered in HQ — subsidiary relations by tapping into the cultural, political and strategic translation solutions via a close reading of interlingual processing of

company documents (Koskinen 2020). This is where collaboration and interdisciplinarity may come in handy: translation scholars are trained to execute textual and comparative analyses, and, in return, they can benefit from the in-depth contextual understanding and interview analysis skills of business studies scholars.

Some studies have begun to look at individual translation solutions and to analyse the micro-processes of interlingual translation and their micropolitical consequences. One prime example is Ciuk, James and Śliwa (2019). They build explicitly on Holz-Mänttäri's theory of translatorial action (I will return to it below) and skopos theory in analysing their data on a translation of an HQ mission statement into a meaningful, localized version for the subsidiary. The translation was collaboratively produced in a group meeting, and the researchers were able to observe its gradual emergence as well as all the discussions and debates around it.

In another study that uses translation as a dataset and explicitly refers to translation studies, Tietze, Tansley and Helienek (2017) focused on the specificities of the local, receiving culture, and the agentic role of the paraprofessional translator in addressing the 'discursive void' that characterised the local Slovak experiences with respect to talent management, a US consultancy-based, English-language concept and practice. In the successive interviews with the translator, they discussed the translated material in detail, making visible the difficulties in finding ways to express core elements of the practice to a culture and language where it was novel, and which therefore did not have the vocabulary or existing semantic frameworks for understanding it. The results highlight the importance of the translatorial competences and the interventionist role of the paraprofessional translator for the success of the translation process.

Other scholars have framed their projects with other interdisciplinary constellations beyond TS to take stock of multilingual practices. A recent study of a Kazakhstan bank (Koo & Kim 2024), for example, uses sociolinguistics as its lens, but a reader attuned to identifying paraprofessional translation will recognize many contact points (see Chapter 3 in this volume for a more detailed discussion). Koo and Kim raise the issue of inclusiveness and discuss the questions of power dynamics and language practices. In today's diverse workplaces, organizations ignore the benefits of flexible multilingual and translatorial practices at their own risk and peril (Back 2024). Natalie Wilmot and Susanne Tietze (2020) discuss the wider political ramifications of prioritizing English and overlooking translation in another context of work: knowledge production by IB and MOS researchers themselves. In their meta-analysis, they encountered the invisibility of translation but also identified a handful of papers which recognize the situated nature of texts, critique the dominant mechanistic approaches and advocate cultural and political approaches to translation.

What we already know about paraprofessional translators?

As research findings gradually accumulate, the contours of paraprofessional translation are becoming more discernible. We can already confidently ascertain that it is a widespread phenomenon, and it has a long history. In fact, it is not too far-fetched to argue that the scribes who in 196 BC engraved the Egyptian decree found in Rosetta stone in two languages, Greek and Egyptian, and in three writing systems, hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek, were probably working as paraprofessional translators alongside their occupation as scribes. Much is not known of who these scribes were and how they viewed their translation work. The current focus tends to lie on another set of paraprofessional translators: scholars who have been able to unlock the mysteries of hieroglyphs by uncovering the translation relations between the languages involved.

There is reason to believe paraprofessional translation has been going on throughout history, as people in different occupations have had to operate across language boundaries. For example, in her extensive study of the translating and interpreting practices in the multilingual Habsburg monarchy (1848–1918), Michaela Wolf (2012, p. 90, 103) makes a distinction between institutionalized translation and habitual translation. At the outset, this binary may seem to repeat the professional vs. non-professional translation dichotomy, but this would be an anachronistic interpretation. As her description demonstrates, much of the habitual, everyday translation work was paraprofessional by nature. She (p. 90) defines it as a communicatively oriented and often starkly asymmetrical activity taking place at the lower echelons of the society, often orally rather than in written from. Additionally, she lists (p. 91–92) several (mostly female) service occupations as prime examples of habitual translation domains, for example, handmaidens, cooks, washerwomen, wet nurses and childminders, prostitutes, stableboys and craftsmen. Low status, the intimacy of the multilingual encounters and orality are among explanations for the lack of remaining documentation of their habitual paraprofessional translations, and evidence needs to be gathered from memoirs and contemporary accounts.

Pertinent for our current discussion, the professionalization of translation was only emerging in 19th century Europe, and institutional translation at officially bilingual schools, in the multilingual army and at different levels of the administration of the monarchy was also often paraprofessional by nature. Hierarchies and asymmetricity are discernible also in these domains, for example, in the Habsburg army where the officers were predominantly German (almost 80 percent), whereas the troops were typically multicultural and multilingual, with regiments operating with two to four languages (Wolf 2012, p. 106–107).

Wolf (2012, p. 112) notes that within the administration of the multilingual monarchy where constant translation was a necessity, translation practices lacked explicit regulations and can be seen as a mixture of habitual and institutional translation. In other words, much of it was realized through paraprofessional translation and executed according to the conventions of a particular office. In a manner recognizable from more contemporary discussions of translation, the necessity to keep minutes in eight languages simultaneously, for example, was seen as a mere technical problem (p. 112). The most institutionalized and professionalized domains of translation and interpreting of the Habsburg monarchy were the courts and the judicial system. The list of languages needed between 1864 and 1918 contains 29 items (in addition to German), and more than 7000 translators were known to have offered their services during that same time frame (Wolf 2012, p. 132–133). Importantly, they too were predominantly, if not exclusively, paraprofessionals, or freelancers if you wish, working also as advocates, notaries, consuls, teachers and others (p. 138). Similar accounts of paraprofessional translation and gradual institutionalization and professionalization of translation across 19th century Europe abound (see D'Hulst and Koskinen eds., 2020).

Translation as an emergent practice

Regardless of whether one is looking at the communication between official authorities and citizens, or contexts of more habitual translation, the realities on the ground are complex, as Meylaerts has pointed out:

> If we really want to understand if, how, and when authorities and citizens were able to communicate with each other in 19th-century Belgium (and elsewhere), we have to deal with a myriad of sometimes contradictory and unequally applied language and translation rules, practices and beliefs. We therefore need to study processes of interaction that enable us to understand the complex and paradoxical relations between society and individual, between the local and the central/global, between agency and structure, between translation and non-translation, between official and unofficial translation, between translation and other transfer processes. We need to study translation as an emergent phenomenon, constitutive of social reality. (Meylaerts 2017, p. 45)

This permanent stage of emergence is a constituent factor in all social practices and institutions. Translation is also a contextually and culturally defined practice. As in all translation, the perennial question arises in paraprofessional translation: What is the relevant similarity between source and target that allows for the interpretation that we are dealing with translation? What is translation, and what is

not? In TS, the question of what qualifies as translation has been asked across decades and answered in several ways. As 'translation' is not a natural category but a human-made and contextual one, it is to be expected that it can be understood in different ways in different times and places, and for different purposes. A classic definition from descriptive translation studies (Toury 2012) is that translation is what the target culture accepts as a translation, that is, if the receiving culture considers that the criterion of relevant similarity has been met (Chesterman 1997, p. 62) and the target text is acceptable for the new audience. This already implies that different cultures may have different ideas about what qualifies as translation. Maria Tymoczko (2007, pp. 68–77) has continued this line of thought from a multilingual perspective and argued that different languages have different meanings for their word for 'translation'. This has been challenged later by Kobus Marais (2020), who argues that while this may have been true earlier, in a less globalized world, the current understanding in all or most languages has become aligned with the Western concept of translation.

The spread of a unified Western understanding — the translation of 'translation' across cultures into a more homogeneous understanding — may well have taken place, and translation studies has probably participated in it. Still, I argue that we do not have one unified translation concept even within any one culture (or within the discipline of TS) but rather a plethora of understandings on where the relevant similarity is met and where it is not. I have therefore found Sandra Halverson's (2000) work on translation as a prototypical concept very fitting for paraprofessional translation contexts. The prototype approach accepts the premise that translation as a practice is culturally and organizationally embedded but also argues that there is a core that is accepted by most. At the same time it also acknowledges that the boundary between translation and non-translation is fuzzy, and that individuals may have different ideas of how far it can be stretched. There is no reason to assume, for example, that professional translators form an entirely unified group in terms of where they draw this line; it is even more clear that paraprofessional translators do not all share the same understanding of what counts as translation.

Indeed, it is one of the premises of this volume that paraprofessional translation with its flexible practices, agentic and strategic actors, and its often limited institutionalization and management efforts, is likely to be a rich source of observations about varied translatorial practices and resources. An overarching concept of *translatoriality* is proposed as a tool for capturing a wide range of translatorial phenomena, also those that are fleeting, fragmentary or alternate flexibly with other multilingual resources.

Translatoriality: How to account for habitual translation?

Wolf's historical study of translation practices before the institutionalization and professionalization projects of translation and interpreting is indicative of the kinds of phenomena one encounters in data and of the necessities of redefining and renaming that may ensue. What she needed to contemplate and redefine in the historical context she was researching is parallel to the contemporary scenes of paraprofessional translation. First, in many domains, the contemporary professional dualism of oral versus written translation is not necessarily a significant one. In many contexts of mediation, getting understood and passing the information are more important than the modes of delivery, and a multimodal mixture of verbal, visual and embodied forms may be used. In German, *Translation* as an umbrella term that covers both written (*Übersetzung*) and oral translation (*Dolmetschen*) allows a more flexible conceptualization than in many other languages in which a distinction between oral, written and other modes is more constrained (Wolf 2012, p. 103).

Another distinction is in the kinds of communicative situations that the term 'translation' is seen to cover. In contexts beyond the professional project, observing "translation in the wild" as performed by natural translators, the researcher soon realises that much of the activity that appears to contain translatorial elements takes place outside a confined understanding of translation as a clearly demarcated interlingual activity. In everyday life, habitual translation is often embedded in a plethora of multilingual practices.

In the study of multilingualism, the co-existence of several languages has been conceptualized in a number of ways. Previous research on bilingual and multilingual practices has from the 1950s onwards been conducted in the framework of *code-switching* (and code-mixing), that is, observing speakers who alternate between more than one code (understood as language, dialect, accent, slang etc.) within an interaction. The first ideas were closely related to the advances of information technology and signal processing, hence the technical sounding label of codes (Auer 1998, p. 27–28). An alternative, ethnomethodologically oriented approach gained in popularity since the 1970s, and it sees code-switching as a resource for creating communicative and social meaning, for building group identities and remarking ethnic boundaries (Auer 1998, p. 1–2).

Although it was originally emphasized that codes are not to be equated with languages, this soon became the received understanding on which research on code-switching was based, much of it within bilingual studies where this collapsing of code into language made perfect sense. For understanding translation as part of multilingual conversations, this reduction appears quite useful: in those cases where language is shifted to another and content is repeated across language

boundaries, code-switching would appear to be a form of translation, either by the speaker or by another participant in the conversation. This kind of translatorial competence that often manifests in situational and unsystematic forms of translation has not, however, received much attention in code-switching research. Instances of fragmentary translation often abound in data, but the focus of analysis has largely been elsewhere (Kolehmainen et al. 2015, p. 373). Self-translation, which is quite common in code switching, has in mainstream code-switching research often been conceptualized as reiteration (cf. Harjunpää 2017; Harjunpää & Mäkilähde 2016).

In recent studies of multilingualism, many new terms have been introduced to cover the various practices in which speakers operate with and in-between different languages and styles. Vallejo and Dooly (2020, p. 2) have listed "plurilingual modes, heteroglossia, languaging, translingual practices, translanguaging, transglossia, crossing, codemeshing, polylanguaging, metrolingualism and transidiomatic practices". They argue that this proliferation of new terms "reflects a generalized interest — and excitement even — for acknowledging and theoretically operationalising the complexity of language use in an increasingly connected and globalized world" (p. 2). From the perspective of studying the multilingual practices of workplaces, this excitement is easy to share, but the sheer amount of seemingly overlapping terms can feel bewildering.

Particularly relevant for our purposes here is the term *translanguaging*, which has been gaining popularity during the past decade, originally in the context of studying multilingual classrooms but expanding to other social contexts as well. Of particular relevance is research on translanguaging in the workplace. Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020), for example, used linguistic ethnography to observe how Swedish office workers operated bilingually in Swedish and English, alternating between monolingual and translanguaging modes to address both current and future audiences. They emphasize the ability to translanguage as a necessary and valuable competence at contemporary work settings.

The way Jonsson and Blåsjö describe their data indicates that translanguaging is often translatorial. For example, they observe that "[f]lexible translanguaging practices, such as writing a PowerPoint in Swedish and quickly being able to present it in English without preparation, are thus expected in these work settings" (2020, p. 366). For a translation scholar this is one kind of translation, not far from prima vista translation but with a twist of self-translation. In other words, these practices are recognizable as translation activities but complex to define with existing terminology largely developed for professional translation. Reporting on a linguistic ethnography at a butcher's stall, Creese, Blackledge and Hu (2017) focus on the distinction between translation and translanguaging. They begin by defining translation loosely as an activity that involves source and target texts and (func-

tional) equivalence, and translanguaging as an ideological process and as a strategic use of linguistic resources. The definitions are quite complicated in terms of comparative analysis as one does not rule out the other. In practice, Creese et al. use the label of translation restrictively for a rather straightforward activity of parallel interlingual reiteration, and give translanguaging the role of the "hero" of the story, seeing it as the practice that enables conviviality and collectivity in creating a vivid multilingual market space. For a translation scholar, this is an unnecessary reduction of the resources that translation can offer in communication.

Researchers who promote translanguaging tend to emphasise its creative and transformative nature (Baynham & King Lee 2019) and use it as an overarching term that covers all kinds of plurilingual, pluricultural and pluricodal communicative practices. Translanguaging has been a trendy and also fruitful conceptualization for many multilingual research purposes. It is therefore not too surprising that several commentators have over the past years asked me why I have not employed it to denote flexible plurilingual practices in paraprofessional translation and beyond, and why have I instead repeatedly proposed yet another term, a neologism of *translatoriality*. Indeed, for a decade or so my research has frequently taken me to areas in which it has felt easier to account for the empirical evidence by moving away from translating and/or interpreting and to employ a more open-ended categorisation. The first of them was a small-scale study of what I ended up calling "translatedness" in the linguistic landscape of a plurilingual and multicultural suburb of Tampere (Koskinen 2012). Together with my colleagues, I then worked to categorize the continuums of *translatoriality* in everyday life (Kolehmainen et al. 2015), in making sense of the translatorial practices of a contemporary bilingual meeting (Koskela et al. 2017), in a historical context (Koskinen 2017), and in the foreign language classroom (Koskinen & Kinnunen 2022). Among these, the contemporary bilingual meeting is clearly an example of paraprofessional translation at work.

But why not translanguaging at work? For research on practices that are translatorial in nature, translanguaging poses some difficulties: (1) its scope is so open-ended that it is difficult to delimit what it would not cover, and to study translatoriality, one needs to differentiate it from non-translatorial mixing of codes; and (2) while creativity and transformation are qualities that often accompany translation, it (as many other plurilingual resources) can also be used mechanistically, and a concept that does not also account for that or value habitual usage would be detrimental to a full understanding of the phenomenon of paraprofessional translation.

It is therefore argued here that translanguaging is too open-ended for the present purposes. But *translation* does not feel entirely adequate either. If we also accept the idea put forward in the prototype theory of translation that people do

not have one culturally shared translation concept in mind but that it also varies individually from a more narrow and more restricted one to a more flexible one, it is worth considering that introducing a new term will create space for retheorizing translational practices.[1] This is the rationale behind speaking about *translatorial* practices that produce *translatoriality*. The conceptualization is intended as a reminder that analytic observations are focused on empirical evidence including but also extending beyond prototypical (Western, modern, profession-oriented) understanding of translation. In other words, translation *is* translatorial, in the wide sense of the word.

Translatoriality and *translatorial practices* are directly linked to Justa Holz-Mänttäri's classic theory of translatorial action (*Translatorisches Handeln*, 1984). This theory focuses on the various actors and actor roles involved and therefore resonates with the largely people-oriented approaches developed so far both in TS and in language-sensitive research in business studies. Rather than "translation", it discusses the communicative process of creating information offers that successfully cross the linguistic and cultural boundaries and are able to fulfil the situational communicative goals of the actors involved. It therefore supports an open-ended concept of translation that is free from any expectations of a straightforward similarity between the source language and target language renderings (often summarized into an equivalence paradigm). This fits the empirical realities often found at workplaces. The agentic and goal-oriented approach is combined with a collaborative contextualization that places the translator within a network of experts, each with their roles. In Holz-Mänttäri's model the professional translator is the expert on multilingual communication; in the case of paraprofessional translation, this role is more fluid and blends with other areas of expertise. Although Holz-Mänttäri's explicit aim was to forward the status of professional translators as experts in multilingual communication, the basic tenets of her model have also been used to map nonprofessional and paraprofessional translation practices both within translation studies (Koskinen 2017) and beyond (Ciuk, James & Śliwa 2019). It provides a conceptual framework to describe and discuss non-professional, paraprofessional and professional translation alike: *translatorial* action consists of *translatorial* practices (such as translatorial translanguaging, if you like) which in turn produce *translatoriality*.

1. I have elsewhere (Koskinen 2025) argued that changing terminology may also support the researchers' ability to break free of their own preconceived ideas of what is and what is not translation. During fieldwork, the concept of translatoriality can help the researcher to create a mindset that is alert to all kinds of micro-moments of translation that the participants perhaps do not conceptualize as translating and the researcher may also overlook.

Paraprofessional versus professional translation

The professionalization of translation is largely a 20th-century phenomenon in Europe. It is not too surprising that paraprofessional translation still coexists alongside professionalized practices in modern societies. In an overview of translation in contemporary business contexts, Tietze et al. (2017) note that this is a regular activity by "normal" employees (I understand this to mean those who are not translation professionals), but that it often remains hidden. But once they have started to search for these kinds of activities, researchers have located paraprofessional translators at all organizational levels and in all occupations. As paraprofessional translation is often not too controlled (see Chapter 6 on translation policy in this volume), the paraprofessional translators can exercise significant amounts of agency, as was the case in the examples of the consultant-cum-translator and the subsidiary manager above.

Some paraprofessional translators do have background in translator training and may have previously worked as professional translators; many others are natural translators. Translation can be approached flexibly, and this can lead to agile and inclusive communicative strategies, as in the case of the chair of a bilingual meeting reported in Koskela et al. 2017. Crossing language boundaries is an innate skill, a natural part of multilingual competence, Harris has argued (1977, p. 96–114; Harris & Sherwood 1978). Paraprofessional and habitual translation largely rely on this kind of natural translation skill. Naturally, some are more gifted than others. Paraprofessionals' competences and their translation awareness can therefore vary greatly, both between individuals and across different tasks and contexts. This is a significant difference to professional translation work where consistency, accuracy and reliability are highly valued and fostered through tools that support systematic collaborative output. Professional translators' main focus is on producing translations. In contrast, paraprofessional translation is by definition a multitasking effort, embedded in other professional goals and tasks that are often prioritized over translation. Once translation becomes routinized and habitualized within the organization, is not necessarily given constant reflection as other, more pressing needs for cognitive effort take priority (Jakkula, forthcoming). It is also less a fixed identity and more a skill one resorts to in order to succeed in one's work tasks.

Modern day paraprofessional translators have many kinds of technologies at their disposal. Within the past decade, automated translation tools have radically democratized the availability of translation-specific support. According to Mary Nurminen's (2021, p. 24) conservative calculations, professional translators accounted for a staggering 0.03% of the 1 billion users of machine translation (MT) apps. Since then, uptake by other users (all professional translators were

already assumed to be users in Nurminen's calculations) has likely only increased, and various AI solutions based on large language models are currently making headway in offices and workplaces as well. We can safely assume that quite a few of the estimated 1 billion users of 2021 were using MT at work. One third of the respondents to Nurminen's survey of users of one such tool had reported using it for work (Nurminen 2021, p. 90). Extrapolating this to the estimated one billion users of all MT tools would result in 333,333,333 paraprofessional translators who at least sometimes rely on AI translation tools. Regardless of how much weight is put on the exact numbers, it is certain that this is not a fringe phenomenon. What is also known is that an image of mindless usage of free and unsafe MT software is far from the full picture. Some of these MT users have been working with MT for years and developed sophisticated systems of ethical usage and risk management. For example, Nurminen's case study of patent professionals (Nurminen 2019) reveals how MT can be integrated into patent professionals' work processes in a carefully considered manner, with systems in place to also flag where and when a professional translator needs to be brought into the picture.

Interlingual translation vs. knowledge transfer

Above, the discussion has remained within the area of interlingual translation, and the conceptualizations of translanguaging, code-switching and translatoriality have all revolved mainly around linguistic operations. In the context of this volume, one also needs to consider the other understanding of translation that is less concerned with crossing language boundaries and more interested in the transfer of knowledge or practices. How does the concept of paraprofessional translation, developed primarily within the framework of interlingual translation, fare with the contexts of crossing other kinds of boundaries that require reinterpretation, modulation, or even manipulation to allow for the travel of ideas or processes? To what extent is this latter kind of translation understandable and analyzable through theories and conceptualizations developed for interlingual translation?

One tentative answer can be found by analysing Røvik's reading of translation theory and his interpretation of the emerging translator image, developed for interlingual translation, within the context of knowledge transfer. He argues that a "persistent and strong focus on the role of the translator" is one of the most salient features of translation studies (2023, p. 85), and then moves on to define the translator role he perceives relevant for knowledge transfer. There are several similarities between his organizational translator and the kind of paraprofessional translator envisioned in this volume. First, in contrast to professional interlingual

translators, the organizational translator role is only an aspect of the role, and the circulation of ideas is something that these translators do "while performing other explicit and recognized roles such as top managers, consultants etc." (Røvik 2023, p. 93). He continues that this role may be assigned by others, and that the translators themselves do not necessarily conceptualize what they are doing as translation (p. 93). Second, these organizational translators are often agentic and pursue their own goals (as opposed to the more neutral mediation role of professional translators) (p. 94). Third, in TS translators have often been depicted as solo actors, but organizational translators often operate collectively (p. 94). Based on this description of knowledge transfer translators, it is feasible to assume a lot of common ground between organizational translator and paraprofessional translator roles, to the extent of even arguing that in empirical fieldwork we can potentially identify Røvik's organizational translators as being the same actors as the paraprofessional translators discussed here. On the other hand, it may be useful to avoid easy conflation of terminologies too soon (see also Chapter 4 on boundary spanners in this volume).

Seeing knowledge transfer from the perspective of organizational translation is a reminder that an interlingual perspective to translation is only one possibility, and not necessarily to most prominent one. Broader conceptualizations of translation are not new to TS, but their prominence is clearly on the rise, together with a similar rise in the adjective 'translational' and the notion of translationality. The word translationality is not used much in this volume, and I have myself intentionally steered away from it, choosing to promote the concept of translatoriality instead. But it needs to be acknowledged that the terms translationality and translational turn, and perhaps even more so the adjective translational have been circulating in TS for quite some time (i.a. Bachmann-Medick, 2009; Robinson, 2017; Blumczynski, 2023) and acquired many meanings, often loosely defined. Mainly, however, they have been used to denote translational processes beyond or outside the linguistic realms. This typical usage might be well suited for the knowledge transfer or epistemic translation processes that have been intensively studied in IB and MOS literature, but it sits rather uncomfortably with the need to recognize and name small-scale and ephemeral interlingual movements that often take place below the radar of participants' translation concepts.

To create a terminological chain that can somehow cover the full spectrum of phenomena that scholars within and beyond translation studies have been willing to cover under the umbrella term of translation, we might at least tentatively propose the following: in addition to the contemporary, Western, big-T translation practices, recognized as such by T & I professionals and target culture receivers, we may wish to account for interlingual, translatorial practices — small-t translation (see Chapter 11). This we can call translatoriality. We may also

wish to acknowledge the elements of cultural translation intertwined with interlingual translation but then also further acknowledge that translation, or translational practices, can also take shape outside of the lingual realm and sometimes without agentic translators. This we might wish to call translationality.

It may well be that reconceptualizations such as translatoriality, or even the much more widely used translationality, will end up unnecessary if the prevailing prototypical translation concept in the fields in question accommodates easily to a spectrum from duplicating to translatorial microactions. It may also be that the prototypical understanding of translation, a concept currently on the move also in translation studies, will become extended enough to make the separate conceptualization of translatoriality redundant. As several scholars within TS engage in actively widening the scope of research to interepistemic, post-human and biosemiotic spheres, and as many more fields engage with the concept of translation from their own unique perspectives (see Marais ed., 2022), and as TS knowledge is taken to other fields to renew their theorization base (Røvik, 2023), the previously prototypical ideas of translation may give way to much more flexible interpretations. It may well become meaningful to argue, in a second-generation Touryan definition, that anything that can be illuminated by applying a translation research perspective and methodology can be understood as translation. Translatoriality may then remain a curiosity of interlingual translation, or it may be dropped entirely as an unnecessary conceptual complication.

Be that as it may, these two kinds of translation — interlingual and organizational — are two sides of the same coin, two intertwined ways of realising paraprofessional translation in organizations (Piekkari et al., 2020).

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CHAPTER 3

Zooming in, zooming out on paraprofessional translators

A translation ecology perspective from Organization Studies and International Business

Rebecca Piekkari & Susanne Tietze

In this chapter we apply the framework of translation ecology to analyze the complexities of paraprofessional translation work in multilingual organizations. Our point of departure is the historical and contemporary situatedness of paraprofessional translation as it unfolds in multilingual settings. We reanalyze an existing study already published in a management journal — an ethnography of a Russophone bank based in Kazakhstan — and use it as our 'data'. The rereading of this ethnography shows how the work of language agents, i.e., the bank's paraprofessional and professional translators, changes the language practices of the bank and increases its degree of linguistic inclusion. Our reanalysis from a translation ecology perspective points to additional insights that can be gained when approaching translation work holistically, encompassing macro, meso and micro levels of analysis. In doing so, we demonstrate the potential of the translation ecology perspective to shed light onto cross-border business and the multidirectional nature of translation processes. We conclude the chapter with a discussion of the methodological implications and advocate the need for further in-depth studies of multilingual organizations from a translation ecology perspective.

Keywords: translation ecology, multilingual organizations, reanalysis, ethnography, Kazakhstan, international business, organization studies

Introduction

As two scholars crossing the disciplinary boundaries of international business (IB), organization studies (OS) and translation studies (TS), we have been intrigued by the different meanings and treatments of translation across scientific communities (Tietze, Koskinen, & Piekkari, 2022). The disciplinary field of orga-

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nization studies deals with how organizations and organizing shape and are shaped by societies. Institutional scholars have advanced conceptualizations of translation as change and movement of management models and organizational practices across institutional contexts since the mid-1990s (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). When management models and organizational practices travel across space and between different meaning systems (e.g., from private to public sector; from the US to the Nordic countries), they get transformed. Organizational scholars interested in the translation approach have focused on the agency of translators as social actors and the translations and translation processes that they engage in. Recently, they have also started to apply the concept of translation ecology (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) to understand the unfolding of translation processes and translator roles over time (Elmholdt et al., 2025; Nielsen et al., 2022). However, organizational scholars have typically not used translation in an interlingual sense but rather in a monolingual, metaphorical sense (Piekkari et al., 2020): they have likened translation to meaning-making (Tietze et al., 2024).

International business as a field, in turn, deals with topics such as cross-border activities of multinational corporations, the influence of the international environment on firms, and cross-country comparative studies. During the past decades, scholars have become increasingly interested in the means and consequences of crossing language boundaries in an interlingual sense, i.e. translation between two or more languages (Fredriksson et al., 2006; Hornikx et al., 2024; Tietze & Piekkari, 2020). However, the role of translation and the work of paraprofessional translators as key agents of multinational corporations is only starting to be incorporated into the research agenda of the field (Ciuk et al., 2019; Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2020; Piekkari et al., 2020; Westney et al., 2022). This emerging body of work acknowledges translation and its accompanying vocabulary as a distinct perspective for theorizing. In contrast, much of the mainstream International Business research regards translation as a mere technical, methodological and practical hurdle to be dealt with in cross-language research (cf. Wilmot & Tietze, 2023). In this regard, research adopting translation as a theoretical perspective has the potential to expand existing scholarship on cross-border business.

Both disciplinary fields have a shared background in a body of work that has been called language-sensitive research. It has existed for over two decades and has consolidated into an identifiable stream of research that concerns itself with the big theme of multilingualism at work (and beyond). This stream has not only drawn attention to the importance of languages as constitutive of social, cultural and organizational processes, but it has also taken a critical-reflective stand vis-à-vis the role of English as a dominant lingua franca in the business world and academia. More recently, language-sensitive research has approached the notion

of translation as a conceptual, methodological and empirical question (Tietze & Piekkari, 2020). Over the years, language-sensitive research has been promoted and advanced by an internationally oriented Research Group on Management & Language, GEM&L (Group d'Études Management & Langage), which was initially established in France. This interdisciplinary community is beginning to shape the agenda of the field.

In this chapter, we apply the concept of 'translation ecosystems' (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) that integrates insights from international business and organization studies by bringing together both the metaphorical and interlingual meaning of translation and the agency of paraprofessional translators (Westney et al., 2022; reprinted as Chapter 7 in this volume). In line with Westney and Piekkari (2020), we use the term 'translation ecology' to refer to the conceptual approach, and 'translation ecosystem' to refer to the empirical phenomenon. Wedlin and Sahlin (2017) proposed the concept of translation ecology as a framework for theorizing relationships across translations, translation processes, and translators. They argued for the holistic nature of translation ecology because management models are rarely translated in isolation; rather, different translations of management models are interconnected across space and time.

We illustrate the potential of the concept of translation ecology by reanalyzing an existing study of KC Bank — a case study of a Russophone bank based in Kazakhstan and operating in the financial services industry (Koo & Kim, 2024) — from a translation ecology perspective. Our rereading of the published study focuses on the work undertaken by paraprofessional and professional translators by contextualizing it within the bank as well as the broader societal context that shaped it over time (see Piekkari et al., 2022). We conclude by arguing that the concept of translation ecology is promising for enhancing our understanding of the complexity associated with the work by paraprofessional translators in real-life organizations.

Different theoretical perspectives on translation

The disciplinary fields of organization studies and international business offer different theoretical perspectives and takes on translation. In OS, the notion of translation is typically not understood to denote interlingual translation. Instead, translation is used to describe organizational change processes, and the movement and transformation of management models, ideas, practices, and resources across borders when they are received in a specific locality (Tietze et al., 2024). Over the years, organizational scholars have theorized extensively about this broad, metaphorical meaning of translation and studied it empirically. However,

the interlingual meaning of translation has largely been ignored. One may argue that the disciplinary field of organization studies is primarily monolingual in its orientation: the relationship between the notion of translation and actual interlingual processing of written or oral texts is rarely taken under scrutiny.

In our earlier work with Kaisa Koskinen, we initiated a conversation about these two forms of translation — interlingual and metaphorical — and how they are related and intertwined (Piekkari et al., 2020). In multilingual contexts, metaphorical and interlingual translation co-exist in various combinations, depending on the context and the agents involved. The combination of a high degree of metaphorical translation and a high degree of interlingual translation is theoretically the most interesting one to the community of organization scholars. When a radically novel practice is being moved to a new organizational context that significantly differs from the original context (i.e., a high degree of metaphorical translation required) and when participants in this context have very different linguistic resources (i.e., a high degree interlingual translation required), existing organizational practices may have to be changed or disrupted. As language agents who wield influence, paraprofessional translators render the new practice intelligible at the receiving location both on textual and practice level. In doing so, they may accommodate new insights, but also manipulate meaning to follow their own agendas (Piekkari et al., 2020).

In the field of international business, multilingual phenomena and multilingual practices have been previously recognized (Brannen et al., 2014). International business scholars initially treated language as a problem to be overcome in managing the multinational (Perlmutter, 1969), or in designing cross-national survey instruments (Green & White, 1976). Over the years, researchers have started to problematize the technical and mechanical way of treating translation in empirical cross-language research (Outila et al., 2020) and instead reframed translation as intercultural interaction (Chidlow et al., 2014). This positive, generative and strategic take on language in cross-border business has enriched existing language-sensitive research in the field (Piekkari, 2024).

The study of language has also made IB scholars increasingly aware of the role of translation when producing knowledge in non-English environments. As scholars, we constantly translate, not only across linguistic boundaries but also across organizational, functional, and disciplinary boundaries (Westney et al., 2022). However, mainstream research in the field has not paid much attention to the complexities and opportunities associated with cross-language research, i.e. research involving more than one language at any stage of the research process. Yet, in all likelihood data, thoughts and texts need to be translated into English even if only at publication stage.

A translation ecology perspective

The concept of 'translation ecology' originates from organization studies (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). This holistic framework integrates the micro perspective of translating agents, the meso perspective of organizations and their sub-units, and the macro perspective of the larger social contexts that influence translation (Westney et al., 2022). Thus, the translation ecology calls for multi-level research that offers the potential to making novel theoretical contributions.

The advantage of translation ecology as a concept is that it broadens the unit of analysis from the receiving organization to the many actors and their multiple roles that are interdependent and may shift over time (Elmholdt et al., 2025). This concept allows scholars to explore the "multidirectional travelling" of ideas and actors involved in translation work within and outside adopting organizations (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 932; Westney & Piekkari, 2020). This is theoretically promising because most studies on translation in this field describe translation processes as a "one-way movement into organizations" (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 934), ignoring "continuous translation processes both within and outside the organizational context" (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 103). Thus, the concept of a translation ecology "moves away from linear thinking of idea translation", shifting "the focus from translating work within adopting organizations to interactions among translations of heterogeneous actors connected in a translation ecology" (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 945). By focusing on "many-to-many interactions" (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 945), the concept of translation ecology allows researchers to uncover "forgotten parts" of translation processes (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 933). A more comprehensive account of translation processes also recognizes the temporal manifestation of translation as an ongoing process of change (Nielsen et al., 2022, p. 947; Pallas et al., 2016; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017).

The analytical repertoire of an ecology invites theorizing that is sensitive to the agency of paraprofessional translators. These translators navigate different kinds of borders and boundaries in and between organizations and their work is expressive and constitutive of the particular translation ecology in which they are embedded (Westney et al., 2022). Paraprofessional translators are located at the central interstices of multilingual organizations where languages, organizations and knowledge domains meet and overlap. Their work is analogical to "translation in the wild" (Koskinen, 2025, p. 12): it is not restricted by the conventions or expectations associated with professional translation, nor should it be compared or evaluated using the same criteria as those applied to professional translation. On the contrary, the work by paraprofessional translators is embedded in "the muddy everyday life of dealing with multilingualism" in organizations, and it is

through their micro-acts of translation work that meanings are received, made, unmade and changed (Koskinen, 2025, p. 11).

In our previous work with Eleanor Westney and Kaisa Koskinen, we have built on the original theorization of a translation ecology (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) and applied it to understanding empirical phenomena that cross national, institutional, cultural and language boundaries (Westney & Piekkari, 2020). In doing so, we have drawn additional insights from international business and translation studies. This has meant, among others, stressing the role of languages in translation processes within the ecology to a much greater extent than our colleagues in organization studies tend to do (Westney et al., 2022; Chapter 7 in this volume).

A recent empirical example of a translation ecology

For this chapter, we initially identified and reviewed six empirical studies that engaged with translation and its agents (Aichorn & Puck, 2017; Barner-Rasmussen & Langinier, 2020; Hokkinen & Barner-Rasmussen, 2023; Iwashita, 2022; Koo & Kim, 2024; Langinier & Ehrhard, 2020). These articles represented different empirical settings in which paraprofessional translation work takes place, providing us with interesting insights into the nature of the paraprofessional translation work in multilingual organizations. However, in many of the articles the main data collection instrument was interviews. As a data source, interviews are rather limited in what they can reveal — in particular as some of the paraprofessional translators have no awareness of their own translation work (Koskinen, 2025).

The exception among the articles was the richly detailed study by Koo and Kim (2024) on linguistic inclusiveness at headquarters of KC Bank — a pseudonym of a Russophone bank in Kazakhstan — which is based on an ethnography. The original study is unusual in providing meticulous contextual detail about KC Bank's setting, making our extended rereading possible. Koo and Kim (2024, p. 8) undertook an 8-month ethnographic study "for understanding changes in linguistic practices" and perceptions among research participants at KC Bank. Between December 2013 and February 2015, the first author conducted participant observation during site visits as well as in-depth interviews with employees at corporate headquarters and other stakeholders such as policy-makers, school teachers, university professors and linguists. The co-author team also collected various documents (in Kazakh, Russian, and English) to obtain information about KC Bank. The article provides a glimpse into exceptionally rich fieldwork, including direct quotations from research participants in different roles and functions in KC Bank as well as fieldnotes (Koo & Kim, 2024).

In this article, the authors set out to explain "[h]ow can linguistic inclusiveness emerge among tensions between the demands for multilingual services and the need for a lingua franca in organizations?" (p. 2). They find an answer in sociolinguistic work that is, everyday "practices surrounding the use of a particular tongue within an organization" (p. 1). Language is treated in this paper as both a learnable skill as well as a source of identity. We provide a reanalysis of this multi-level ethnography that explicitly situates micro-level translation work in the societal context of changing linguistic dynamics (see Köhler et al., 2025 for a methodological discussion of restudies).

In rereading the published version of the original study (see Piekkari et al., 2022 for a similar approach), we apply the concept of translation ecology to better understand and situate paraprofessional translators at work in KC Bank. Our explanation differs from the original framing of sociolinguistic work by attributing the patterns of paraprofessional translation to the power dynamics of KC Bank as a multinational services organization and by shifting the attention from the receiving organization to some of the many actors outside the organization but within the broader translation ecosystem. We have structured our analysis according to the key elements of a translation ecology: (i) a temporal account of the changing language landscape in the Kazakh society that allows us to trace the linkages between KC Bank's language practices and the macro shifts taking place at the level of the Kazakh society; (ii) paraprofessional translators and translations, and (iii) translation processes.

Temporal account of the language landscape in the Kazakh society

An important aspect of the article by Koo and Kim is that it includes detailed consideration of the changing linguistic dynamics in the Kazakh society. These changes are shown to exert a strong influence on the sociolinguistic micro-practices of the translators.

The case organization — KC bank — is a "Russophone organization that faced growing societal demand for services in Kazakh in addition to Russian" (p. 6). Kazakhstan was occupied by Russia from the late 18th century until its independence in 1991. The Russian language became the primary language for higher education, professional occupation and social mobility in the 20th century. It was regarded to be a superior, urban, and more sophisticated language for many professions. This stood in stark contrast to Kazakh, which was deemed to be rural, simple and lacking in sophistication, i.e., it was the deficit language. Following independence, laws and policies were introduced with a view to strengthen the

Kazakh language and culture such as the law on language use in 1997. As Koo and Kim (2024, p. 6) comment:

> Russian remained the main language in KC Bank because of its importance for communicating with a large number of Russophone clients in Kazakhstan, as well as for operating in neighbouring post-Soviet countries. Kazakh became incorporated into business operations from the late 1990s onwards, with an increase in societal demands.

The paper focuses on Kazakh and Russian as the two most spoken language in Kazakhstan, including among the employees of KC bank. The Russian language was the high-status language which provided occupational opportunity, social status and cultural capital to its speakers. Kazakh, in contrast, continued to be a lower-status language with a lower socioeconomic return. Therefore, speakers of the low-status language had a stronger motivation to learn the high-status language than the other way round. Oftentimes, speakers of the lower-status language experienced degrees of marginalization when it came to career opportunities, earning power and status in the organization. In this context, Russian as the high-status language was a necessity for access to and advance in the organization. Speaking the lower-status language — Kazakh — was helpful, but it had a minor importance for career advancement and status.

However, as the study by Koo and Kim (2024) shows, the relative status of languages is not fixed and often in post-colonial contexts, the low-status local or regional language may gain importance. Consequently, competence in these languages can aid previously marginalized language-speakers. For example, as was the case in KC Bank, with the increasing demand for multilingual services, speakers of both high and low-status language found that previously closed doors and opportunities for advancement began to open. Consequently, they had access to organizational dialogue, information and networks. In this regard, the 'mere' skills of speaking a language is closely aligned also with issues of identity, job role, status and advancement both in organizations and society at large.

Paraprofessional translators and translations: Three groups of embedded language agents

The article identifies three language-based groups in KC Bank: (i) Russophone monolingual bankers, who spoke Russian as their first language and had limited knowledge of Kazakh, (ii) bilingual (Russian and Kazakh) bankers, and (iii) bilingual (Russian and Kazakh) in-house professional translators and secretaries.

The first group — Russophone monolingual bankers who were exclusively male — held high level positions and dealt with tasks directly related to banking and finance at the headquarters. The second group consisted of Russophone bilingual bankers. They were native Russian speakers but with some working knowledge of Kazakh. They had been rooted in both Kazhakh and Russian cultures when growing up. These bankers often held mid-level positions and also dealt directly with banking and finance tasks. The gender distribution between male and female was mixed in this group. The third group consisted of Kazakhophone bilingual language workers such as in-house translators, secretaries, and lower-ranked support workers, who conducted various administrative and language-related tasks such as translation and often worked in boundary positions between KC Bank and Kazakhophone external stakeholders. This group consisted mainly of female language agents. Paraprofessional translation work was initially undertaken by bilingual secretaries and professional translators who went beyond their prescribed job role. Over time, also bilingual bankers and monolingual bankers, as their language skills improved, engaged in paraprofessional translation.

The emergence of greater linguistic inclusiveness is seen as an outcome of the interactions and exchanges between the above groups of translators and language agents. The article captures the critical role of the in-between group — bilingual bankers — who interacted and mediated between marginalized and dominant linguistic groups to achieve a greater degree of linguistic inclusiveness. Thus, they also acted as paraprofessional translators.

Translation processes: From monolingual to multilingual practices

The paper provides a narrative of how the monolingual Russian practices prevailing at KC Bank changed over a period of two decades.[1] First, Kazakh was increasingly perceived as a useful skill for external operations, which entailed the hiring of Kazakhophone language workers for the provision of multilingual services for external stakeholders. Yet, bankers in both groups still insisted that Russian — rather than Kazakh — was more professionally aligned with banking. Over time, however, this perception gave rise to identity-based discontent in the group of the secretaries and the professional translators. As embedded societal agents and expressive of the changing expectations of Kazakh as a no longer low-

1. The case time of the KC Bank is more than two decades, spanning from the late 1990s to 2015. The research time is 18 months which took place between 2013–2015. It involved among others retrospective interview questions that allowed the researchers to go back in time (Blazejewski, 2011).

status language, they felt empowered to 'nudge' the group of bilingual bankers to modify their linguistic practices towards adopting more Kazakh. These practices included communicating in both Russian and Kazakh languages. Eventually, language workers also nudged the group of monolingual Russian to respectfully acknowledge Kazakh through symbolic code-switching. The bilingual speakers were expected to integrate Kazakh into the business activities of the bank such as in meetings with partners from the Kazakh speaking regions. As a Russophone banker recalled (Koo & Kim, 2024, p.14):

> [In the 1990s,] there was no room for Kazakh in any professional sphere since everything in the city was designed for Russophones during the Soviet time. It was understandable why the Kazakh language could not be immediately accepted by people in the banking industry. Like myself, I studied finance in Russian at the university, and I have been working only in Russian. I did not know any of the professional terminology in Kazakh [...] and there were no proper terminologies for finance, commerce and business in Kazakh.

Despite their marginalized status and low rank in particular in the 1990s, the professional translators and bilingual secretaries — gradually, yet steadily — initiated changes in the language practices of KC Bank. In the article, both professional translators and bilingual secretaries went beyond their ascribed roles. They did not only serve as mere 'buffers' between the headquarters of the KC bank and Kazakhophone external stakeholders in providing interlingual translation services; they also rewrote sentences in documents or paraphrased texts rather than used direct translation. Secretaries used their social skills and cultural knowledge to enhance the banks' translation capabilities to operate in both languages. In this way, KC Bank responded to the increasing demands for multilingual services in society.

However, Russophone bankers tried to forbid the use of Kazakh in internal communications. Koo and Kim (2024, p.17) report about a senior manager's behaviour:

> The senior manager only knew Russian. One day the director heard two Kazakh girls [language workers] speaking in Kazakh to each other during the work hours. He walked to the girls and said he would fire them if he heard Kazakh again in this office.

The authors note that such language change in the office was covert in nature (Koo & Kim, 2024, p.17). Moreover, bilingual bankers self-delimited their use of Kazakh, which they saw as inadequate for their professional work. Both groups of language workers began to exert subtle pressure by nudging the bilingual bankers

to speak Kazakh more often at the workplace. For example, humour and informal conversations were helpful resources for nudging.

Over time, the strategy of nudging took hold as bilingual bankers began to change their attitude towards the use of Kazakh. They started to realize that showing their knowledge of Kazakh was important for how they were perceived within the bank and in society at large as well as for their ability to build and maintain professional relationships with colleagues. As a bilingual banker commented (Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 20):

> I thought that the ongoing societal debates about languages could affect my personal relationships with Kazakhophones at work. For example, people might have some prejudices against me especially if they don't know me well. I wanted to avoid that.

These bankers did not want to be seen as "half-Kazakh", suggesting "a lack of respect for their own language and cultural roots" (Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 19).

It is important to note that changing between languages was bounded to certain spaces at headquarters such as the tea room, to particular times such as lunch breaks and tea breaks, and to specific contexts such as informal conversations (Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 20). In this way, bilingual bankers could maintain their professionalism using the Russian language in formal work situations.

At the same time, the Russian monolingual bankers observed the changing behaviours and practices of their colleagues — bilingual bankers — against the background of societal changes in expectations about the status and use of the Kazakh language. Once they recognized the importance of establishing better relationships at work, these Russophone monolingual bankers also adopted different language practices. They invested in learning at least some aspects of the Kazakh language to be able to symbolically switch codes when greeting a colleague or asking for a simple request without much effort. As a monolingual banker explained (Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 22): "I just try to use small words in Kazakh for Kazakhophone workers." Overall, this change of behaviour signalled a new-found respect for the Kazakh language and Kazakh employees.

The above changes in language practices occurred as paraprofessional translators were encouraged by the transformation of the societal context. These translators began to express their discontent with the status quo by nudging the senior bankers, who were hierarchically above them, to change their outlook and behaviour. Interestingly, the professional translators also engaged in practices that are more often associated with the work of paraprofessional translators — they brought their own agenda to the business context and took on the role of cultural mediators. This can be understood in line with their status as in-house translators.

What value does the reanalysis from a translation ecology perspective add?

As it stands, the article by Koo and Kim (2024) offers a rich analysis of changing language practices and increasing linguistic inclusiveness in KC Bank. However, the authors primarily emphasize two levels of the translation ecology: the societal macro level and the individual (or group) micro level. The societal changes of the Kazakh society are reflected in the linguistic dynamics of the KC Bank; the authors explain very skilfully the micro dynamics by situating them in the macro environment.

The translation ecology perspective enables even deeper investigations of the agency of paraprofessional translators in KC Bank. In the present version, Koo and Kim (2024) capture the status of paraprofessional translators within the organizational hierarchy well. Their evidence also suggests that professional translators were not the 'neutral translation machines'; these translators clearly had their own agendas and interests. In this regard, both professional and paraprofessional translators were change agents of language practices that were expressive and shaped by the broader societal level. From a translation ecosystem perspective, what is highly interesting in the case of KC Bank is that paraprofessional and professional translators forged alliances between them to achieve organizational change. This might be an interesting area of future inquiry.

The translation ecology perspective would also allow to fully embrace the organizational meso level of analysis. In the article, the authors focus on one organizational unit only — the corporate headquarters — but it is not contextualized. The reader is told that KC Bank is headquartered in Almaty city; yet, the organizational structure of the bank and the reporting lines are not discussed. From a translation ecology perspective, it would be intriguing to understand how translation processes cross the functional, departmental, knowledge and inter-unit boundaries within the organization. In the case of KC Bank, changes in language practices were largely triggered by external customers who demanded financial services in their mother tongue. The perspective of translation ecosystems would also pay particular attention to the processual and spatial nature of translation as it unfolds across formal and informal spaces such as the tea room. In these spaces, paraprofessional translators share experiences and forge emerging alliances with professional translators as mentioned above. It is worth noticing that the article by Koo and Kim does not deal with a particular incoming management practice as is customary in much of the previous organizational translation research. Rather, the organization actually translates itself (Cronin, 2006) to better meet the shifting language requirements of inclusion that are being voiced in the Kazakh society.

KC Bank is a multinational corporation, but this is only acknowledged in a footnote: "KC Bank is a multinational corporation that offers investment, corporate, and retail banking services across Kazakhstan, as well as in Russia and other post-Soviet countries" (Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 6). The article explicitly focuses on "the domestic context" of the bank in Kazakhstan as a multilingual country. (p. 6). However, the complex multiunit, multilocational and multi-identity characteristics of KC Bank could have become part of the study (see Piekkari et al., 2022, p. 11). Thus, Koo and Kim (2024) treat the multinational corporation as a research site rather than a research object in its own right (Piekkari et al., 2022). Thus, by taking the organizational level seriously, KC Bank could be theorized either as a translation ecosystem itself or as a multinational corporation nested within other translation ecosystems that affect its translation processes, or both (Westney et al., 2022).

Alongside the organizational level, the industry level is also part of the ecological framing (Westney et al., 2022). While the language of the global finance industry is English, the finance sector is largely absent from the paper. KC Bank began to provide services in three languages — Kazakh, Russian and English — in response to societal changes (p. 6). The authors mention, but only in passing, that "[t]he use of English was expanded gradually throughout the 2000s alongside the growing relationship with global partners (e.g., Visa, Western Union) (p. 6)." Yet, we do not learn much about why and how this was the case. The footnote does suggest that KC Bank must have had multiple relationships with members of the global translation ecosystem in the finance sector, but the extent to which these interactions play a part in the language practices and identities of paraprofessional translators remain unclear.

While the article by Koo and Kim has many strengths, it leaves out any discussion of cross-border business and thus the multidirectional nature of translation processes beyond this specific setting. This may be due to the publication outlet which is a general management journal rather than a specialized journal in international business. However, we believe that the translation ecosystem perspective invites an extensive discussion of the role of English and Russian in KC Bank. Considering the contemporary geopolitical situation important questions to address include: Will English gain a more important status within the Bank as the global language of the finance sector? How will the relationships and statuses between the three languages — English, Russian and Kazakh — change in the light of economic expediencies and geopolitical developments? Paying simultaneous attention to the interaction between the different levels of the translation ecology and its boundaries is a marker of the kind of thinking we are advocating in this chapter.

Methodological considerations of the KC Bank study

In many ways, the study of KC Bank, as it stands, already addresses the methodological requirements of the translation ecology perspective (Westney et al., 2022): the theorizing extends beyond the immediate case setting, and past historical events are also included in the explanation of contemporary language practices. Other requirements include the importance of collaborative research as well as a focus on remaining linguistically reflexive where we see scope for some greater transparency. This means addressing in the written research account how the authors' own language and translation skills and practices affected the research process from its very beginning (e.g., gaining access to the organization), how their interests and perspectives informed the selection of research setting and themes, and how these drove the analytical process (Westney et al., 2022).

The first author used English, Russian and Kazakh during fieldwork to communicate with research participants. Her knowledge of these languages and the local culture directly informed interactions with research participants and provided opportunities to capture "subtle nuances that can easily be lost in translations, such as humour and idiomatic expressions" (p. 8). The second author was not involved in the field, but collected data in the form of documents such as annual reports, press releases etc.

The field researcher conducted 128 semi-structured interviews: 43 with KC bank employees: 18 interviews with 15 bankers and 25 interviews with 21 language workers. There were 39 interviews with individuals from public and private sector organizations, job seekers, local scholars and other informants' interviews, including two group interviews with translators. Overall, interviewees were asked for preferred language of interviews (and bankers were also asked about their school background) which provided additional information about the level of fluency in each language. The inclusion of interviewees from outside the case organization provided understanding about the changing language dynamics in the Kazakh society, as they represented both macro and micro levels of the translation ecosystem.

The ethnography was undertaken in four phases, enabling the authors to observe changes in language practices as they unfolded over time. Observations included formal meetings, normal workplace behaviour in departments, spending time in a tearoom as well as observing informal conversations in settings outside KC Bank such in bazaars, public transport, supermarkets and so on. Documents were collected in English, Russian and Kazakh and included a wide variety of texts from formal KC Bank documents to publicly available documents such as annual reports, legal and policy documentation, written and visual documents and texts (e.g., photographs of street signs and advertisements) from Almaty, the

center of business and commerce in Kazakhstan. These provided useful background materials about KC Bank and the wider Kazakhstan society.

Data analysis was a continuous and iterative process moving between data and the literature. It included the drawing up of a timeline of key events in Kazakhstan and KC Bank so that a relationship between KB Bank and the societal developments could be established. The authors provide thick description of the unfolding events and detail the coding of the ethnographic data. The categorization of employees into different language groups emerged during the analysis process.

The study is exemplary in terms of how it brings multiple data sources into play through meticulous presentation. Likewise, the ethnographic involvement of the first author over several periods of time is exceptional. Her deep immersion in the field provides an opportunity to observe, document and analyse the emerging nature of language practices in KC Bank. In the findings, the hierarchically subordinate paraprofessional translators become empowered to overturn the received wisdoms of high and low status languages and marginalized groups.

The written account of the study relies on English as the language of management knowledge (Tietze, 2022). Empirically, Russian and Kazakh are the main languages whose practices are investigated. Their presence is rendered visible through foreignization elements in writing by leaving these languages visible in the quotations from interview data or by introducing particular non-English words as a means to establish perspectives on the language practices.

The role of the authors as language speakers is addressed and the translation of data was done by the first author and checked by other native speakers. Yet, one wonders to what extent access to the KC Bank was also shaped through the first author speaking Russian, English and Kazakh? The language skills of the second author remain obscure, though one must assume that she was also able to read all three languages. The complementary discussions between the authors are briefly mentioned, but these aspects remain hidden from the reader. Yet, evidence suggests that such discussions are a vital part of making sense of multilingual data and the analytical process (e.g. Outila et al., 2020). From a translation ecosystem perspective, greater reflexive transparency in the presentation of the research account would have been welcome.

This study is a rare example of a linguistic ethnography (Koskinen, 2020) located in the context of a changing society within an organization where paraprofessional translators introduce, propel, intercept and accommodate this change through their micro practices. The KC Bank is a translatorial space, where translation needs to happen for mutual comprehensibility and where translation work is distributed throughout the organization. The societal change plays out in the micro movements between the different languages — a movement that is

agentic (i.e., enacted through language actors and their choices) and that has been described as translatoriality (Koskinen, 2020, p. 60). In this regard the study describes KC Bank's translatoriality as a movement where the relationship between languages and language users changes over time.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we presented translation ecology as a conceptual framework to advance the understanding of the work undertaken by paraprofessional translators. We then applied this framework to reanalyze a published ethnographic study of a Russophone bank in Kazakhstan undertaken by Koo and Kim (2024). Some of the paraprofessional translators were bilingual secretaries, others bankers, and even professional translators who took on behaviours such as cultural mediation that are typically ascribed to the less-bounded work of paraprofessional translators.

It is notoriously difficult to capture the work and influence of paraprofessional translators because most of it is happening under the radar of the formal requirements for job roles. Moreover, these language agents are often unaware themselves that they are acting as paraprofessional translators and that their work can be influential and important for the organization. Thus, studying their work empirically and in some detail is of great interest in itself. Furthermore, situating their specific work in wider historical, societal and political contexts yields genuine insight into how language and translation-based choices contribute to the microfoundations of multilingual organizations. Thus, there is nothing trivial or mundane in the translation work that the paraprofessionals are doing. The contribution of paraprofessional translators is a collective one: the different groups of paraprofessional translators collaborated over time and across professional boundaries within the bank. Thus, an important aspect of paraprofessional work lies in its collective rather than individualistic nature.

In applying a translation ecology perspective to the Koo and Kim article, we were able to accentuate some of its strengths such as the multi-level approach. The authors produce a plausible answer to their research question by aligning the macro-level language environment in Kazakhstan with the micro-level language dynamics within the Russophone bank. We also noted that the translation agents served as organizational change agents, ensuring that the bank was responsive to the shifting requirements for multilingual services from local and global stakeholders. The Koo and Kim article also emphasizes the contemporary relevance of language to the discourse about inclusive societies and social cohesion.

Methodologically, the Koo and Kim article is an excellent example of what ethnographic studies can contribute to the understanding of the work of parapro-

fessional translators. The authors have left some of the original Kazakh and Russian expressions visible in Cyrillic script when presenting interview quotations in their article published in an English-speaking top management journal (i.a., Koo & Kim, 2024, p. 19). They also detail the language skills of the first author who was responsible for the ethnographic fieldwork and for translating research materials. Their study provides deep insights into the complexity of situational needs and responses, professional discourses and privileges as well as societal and political changes that together shape the attitudes towards language use. In taking such a broad approach to the organizational setting the study provides a rich picture not only of one organization but rather of the entanglements between society, history, organizational setting, individuals' lives and professions. For us, translation work is expressive and reflexive of these entanglements as well as how and why they may change.

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CHAPTER 4

Are boundary spanners in international firms paraprofessional translators?

Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen

This chapter aims to fuse extant research on individual boundary spanners and interlingual translation activities in international business into an updated view of boundary spanning that also accounts for boundary spanners' translation activities. Illustrative empirical examples shed light on the translatorial aspects of boundary spanners' activities and provide a bridge to previous empirical research on linguistic boundary spanning in MNEs. Lacunae in existing literature are discussed through these examples, helping expand our understanding of boundary spanners' translatoriality. Based on this, possible avenues for future empirical research in international management and translation studies are outlined, and the notion of "omnitranslatoriality" is advanced to denote the fusion of interlingual and metaphorical translation expertise with domain knowledge.

Keywords: boundary spanners, knowledge flows, international business, paraprofessional translators, omnitranslatoriality

Introduction

At the intersection of international business research, organization studies and translation studies, a new area of inquiry is emerging focused on the longstanding managerial challenge of knowledge transfer in internationally active business organizations (Westney, Piekkari, Koskinen & Tietze, 2022). One of the key tasks at hand is to theorize the following observation, at first sight a simple one. Interunit knowledge flows in international business organizations rely heavily on interpersonal interactions across a multitude of organizational and linguistic boundaries. Individual-level interactions thus constitute the least common denominator of organizational-level knowledge sharing. Understanding how these individual-level interactions can be enabled, or indeed explaining their absence, requires paying attention to individuals simultaneously crossing epistemological, organizational and linguistic boundaries as they engage in what

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has been termed "boundary spanning" (Allen, 1977; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). This inquiry, in turn, requires the integration of contributions from disciplines that have traditionally approached aspects of the phenomenon separately, as follows.

The field of *translation studies* (TS) has historically focused on interlingual translation and has recently paid growing attention to individual translators (Chesterman, 2009; Dam, 2024). By contrast, TS has engaged relatively little with the organizational context within which translators operate, and has also prioritized professional translators over amateur and paraprofessional translators, or "people who translate as part of their regular work in another professional capacity" (Koskinen, 2025) and thus differ in key ways from professional translators (Koskela, Koskinen & Pilke, 2017; Tyulenev, 2014). Recent research (i.a. Koskinen 2023; 2025) has begun to change this, highlighting the important translation work done especially by "paraprofessional" translators. We will return to this point below.

Meanwhile the field of *organization studies* (OS) has attended extensively to processes of language, meaning, sense-making, and sense-giving in the context of how knowledge is shared or (metaphorically) "translated" in organizations, but this line of inquiry within OS remains primarily monolingual in its outlook on language (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2020). It focuses on "the role of discourse, frames and narratives in sense-making and sensegiving [rather] than on multiple and different languages per se" (Brannen, Piekkari & Tietze, 2014, p. 497). OS has not engaged much with the recursive relationship between organizational practices and processes on one hand, and multilingual organizational realities on the other (Piekkari et al., 2020; Johansson & Barner-Rasmussen, 2023). In short, even if OS draws on translation as a *metaphor* in multiple ways (Piekkari et al., 2020), the field has engaged little with *interlingual* translation, or translation between different natural languages.

A separate line of OS inquiry with relevance for the present chapter is the effort to conceptualize organizational boundaries (see i.a. Carlile, 2004) and boundary spanning, where the seminal insights of Allen (1977) and Aldrich and Herker (1977) have subsequently been elaborated by, for example, Levina and Vaast (2005). Key insights are that organizational boundaries are most helpfully approached as social constructions that regulate interactions and exchanges while being redefined by these, with big implications for organizational resource flows, identity, and power. Individual boundary spanners enable and facilitate exchanges across these boundaries in many ways, making them especially critical for coordination and innovation both within and between organizations, but also for other purposes such as building organizational culture.

As for *international business* (IB) research, its remit is broadly the strategies, organizational forms and cross-border activities of multinational enterprises (MNEs) in their global environment, complemented by cross-country comparisons of business behavior and processes (*Journal of International Business Studies*, n.d.). This field thus focuses on business firms acting across national, legal, temporal, and geographical boundaries alongside the cultural and linguistic boundaries treated in this chapter. IB's interest in boundary-spanning is motivated by MNEs' broad geographical spread combined with the longstanding notion that their main source of advantage over domestic competitors is internal resource sharing between globally dispersed subunits (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Gupta & Govindarajan, 1994). To be competitive thus implies continuous efforts to span boundaries between units and functions.

A language-sensitive strand within IB has been co-shaped by TS-inspired contributions underlining the multilingual nature of the MNE and pointing out that interlingual translation is part and parcel of its daily reality (Janssens et al. 2004), and language-sensitive IB scholars and TS scholars have connected during joint workshops and other events (see Barner-Rasmussen, Nummela & Dam, forthcoming, for a historical overview). There is also a string of publications highlighting different aspects of interlingual translation in IB (i.a.. Blenkinsopp & Pajouh, 2010; Tietze, 2010; Chidlow, Plakoyiannaki & Welch, 2014; Janssens & Steyaert 2014; Holden & Michailova, 2014; Ciuk & James, 2015; Logemann & Piekkari, 2015; Ciuk, James & Sliwa, 2019; Piekkari & Tietze, 2021; Westney et al., 2022; Dam et al., forthcoming). Still, in-depth integration of the fields remains a future goal.

IB has historically focused more on firm and subunit levels of analysis than on individuals, but has in recent years grown increasingly sensitive to the "microfoundations" argument (Foss, 2003; Felin & Foss, 2005; for a review, see Felin, Foss & Ployhart, 2015) which implies a commitment to reduce entities or variables at higher levels of analysis (e.g. organizational level) to individual actions and behaviors whenever possible (Foss & Pedersen, 2019). This has increased the interest in individual-level actions and behaviors within IB, including research on boundary spanning in MNE contexts (i.a., Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Schotter et al., 2017). This research draws on OS insights on boundary spanning: MNEs are organizations among others and OS forms a natural reference point for theorizing them. Some empirical work has also highlighted the role of individual boundary-spanners' linguistic skills (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014; Backmann et al., 2020), bringing IB research on boundary spanning within shouting distance of TS inquiries into how paraprofessional translators contribute to "guarantee[ing] information flows across languages" (Koskinen, 2025). However, like OS, IB's engagement with translation remains patchy. As Westney and colleagues

(2022) explain, IB mirrors OS in often deploying the concept of "translation" in a metaphorical sense (see i.a. Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2020), and even IB researchers who engage actively with questions related to shifts between natural languages tend to approach interlingual translation as part of a more general category of "language-related issues" (Dam et al. Forthcoming).

In sum, important steps have been taken to synchronize TS, OS and IB around the theme of how to achieve knowledge transfer in internationally active business organizations, but much remains to be done to surface the translation activities that underpin and are enmeshed with individual-level interaction in MNEs as the core of interunit knowledge transfer, as well as its organizational-level implications. IB has only begun to address the translation aspects of boundary spanners' work in MNEs, and IB findings on multilingual work environments and interlingual translation in MNE contexts are not yet integrated with OS research on discourse, metaphorical translation and sensemaking. Finally, it remains unclear how boundary spanners and paraprofessional translators are related.

Following on from this overview of the present, which broadly aligns with Westney et al. (2022) but focuses more on the individual level and specifically on the role of boundary spanners, this chapter is aimed to fuse extant research on boundary spanning and interlingual translation activities in international businesses into an updated view of boundary spanning that also accounts for boundary spanners' translation activities. Based on this, possible avenues for future empirical research in international management and translation studies are outlined.

The chapter continues as follows. A literature review deepening relevant parts of the above themes is followed by an illustrative example from the qualitative data set used by Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) and Mäkelä et al. (2019), shedding additional light on the translatorial aspects of recognized boundary spanners' activities while providing a direct bridge to previous empirical research on linguistic boundary spanning in MNEs. Lacunae in existing literature are then discussed in light of this in-depth example, providing a base for expanding our understanding of boundary spanners' translatoriality.

The chapter concludes that contrary to what recent technological developments might suggest, the demand for translatorial competence is likely to grow in future if individuals with this competence are able to merge interlingual and metaphorical translation expertise with domain knowledge. This ability could be labeled "omnitranslatoriality". It is argued that by advancing this notion, the body of work emerging at the intersection of TS, IB and OS has potential to address key challenges of today's business and societal environment.

Literature review

What are boundary spanners? Different aspects of the role including what they do

Within OS, the interest in individuals operating at organizational boundaries stems from a conceptual interest in how organizational boundaries are maintained and managed — in short, how the organization is distinct from its environment, which was a key question for seminal organization theorists such as March and Simon (1958) and Katz and Kahn (1966). Early work focusing specifically on boundary spanning (i.a. Aldrich & Herker, 1977) highlighted the role of boundary spanning individuals as gatekeepers who process information and represent the organization externally. Subsequent research added that boundary spanners also play an important communication role, leveraging their perceived technical competence and communicative abilities to span internal and external communication boundaries created by different language schemes and conceptual frameworks (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981).

In the context of internationally active businesses, boundary spanners play a key role in integrating activities across different kinds of boundaries including linguistic ones (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014), and here they can be defined as "individuals who are recognized by members of both their own in-group and/or relevant out-groups for their long-term commitment to engage in and facilitate significant interactions between the groups, *in order to integrate activities across cultural, institutional and/or organizational contexts*" (Barner-Rasmussen & Mäkelä, 2024, emphasis added). By this definition, which requires recognition by both in- and out-group members, boundary spanners are rare, and far from all organizational members who work across organizational boundaries are thus recognized: Mäkelä et al. (2019) found a total of 6 bilaterally recognized "strong" boundary spanners in a data set comprising 118 potential boundary spanners.

Boundary spanners also cannot be identified by organizational level or job role, as they have been found across all hierarchical levels and may not be formally tasked with boundary spanning (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Mäkelä et al., 2019). Instead, people acting as boundary spanners seem to end up doing it primarily due to their skills and willingness to do so (Levina & Vaast, 2005; Roberts & Beamish, 2017), with their language skills playing an important role in them taking this path (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014). Other necessary characteristics for becoming a recognized boundary spanner seem to be professional competence and familiarity with the organization and its goals, a willingness to promote these goals in ways considered helpful on both sides of the boundary, and operating within an organizational structure that actually makes it possible to be recognized as a boundary spanner (Mäkelä et al., 2019). This chap-

ter will not pursue the last point in detail, but it can be generalized to the observation that boundary spanning always takes place in context.

Due to IB's historical tendency to focus on large units of analysis such as firms and subunits, interest in individual boundary spanners is a relatively late addition to the factors recognized as shaping interunit knowledge transfer and thereby sustaining MNE competitive advantage. The rising interest in microfoundations has redressed this and there is by now a fair amount of IB research on boundary spanners, mostly focusing on these individuals' role, characteristics and effectiveness. This research engages little with language or translation. For example, Schotter and colleagues' (2017) contribution to a special issue on global boundary spanning in the prestigious *Journal of Management Studies* mentions the words "language", "linguistic" and "translation" only once each. Translation is mentioned while describing the organizational complexities of the MNE, which according to Schotter et al. (2017, p. 404) "create implicit and multi-dimensional boundaries including cultural and psychic distance, institutional incompatibilities as well as linguistic issues that may be labelled as 'lost in translation'." Still, some empirical work on boundary spanners' roles and characteristics in the international business context touches upon the role of language and translation. The following three typologies showcase different approaches to this issue.

Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014), focusing on the context of HQ-subsidiary knowledge sharing, find that boundary spanners exchange information, link previously unconnected colleagues, facilitate others' interactions, and intervene in potential or actual conflicts. The authors explicitly state that cultural and language skills play an important role in enabling especially the latter two roles. This paper is the first to explore boundary spanning in MNEs from a language perspective. However, it empirically touches upon the role of translation only once, in noting that a highly effective boundary spanner had "started her career translating negotiations… this role evolved [and she became] the main [interunit] link" (p. 898). This boundary spanner's role was described as follows in a quote by her colleague:

> We have been lucky enough to have a key person here, who has really been important. She has not only been an interpreter, she has been helping people in the Russian unit in many ways … She has really been much more important than people realize. (p. 898)

Birkinshaw, Ambos and Bouquet (2017), focusing on MNE headquarters managers, argue that these individuals may play four boundary spanning roles in relation to subsidiaries: facilitating, spearheading connections across boundaries, lubricating, and reconciling differences in worldviews. This categorization builds on the idea that managers acting as boundary spanners engage in two key forms of mediation, namely making connections (between actors who are unaware of

each other's existence, thereby engaging in facilitating between internal actors and spearheading in relation to external ones) and overcoming differences (by helping actors who already are aware of each other to understand each other better, thereby engaging in lubricating between internal actors and reconciling between internal and external ones). In this typology, especially the overcoming of differences is stated to include elements of translation. This function of boundary spanners is opened up as follows:

> There are many situations where an initial connection exists between actors across boundaries, but a middleman is still required to help them understand each other. For example, Tushman and Katz (1980, p. 1073) talk about the role of boundary spanners 'translat[ing] information into terms that are meaningful and useful to their more local oriented colleagues', while Tushman and Scanlan (1981, p. 291) describe them straddling different thought worlds so that they 'convert words into the second semantic space, while retaining the meaning intended in the first'. (Birkinshaw et al. 2017, p. 432)

Birkinshaw et al. (2017) do not explicitly mention interlingual translation and the references in the above quote are to classic OS papers that primarily engage with translation in a metaphorical sense. However, an overall reading of the paper makes clear that Birkinshaw et al. view the global business context as featuring multiple natural languages, necessitating interlingual translation that is often undertaken by the same individuals who also engage in metaphorical translation.

Søderberg and Romani (2017), focusing on vendor managers acting as boundary spanners in the context of global IT development projects, find that these individuals manage boundaries through buffering and reflecting, forge common ground by connecting and mobilizing, and develop new frontiers by weaving and transforming. Their view of boundary spanners' tasks is thus similar to the other typologies summarized above. As for translation, Søderberg and Romani frame boundary spanners as "translators" mainly in a metaphorical sense, but also mention boundary spanners' foreign language skills as relevant. Their empirical examples include the following quote from their data set, which again shows awareness of interlingual translation as an integrated part of daily boundary spanning activities in global business contexts:

> [Europeans] ... might sound rigid, or a bit rude sometimes. But actually, they do not really mean it, it is just the language they use, it is like they are converting [their native language] into English . . . so for an offshore guy, he feels that "why is he so harsh on me"? So then I tell him "He is not being harsh. He is just using the language that he knows." (Søderberg & Romani 2017, p. 258)

Complementing these typologies, which all use the term "boundary spanning" albeit with small variations in how it is defined, Backmann et al. (2020) advance the very similar concept of "cultural gap bridging" (CGB) in multinational teams. The difference is that CGB focuses on team-internal activities, but in my reading, boundary spanning as defined above could also be internal if a team is characterized by e.g. linguistic or cultural boundaries, implying that CGB and boundary spanning are essentially equivalent. Key for the present argument, Backmann and colleagues find that also CGB is driven in part by bridging individuals' linguistic skills and notably includes interlingual translation as an important component of these individuals' actual bridging behaviors, e.g. as in the following quote from their data:

> But I think, luckily we have a Chinese software engineer, who has been working in Russia for many years and he can speak the Russian language, and so he is acting as kind of a communication bridge between the Chinese team members and these Russian engineers. (Backmann et al. 2020, p. 1288)

Overall, we may conclude that IB research on global boundary spanners recognizes the centrality of language for boundary spanning behaviour and acknowledges that spanning linguistic boundaries between different actors in international business contexts often involves interlingual translation alongside metaphorical translation.

How are boundary spanners translators — or are they at all? What do we know about the translatorial aspects of their role?

Even if IB researchers have recognized boundary spanners' language skills as an important aspect of their competence, and the notion of translation — interlinguistic or metaphorical — is clearly present in the understanding of this role, we know much less about the actual translation that takes place as part of boundary spanners' organizational activity. It is present but not visible, as if behind a veil. In an effort to deepen the understanding of boundary spanners' translatorial role, I will first expand the literature review by summarizing some key recent work at the interface between IB, OS and TS that engages with this issue, and then bring the reader along to look closer at some pre-existing empirical data on boundary spanning, re-examining it for evidence of translation.

The boundary spanning typologies briefly reviewed above suggest that boundary spanners engage in both metaphorical and interlingual translation to carry out their role in MNEs. The strong role of metaphorical translation is surely partly a consequence of IB's overall "translation blindness", which is linked to the field's belated awakening to language issues overall (Piekkari & Tietze, 2021). It is also rooted in OS approaches to translation as a key metaphor in the context of interunit and interorganizational knowledge transfer (Westney et al.,

2022). But it may equally be a sign that the complexity of MNEs compels boundary spanners in these organizations to continuously translate both interlingually and metaphorically, as separate but concurrent and highly enmeshed activities (Tietze, 2010). Indeed, the integrative "translation ecosystem" model recently proposed by Westney et al. (2022) implies that metaphorical and interlingual translation are continuously co-present in the MNE context. Koskinen (2025, p. 42) also notes in the context of her discussion of paraprofessional translatoriality that "the interlingual, intercultural and interorganizational processes tend to be intertwined", and Piekkari et al. (2020) describe interlingual and metaphorical translation as "closely intertwined, shaping and influencing each other".

I provisionally conclude that parsing apart the interlingual and metaphorical translation activities of strong bilaterally recognized boundary spanners may be a dead end, and that while we may be critical of approaches such as Gutierrez-Huerter et al. (2020), who talk about intra-MNE knowledge sharing in terms of "micro-processes of translation" and "the role of subsidiary translators" without engaging at all with interlingual translation, it would be equally one-sided to err in the other direction by focusing only on interlingual translation. However, this still tells us little about the translation activities of boundary spanners beyond that they probably engage in both types of translation and that these should be explored in context.

What do we know about these activities? We know that they occur, that they are important for the MNE, and that they often build on individuals having a combination of professional competence and language skills that can be described as exceptional in their context (though not necessarily in objective terms). We also know that in the context of international businesses, the few who act as boundary spanners usually do so without formal training in translation (though there are exceptions), and that most managers and line employees who translate in MNEs do so as part of a more general responsibility for interaction between individuals, groups, teams and units — that is, translation is not their main task. All this seems to indicate that boundary spanners in international firms are an important category of paraprofessional interlingual translators or "people who translate as part of their regular work in another professional capacity" (Koskinen, 2025).

Koskinen (2025, p. 43) advances the notion of *translatoriality* as "a conceptualization that can account for the muddy everyday life of dealing with multilingualism amidst organizational practices. [Translatoriality] carries no value judgments about who does the translating and how [and] has no in-built emancipatory agenda". These starting points match well with the present state of IB research in terms of how the translation activities of boundary spanners might be approached. Not least, many boundary spanners might themselves baulk at being labeled "translators". Other professional identities are likely to be more salient to

them, and translating — however they understand this term — would be one of many activities they engage in to enact these identities and reach professional and organizational goals. "Translatoriality" as one aspect of these activities thus seems to offer a framing better aligned with boundary spanners' self-view as well as their organizational roles.

Koskinen's research agenda on paraprofessional translatoriality emphasizes the following characteristics. Firstly, paraprofessional translation is widespread in organizations and becoming more so as work contexts are becoming more multilingual. Second, it covers written and oral translation as well as gestures, visualizations and other forms of communication across a broad range of communication situations. Third, it is often managed to a limited extent or even not at all by the organizations that employ paraprofessional translators, while the paraprofessionals themselves in their translatorial role are under less normative pressure than professional translators and are not bound by the same ethical codes. This creates degrees of freedom and affords them significant translatorial agency (see Logemann & Piekkari, 2015). Still, Koskinen assumes that paraprofessional translators will largely remain target-oriented in terms of organizational context and aligned with organizational goals, bound if nothing else by their employment relationship with the organization.

Koskinen calls for extensive data to be collected on paraprofessional translation and translatoriality. Her research agenda also contains numerous suggestions for empirical research, centered on a new approach labeled "translatorial linguistic ethnography" and including thorough analyses based on extensive observation, immersive site visits and translated data as main sources of data, alongside other material such as questionnaires and interviews. It is also noted that "In paraprofessional contexts the display of particular languages or cultures in office walls or desktops offers insights into their status and participants' identity work. These artifacts could also be discussed in interviews." (Koskinen, 2025, p. 48).

Observations on an extreme case of boundary spanning: Where is the translation?

To advance our understanding by tying the above ideas to a practical example, I will now explore them through the prism of an extreme case of boundary spanning in an international business context. The case in question will be familiar to the readers of Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) and Mäkelä et al. (2019). As a coauthor of these two papers, I have returned to their original qualitative data specifically to explore the role of boundary spanners as translators, guided by the notion

that re-analyzing existing data from a novel perspective offers exploratory potential and insights (Corti, 2007; Wästerfors, Åkerström & Jacobsson, 2014).

My inquiry is focused on a specific individual pseudonymized as "Mr. Y" in both papers. This person was identified as being both linguistically and culturally highly skilled (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014) and qualified as a "strong and bilaterally recognized" boundary spanner (Mäkelä et al., 2019). I personally participated in interviewing Mr. Y twice as part of the 31 interviews undertaken in the MNE that he worked for, a Finland-based chemical process manufacturer labelled as "Company D" in Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014). The context of the interviews was a research project focusing on inter-unit knowledge and competence transfer between Finnish parent MNEs with strategically significant activities in China or Russia — considered key emerging markets at the time — and their subsidiaries in these markets. Further details on the project are provided in the original papers.

The interviews in Company D were conducted in English, Finnish, Russian or Swedish depending on the respondents' preferences and which members of the 8-person research team were present during a specific interview. Most interviews referred to here were conducted in Finnish or English. I am fluent in both these languages in addition to my native Swedish. Our two interviews with Mr. Y were carried out in English because I do not speak Russian. All interviews were transcribed in the original language and all except the Russian ones were also analyzed in the original language. The Russian interviews were translated to English by a native Russian member of the research team to make them available for analysis also by other team members.

Westney et al. (2022; Chapter 7 in this volume) have pointed out that interviews are limited as a source of information on what gets translated and how in organizations, and the research agenda of Koskinen (2025) forcefully insists on interviews being used only as one data collection method among others. The limitations of interview data are heavily present in my reanalysis, but to some extent counterbalanced by in-depth knowledge of the case, which we as a research team followed over an extended period, with opportunities for ethnographic observations during visits to the company's sites in both Finland and Russia. As we shall see, these observations — although fleeting — offered glimpses that in my view justify Koskinen's insistence on ethnography.

Mr. Y held a key managerial position in Company D's Russian operation, which included a new production facility and a regional sales operation. He was a relatively young executive of Russian extraction with a business degree from a Finnish university and work experience from global MNEs much larger than Company D. Early in his career in Company D, he had spent some time at the Finnish headquarters to get acquainted with the company's management processes before relocating to Russia to start ramping up the local activities there.

However, he still visited Finland on a regular basis. Mr. Y had long experience of working with Finns and spoke fluent Finnish in addition to very good English. He reflected on how these linguistic and cultural skills supported his work and his position in Company D as follows:

> I am someone who knows Finns 'cos I worked mostly all of my life and know the language and I know the culture for a long time, it is something that in many cases when I tell something to our people here, they are very surprised to understand that OK, this is a new thing about the Finnish culture that they have not any idea before so it is not only Finns learning how Russians are different but it is also Russians learning how Finland is different.
>
> For me it has been very easy, because you know I have now spoken Finnish for sixteen years, and it has been very helpful for me in my work.
>
> I think I wouldn't even have this position without Finnish. It was not a formal requirement, but I think that was a must at that point.

Mr. Y's linguistic and cultural skills were corroborated by other interviewees in both Russia and Finland. A subordinate of Mr. Y, a member of the Russian unit's management team, reflected on the importance of these skills as follows when describing Mr. Y's role as a key contact between the Russian unit and the Finnish headquarters:

> If [Mr. Y] was not able to speak Finnish, then he would not be our general director.

A Finnish colleague who was the hierarchical equal of Mr. Y, as they were both members of Company D's top management team, made a similar point twice during our interview:

> I believe that it has also been very important that [Mr. Y] speaks perfect Finnish, which made it possible for us to handle all our meetings here at the early stages, when he was here, in Finnish.
>
> I think one of the reasons for [Mr. Y's] success, in addition to his many other good qualities, but also there has been the significance of language. He is great at languages.

The documented instances of boundary spanning recorded for Mr. Y centered on three processes that had recently unfolded or were unfolding in Company D at the time of the interviews. These were (1) establishing the company's state-of-the-art production unit in Russia; (2) solving a trust crisis between the Finnish HQ and the Russian management team related to how much and how detailed control

would be exerted over the Russian subunit; and (3) conveying the distinct corporate culture of Company D to new Russian employees.

These processes unfolded in a broader organizational and cultural context where some features were particularly salient. First, the expansion to Russia was a crucial strategic investment for Company D. It entailed a near-doubling of their production capacity, which had previously been located only in the Finnish regional town where the company had been founded more than a century earlier. This meant that top management consisted of Finns who spoke Finnish between them, and international experience was relatively limited despite the company being a global leader within its product niche. Second, although the data collection took place at a point when Russia was viewed positively among Finnish businesspeople as a major emerging market opportunity, the two countries have an arduous historical relationship including wars in 1939–1944 that cost Finland 9.5% of its adult male population and 11% of its territory. A trust deficit towards Russia, few Finns wanting to learn Russian (the two languages are not mutually intelligible), and a turn towards the West were thus features of the Finnish cultural, political and business landscape already then. They were also evident as undercurrents in the relationship between Company D's Finnish headquarters and its Russian units, though key actors made active efforts to subdue their impact on interunit cooperation.

In Company D, all three processes mentioned above included multiple boundary-spanning interventions by Mr. Y, covering the four dimensions of the typology proposed by Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014): exchanging, linking, facilitating and intervening. The question pursued here is to what extent his boundary spanning involved different kinds of translation, whether in the interlingual or the metaphorical sense. We now proceed to explore the evidence for this.

Translation as part of Mr. Y's boundary spanning during the establishment of Company D's state-of-the-art production unit in Russia

The establishment of the production unit in Russia was succinctly described by Mr. Y as follows:

> Basically there were two people in charge of different parts of the project and there was very close collaboration between these two people from the outset and it still continues. These two people are NN [a Finnish top management team member] and myself.

NN did not speak Russian, so they had chosen English as their communication language — a solution both expressed satisfaction with — and had ensured that all administrative staff recruited for the new venture spoke English. These solutions

imply extensive "hidden translation" from Finnish to English and from English to Russian, but this aspect was not problematized by Mr. Y or NN. Both stressed that their mutual relationship had always been problem-free and the process of establishing the new production unit had gone according to plan.

Organizational translation needs in this process had been handled by hiring interpreters to facilitate the transfer of technology from Finland to Russia. Mr. Y motivated this as follows:

> [When] technical expertise should be transferred to people who don't speak English (…) we hired a translator (…) helping in training sessions for the [Russian] operators who were coming to [the Finnish HQ], helping in communication with the Finnish specialists (…) because he has spent so much time there, he already himself he knows about the process and the production technology so much, he knows the terminology, it has been very helpful. Because (…) externally you cannot get a translator who would come and be knowledgeable of [our] terminology. It's very specific, but we have built it in-house, this capability.

Thus the first of our three processes, consisting of transferring technical competence and setting up a production unit, mainly entails hidden and explicit interlingual translation, with little evidence of — or perceived need for — metaphorical translation.

Translation to solve a trust crisis between the Finnish HQ and the Russian top management team related to control over the Russian subunit

The start of our data collection coincided with a trust crisis between the headquarters and the Russian unit, centering on how much autonomy the latter should have in staffing its finance department and whether a controller appointed by the Finnish headquarters would be stationed in Russia or not. Mr. Y engaged extensively in boundary spanning between the Russian management team and top management in Finland to defuse the conflict while striving to retain what he considered a reasonably staffed and sufficiently autonomous finance department in Russia.

Related to this process, there is no explicit evidence of interlingual translation, but clearly much of the Russian management team's dissatisfaction was channeled to Finland via Mr. Y, which probably entailed him engaging personally in interlingual translation from Russian to English and Finnish when conveying the message. A Russian management team member stated:

> Only one person in our management team has worked for [a] Finnish company, it is our GM 'cause he speaks fluently Finnish and he lived in Finland and he knew these cultural differences that influence the business relationships but as for us we did not know anything.

Our interviews with Mr. Y suggest that he engaged extensively in metaphorical translation during this process, focusing especially on differences in accounting practices between Finland and Russia while downplaying the impact of cultural differences, which he felt would be counterproductive to emphasize:

> We have had very long and very hot discussions with [the chief executive officer of Company D] about resourcing in finance department 'cause accounting in Russia and accounting in Finland are two entirely different things.
>
> The perceptions that people in Finland and in Russia have about the other nation, which is driven by historical reasons, by different kind of prejudices and so on, and this is something that should be fought, but I think we should be focused on building the common corporate culture and taking the best of both national cultures in it. (…) I wouldn't really even speak too much of these cultural differences.

Throughout this process Mr. Y adapted to which side of the interunit boundary he was operating on, as Finnish top managers were well aware. One said:

> He's an interesting man, this Mr. Y, it's fascinating that when he's in Finland, he behaves like a Finn, and then when he's in Russia, he behaves like a Russian [laughs].

Translation as part of Mr. Y's boundary spanning efforts to convey the distinct corporate culture of Company D to employees at the Russian subunit

The third and most complex process related to corporate culture. At their century-old Finnish site, Company D had a strong culture supported by some historical military imagery. For reasons of confidentiality these images cannot be described in detail, but they included brand names and verbal and visual symbols with connotations to historical Finnish soldiers who fought for the Swedish crown, including against Russia. Mr. Y and the HR manager at the Russian site saw the value of this distinct company culture and personally engaged in both metaphorical and interlingual translation to convey it to employees at the Russian site. The HR manager, who was a language teacher by education, described this delicate task as follows:

> We, not only me but [Mr. Y] also participated in translating this into Russian. And there were some words we changed in some time, because we saw that maybe it is not understood by people in the way that we want.

Mr. Y described the challenges as follows, in the context of a discussion where he and the interviewer had just walked past a poster depicting a cartoon of a 17th-century knight:

> Well, it was actually transferred in the same way as it has been done in Finland. (…) We didn't change anything, it cannot be changed, if you want to keep the originality of the thing, keeping it authentic. [but] we don't really like emphasize too much the history. (…) we use these images all the time, so people know where it came from, but perhaps we don't emphasize too much the specific details of where these guys fought with whom and so on, because then the next question is then, well, did they fight with Russians... And this is something that you don't want to go into.

Answering a question specifically on possible challenges in the linguistic translation of the company vision and values to Russian, Mr. Y stated:

> No, not really. Not that I recall. Of course there were some small issues, but... the translations of these texts were done here by our HR manager basically, of course being Russian, she was careful in selecting the words and making sure that the meaning is kept, but that the wording doesn't insult anyone or whatever, brings the true meaning of the word.

Finnish HQ managers did not know enough Russian to assess the translations, but had hired a Russian-speaking communications expert and overall trusted the Russian organization to convey the culture appropriately, specifically referring to Mr. Y's skills in Finnish as in the following quote by a top management team member:

> Well, I have done my best to, in those translation things, the Russian language is so very different, but, well, I can check with [Russian-speaking communications expert at HQ] but my impression is that those things went quite smoothly (…) It's also because [Mr. Y] himself has lived in Finland and knows Finnish, so he has been able to communicate it.

This process provides insight into how a recognized boundary spanner engages in metaphorical translation, supported by interlingual translation that is "used strategically to shape the direction and impact of metaphorical translation" (Piekkari et al. 2020). It also sheds some light on what Piekkari et al. call "agentic translation" and the potential manipulation of meaning enabled by translation processes that outsiders cannot monitor.

Discussion

Based on this excursion into data on boundary spanning, we can tentatively answer some questions about the relationship between bilaterally recognized "strong" boundary spanning and paraprofessional translation. Firstly, the findings

strongly suggest that bilaterally recognized boundary spanners tend indeed to fit the definition of paraprofessional translators. Or perhaps more appropriately, because few of these boundary spanners would define themselves as "translators" or have (interlingual) translation as their primary formal work task, their activities can be described in terms of paraprofessional translatoriality.

Inversely, however, it must be underlined that all individuals exhibiting paraprofessional translatoriality in international business contexts cannot be labeled boundary spanners as defined by Mäkelä et al. (2019). While Koskinen (2025) is right that paraprofessional translation is widespread in organizations and becoming more so as work contexts become more multilingual, bilaterally recognized boundary spanners are a much rarer category of actors, with activities stretching far beyond translation (even in a wide sense) based on their advanced professional and organizational skills alongside linguistic skills. In short, it may be assumed that most or all boundary spanners engage in paraprofessional translatoriality, but we should be careful not to equate paraprofessional translators with boundary spanners.

In a further parallel to the research agenda advanced by Koskinen (2025), and extending also the arguments of Piekkari et al. (2020), the above analysis suggests that the translatoriality of strong boundary spanners is enacted strategically and with a significant degree of freedom. This is based both on boundary spanners' generally recognized efforts to advance the goals of the organization — which makes them highly trusted by colleagues on both sides of the spanned boundary — and their rare linguistic skills, which makes their translatorial output difficult or impossible for others to monitor. This obviously creates the potential for agentic action that is not fully aligned with organizational goals. In line with their paraprofessional status, boundary spanners who engage in translation are not reined in by the same norms and codes of conduct as professional translators. Depending on how they prioritize other dimensions of their professional activity, they may use their translatorial agency quite liberally.

As for the balance between metaphorical translation and interlingual translation, the material examined for this chapter suggests that in the context of strong boundary spanning, both occur, sometimes separately and sometimes concurrently. This makes their relationship opaque and calls for a new range of research methods to shed light on their interplay, again very much in line with the proposals of Koskinen (2025). Tentatively it may be assumed that strong boundary spanners are able to engage in both types of translation and do so strategically and agentically with the aim of advancing organizational goals. This translatoriality is co-enabled by organizational and professional knowledge. It is perhaps not wrong to suggest the label "omnitranslatoriality" for this rare, highly context-specific and difficult-to-imitate competence.

In closing, recent research on boundary spanning has emphasized the need to study boundary spanning in terms of specific actions taken by individuals and to evaluate boundary spanning actions through the perceptions of others on both sides of the boundary being spanned (Barner-Rasmussen & Mäkelä 2024). This appears well aligned with the ethnographic approach suggested by Koskinen (2025) and can shed further light on "omnitranslatoriality" if questions related to researchers' linguistic and contextual competence can also be solved. The importance of such endeavors is accentuated by the external turbulence many organizations and societies are facing today, which daily increase the need for translation and boundary spanning — mutual understanding, in short.

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CHAPTER 5

Learning from news translation research to unblackbox paraprofessional translation

Marlie van Rooyen & Lucile Davier

The general public still widely understands translation as a linguistic or lexical activity where words are mechanically replaced by other words. Journalism studies scholars have a linguistic understanding of translation, and journalists conceptualize translation as a form of literal transfer that is not adapted to the news context. In organization studies and international business, translation is used to describe the movement of ideas, objects, and resources, but there is still a widely held view that interlingual translation is a routine task. In this chapter, we present a conceptual framework, supported by empirical data from studies related to news translation, that could inform translation research in sister disciplines. Coexisting concepts of translation are compared in a brief overview of news translation. We engage with concepts related to the status of translators, such as volunteer, paraprofessional, or professional. Methodologically, this contribution argues that sociological methods can guide news translation research to unblackbox translation and the translators. The final section suggests several avenues for future research into unblackboxing data regarding paraprofessional translators working in journalistic settings.

Keywords: paraprofessional, volunteer, news translation, actor–network theory, sociology of translation

Introduction

The general public still widely understands translation as a linguistic or lexical activity where words are mechanically replaced by other words. Journalism studies scholars have a linguistic understanding of translation (Valdeón, 2018), and journalists conceptualize translation as a form of literal transfer that is not adapted to the news context (Davier, 2017). In organization studies and international business, translation is used as a way "to describe organizational change processes" and the "movement of ideas, practices, objects and resources across borders" (Tietze, Koskinen & Piekkari, 2022, p. 1), but these disciplines have generally con-

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ceived interlingual translation as "a mere mechanistic act" (p. 13). More recently, organization studies scholars have adopted a more nuanced understanding of interlingual translation to reveal the "active involvement [of translators] in meaning-making" (p. 13).

This integration strongly relates to the visibility debate in news translation. To date, research into translation in journalistic settings has focused quite extensively on the often-invisible nature of news translation and the challenges of identifying the translator, translation processes, and/or the translation product. However, there are studies that have presented empirical evidence and theoretical arguments to increase the visibility of translators, translation processes, and the translation products (i.e. Van Rooyen, 2019a, 2025). In some instances, these studies have offered some insight into the complexities of volunteer or paraprofessional translation in newsrooms by following, inter alia, sociological theories and methods (Davier, 2014, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2022a, 2022b; Tesseur, 2013, 2017a, 2017b; Van Rooyen, 2013, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2025). Paradoxically, while translation processes seem to be invisible, scholars have observed far-reaching restructurings of content due to forceful interventions in the translation product (Schäffner & Bassnett, 2010; Davier, 2017).

The primary aim of this chapter is to present a conceptual framework supported by empirical data from studies that have investigated news translation that could inform translation research in sister disciplines, such as organization studies and business studies. The chapter is structured as follows: first, by way of contextualization, we provide an overview of how news translation has been conceptualized, followed by a summary of how we situate ourselves conceptually and confront coexisting conceptions of translation. We subsequently engage with concepts related to the status of translators, whether volunteer, paraprofessional, or professional. Thereafter follows a discussion of the sociological methods that have guided news translation researchers in unblackboxing translation and translators, and, finally, we conclude and identify avenues for future research.

Conceptualizing news translation

Since the 1970s, translation studies have revised the linguistic approach to translation with the development of functional theories (Munday, Ramos Pinto, & Blakesley, 2022). Instead of regarding translation as a comparison between inert language systems (Chesterman, 2016 [1997]), various theorists have envisaged translation as an action in pursuit of a goal that involves multiple participants; examples of such approaches include *skopos* theory (Reiß & Vermeer, 1984), "translatorial action" (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984), and translation-oriented text analysis

(Nord, 2005). Furthermore, translation studies scholars have incorporated theoretical and methodological frameworks from various other disciplines to investigate translational phenomena, e.g. from cultural studies (i.e. Sywenky, 2014), feminist theory and politics (Simon, 1996), globalization studies (Bielsa, 2016), development studies (i.e. Marais, 2014), sociology (i.e. Wolf & Fukari, 2007), complexity thinking (Marais & Meylaerts, 2018), semiotics (i.e. Gorlee, 2004), and ecology (Cronin, 2016). All these interdisciplinary influences have added nuance to the conceptualization of translation. In news translation research, numerous scholars (i.e. Davier, 2019b; Valdeón, 2020; Van Doorslaer, 2010) have described how the subdiscipline has developed in parallel to the multiple frameworks in the broader discipline. In a joint contribution to translation and sociology, we highlight the most important studies that follow the frameworks of Pierre Bourdieu (field theory), Niklas Luhmann (systems theory), Anthony Giddens (structuration theory), and Bruno Latour (actor–network theory) (Van Rooyen & Davier, 2024).

One of the most significant challenges in news translation research arises due to the multiple terms used to describe translation, including (but not limited to) acculturation (Bassnett, 2005), localization (Tsai, 2005), recreation (Van Doorslaer, 2009), reframing (Federici, 2010), reshaping (Bassnett, 2005), transediting (Stetting, 1989), and transformation (Bielsa, 2007). In translation studies, Marais (2019, pp. 3–4) lists multiple terms used for "roughly similar phenomena or processes", such as

> transmodality, transfiction, transliteracy, transmedia navigation, transcreation, adaptation, ekphrasis, intersemiotic translation, semiotranslation, interart, voice description, cinematization, and gamification, representation, visual transmediation, metafilmic, kinekphrastic, transideology, interfigurality, and shapeshifting... intermediality, intermodality, multimediality, and multimodality, ...

Marais (2019, p. 5) explores what these examples have in common and argues that these phenomena are all "meaning-making processes" that "have a translational aspect to them, in that they involve a process of turning signs into other signs" (Marais, 2019, p. 5). Marais's semiotic conceptualization of translation is reminiscent of the research of Bruno Latour. Despite being primarily a sociologist, Latour was also influenced by Greimas' semiotics and especially actantial grammar, where an actant "applies not only to human beings but also animals, objects, or concepts" (Greimas & Courtés, 1979, p. 5). Both the human and nonhuman actors are actants (Janicka, 2022, p. 849). These actors are entities responsible for affecting changes and, in effect, making a difference (ibid.). According to Marres (2019, p. 115), both the human and nonhuman actors leave traces through "what they say" (their expressions) and "what they do" (their actions). Van Rooyen aptly asks, "which actants are relevant, because it seems impossible to trace all

entities in any given research setting" (2019b, p. 58). She states that the only relevant actants (p. 58) are those that leave traces and a "visible effect on other agents" (Latour, 2005, p. 79). Latour used translation in his research, but it was not his intention to develop a translation theory, certainly not with interlingual and intralingual translation in mind. His understanding of translation is "a connection that transports, so to speak, transformations" (2005, p. 108). Latourian translation means that "a relation does not transport causality but induces two mediators in coexisting" (2005, p. 108).

To further illustrate, we discuss a few trans-phenomena used in news translation that we intend to challenge. However, we emphasize that these terms are discussed as global strategies for a whole text and not as micro-strategies employed within individual sentences. Stetting (1989) introduced the term "transediting" to refer to translation that includes changes intended to tailor texts to the target audience, which closely relates to the practices in news translation. The reference to change could correspond with a Latourian definition of translation. Similarly to Stetting, Schäffner criticizes Stetting's term because it poses the risk of pushing translation to "a narrower sense of a purely word-for-word transfer process" (2012, p. 881). She thus argues for an understanding of translation that could also align with Latourian translation. The reason could be Schäffner's statement that "any translation [...] is a textual and a sociocultural process which involves transformations" (ibid.). The same reasoning can be transferred to other concepts used to describe the numerous changes incorporated while translating news, such as localization (Orengo, 2005), trans-adaptation (Li, 2006), or recontextualization (Kang, 2007).

Most relevant to translation studies, and, in this case, news translation, is that, if anything has been moved from one place to the next, it "cannot emerge unchanged" (Czarniawska, & Sevón, 2005, p. 8), and there is thus some form of change. Latourian translation would include concepts (also referred to as Latour's infralanguage) such as "tracing", "associations", "relations", and "connections" (Latour, 2005, p. 108). As previously mentioned, news translation is still mainly investigated through a product-oriented and actor-oriented approach, with the ongoing debate regarding the visibility (or lack thereof) of translation products (source texts and target texts) or translators. We propose that, as argued by Van Rooyen (2025), a sociological approach to news translation, and especially Latour's actor–network theory, provides a thinking tool with which to unblackbox not only the (translation) actors and the (translated) products but also the nonhuman actors in the news translation process. We discuss the methods used to uncover all these concepts in Section 4, but, for the sake of clarity, mention the relevance of other role-players in Latourian translation. The actor–network theory researcher considers all the different actors (human and nonhuman) but eventually settles for

those "who make a difference", which are referred to as "mediators" (Latour, 2005, p. 39). Latourian translation is the fleeting instance when mediators interact, and the effect of this form of translation is when there are "different forms of transformation, modification, distortion or change that would then allow for some form of meaning-making" (Latour, 1996, p. 379).

In contrast, "intermediaries" are actors that do not affect any other actors (ibid.). The actions or presence of the intermediaries are "blackboxed", and, therefore, they (whether human or nonhuman) have no effect on the specific processes under investigation. The intermediaries do not contribute to any form of transformation, whether the translational activities during interlingual or intralingual translation or the use of technology such as a computer or a mobile phone. These actors are taken for granted and are, in effect, invisible. For example, a news consumer would probably only become aware of a seemingly hidden interlingual translation process between French (i.e. news dispatch) and English (newspaper report) if there was a mistranslation (cf. Van Rooyen, 2025).

To illustrate Latour's infralanguage, we describe the process from the moment the news event occurs (i.a., a hurricane, also referred to as a tropical cyclone)[1] until the information is shared with a news outlet's audience. In the following scenario, a news organization (nonhuman actor) receives information (in whichever language, depending on the circumstances) (nonhuman actors) from a weather service that a certain area could expect a hurricane (nonhuman) in the next few days. As torrential rains (nonhuman) pour down near the coast of Mexico, a journalist (human actor) sources the story from citizens (humans) and publishes photos (nonhuman) on Facebook (nonhuman) and X (nonhuman). The news outlet (likely through a human actor) dispatches journalists, photographers, and/or videographers (human actors) to the area. The journalists and other human actors use recording equipment, cameras, computers, and other technology (nonhuman) to record or report on the situation (i.e., the nonhuman actor) as it unfolds (process).

In the example above, translation is the process by which the journalist or other human actor displaces and transforms (*processes*) the news event (hurricane, *nonhuman*) into a news report (*nonhuman*). The actors thus have agency. The processes of displacement and transformation (Callon, 1984, p. 209) could include interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation. In this specific example, the news report would inevitably be complemented by multimodal elements (e.g. *nonhuman* video material, images, and audio) and distributed (*a process*) across multiple *nonhuman* platforms (depending on the nature of the

1. Encyclopedia Britannica. 2026. https://www.britannica.com/science/tropical-cyclone; https://gpm.nasa.gov/education/articles/how-do-hurricanes-form

news outlet). News translation (in a Latourian sense) thus *connects* the *human and nonhuman* actors and *moves* them to new contexts by *associating* them with new actors. As argued by Van Rooyen, a translated news story "is not a single, homogenous thing with a single source text" (2025, p. 271). Through the associations, the news story would form "a concatenation of mediators" with a chain of interconnected actors (Latour, 2005, p. 137).

Including the role of nonhuman actors in our understanding of news translation emphasises the presence of materiality in news translation, especially in the form of nonhuman actors, such as multimodal elements. Research into this topic is still extremely limited in this subdiscipline. In terms of multimodality, Riggs (2021) notes that the verbal elements in headlines as well as the accompanying visual material translate "the event, and the news values of the outlets, for the domestic audiences" (p. 353). Another scholar, Hernández Guerrero, explores news stories that are presented through more than one media format, for example "spoken and written word, moving and still images or graphics, including interactive and hypertextual elements" (2022, p. 1488) — all of which are examples that could be understood in Latourian terms. She identifies the human actors in the translation process, including translators, editors, and writers who participate in the rewriting (i.e., the translation process) of written content and different multimedia elements for a "new journalistic framework and [for] its new recipients" (Hernández Guerrero, 2022, p. 1499).

Thus, news translation is one example of pushing the conceptual framework of translation beyond the linguistic (Jakobson's interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation types [1959]). Simultaneously, we observe an opposing trend in international business and organization studies, two disciplines that are progressively incorporating translation in its interlingual meaning (Tietze, Koskinen, & Piekkari, 2022).

In these disciplines, Tietze, Koskinen, and Piekkari (2022, p. 125) note that actor–network theory has also been the inspiration for the conceptualization of translation by a school of thought in organization studies, namely Scandinavian institutionalism (Czarniawska, & Sevón, 1996). Researchers have recognized that a Latourian conception of translation "is a good way to describe the emergence and construction of various types of connections around the globe because it is polysemous" (Czarniawska, & Sevón, 1996). For these scholars, Latourian translation provides insights into how "ideas and organizational models travel across borders between countries and boundaries between organizations (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996)" (Westney et al., 2022, p. 3). Actor–network theory connects the conceptualization of translation studies and business studies to discuss movement, change, innovation, and transformation.

To summarise, we view translation as not being simply a matter of interlingual and/or intralingual transfer but rather as a process that includes transformation, displacement, and movement. Therefore, we contend that Latourian translation could uncover (or unblackbox) most translation products (whether source or target), the translational process, and, specifically, the translation actors (whether human or nonhuman). For this purpose, we propose a conceptual framework inspired by sociological approaches that investigate the complexities of volunteer and paraprofessional translators.

Volunteer and paraprofessional translation

In this section, we refer to a body of knowledge called nonprofessional interpreting and translation, which has been used in news translation research. However, to align with the terminology employed in this edited collection, we distinguish between volunteer translation and paraprofessional translation. The term "nonprofessional interpreting and translation" has been widely adopted in translation studies (Antonini, 2021, p. 172) and now serves as an umbrella term. However, the term "paraprofessional" may lead one to question the broad application of "nonprofessional".

Nonprofessional interpreting and translation emerged in the 2010s, even though the discussion regarding "natural translation" had already begun in the 1970s (Harris, 1973). Research into nonprofessional interpreting and translation has included genres such as child language brokering (Wunseh & Nomlomo, 2023), fansubbing (Abu-Rayyash, Al-Abbas, & Haider, 2023), collaborative online translation (Yu, 2022), faith-related interpreting (Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013), community health interpreting (Lesch, 2020), and translation in the news (Antonini, 2021; Van Rooyen & Van Doorslaer, 2021).

Among these domains, translation in the news often challenges the distinction between professionals and nonprofessionals (Antonini, 2021, p. 172), which is why we argue for the inclusion of the term paraprofessional in news translation research. Examples of paraprofessional translation include research by Van Rooyen and Van Doorslaer (2021) regarding collaborative community news translation, Davier's (2017) work on translation in news agencies, and Tesseur's (2017b) research into translation and nongovernmental organizations. In this instance, it may be useful to distinguish between nonprofessional (or volunteer) and paraprofessional translators in journalistic settings along the following lines: volunteer translators are not paid but may have been trained as translators (Cadwell, Bollig, & Ried, 2020; Olohan, 2014). There can thus be professional and nonprofessional volunteers. If translation is practiced as part of another professional activity and

an individual is paid for services rendered, the practitioner could be referred to as a paraprofessional (see among others, Jiménez Crespo, 2024; Koskela, Koskinen, & Pilke, 2017). Apart from the criterion of payment, paraprofessional translation is also a form of translation performed by professionals from other fields (Antonini & Bucaria, 2016; Ghignoli & Torres Díaz, 2016), such as sports commentators who function as interpreters.

The authors in this subfield do not describe journalists (or paraprofessional translators) in normative or critical terms. Instead, they highlight journalists' expertise in a specific genre, which allows such practitioners to compensate for the lack of formal training in translation, to acquire competence in news translation over time, and to eventually help "the final users partake in the mediated event/text" (Antonini & Bucaria, 2016, p. 10). To the best of our knowledge, except for Bielsa and Bassnett (2009), who have observed professional (or trained) translators working at the alternative news agency IPS, professional translation is largely absent from news translation research focusing on actors.

Journalists who also translate often follow different translation quality criteria than those followed by professionally trained translators (Ghignoli & Torres Díaz, 2016). For instance, instead of faithfulness, the risk of legal actions (Matsushita, 2019, p. 71), speed (Matsushita, 2019; Davier, 2014), accuracy, and adaptation to the audience are seemingly the main criteria against which journalists assess their production (Davier, 2014). They also implement strategies intended to mitigate communicative and credibility risks with regard to the audience (Matsushita, 2015; Davier, 2022b). Nevertheless, the fear of losing the trust of the audience is stronger than concerns regarding mistranslations, about which journalists receive few complaints (at least in studies on the Japanese [Matsushita, 2015] and Canadian [Davier, 2022b] contexts). From an ethical perspective, the fact that translation skills are not highlighted and are therefore not developed in a paraprofessional context could pose risks (Matsushita, 2019, p. 72), even if journalists adhere to other deontological principles (Davier, 2022b). Dealing with risks as a collective or a "community of practice" is a possible strategy by which to control problems (Davier, 2022b), which echoes the often-collaborative nature of paraprofessional translation observed by Koskinen (2025).

Research into paraprofessional translation in other environments has also shown that paraprofessional translators are more likely to enjoy greater visibility in their organizations (Piekkari et al., 2020), have a more complex organizational role (p. 1317), and use their agency to pursue their own agendas (pp. 1315–1316). This distinction can be illustrated by the situation analysed at the French-language network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Davier, 2022b). When Davier was in the field, reporters translated as part of their professional activity (e.g. subtitled quotes, translated a concept or background information),

their names appeared, be it in a mention at the introduction of a news bulletin broadcast on TV or in a by-line on the web page where the news story is published. However, when web editors translate a news story created by a journalist from the English-language network of the Corporation, the news item is not bylined. The distinguishing principle is that this group of journalists either interview newsmakers face-to-face or by phone. In other words, journalists who only translate and do not collect their own materials are denied agency in the form of having their authorship recognized. Journalists also participate in editorial meetings and thus in selecting which stories are to be covered. In addition, the French-speaking journalists (Davier, 2022b, p. 41) interviewed in the Canadian context saw language correctness and the protection and preservation of high-standard French as part of their professional mandate.

We can contrast the above example with Buzelin's analysis of the translation of a marketing book by a professional translator and a marketing scholar (who can be classified as a paraprofessional translator). Both types of translators followed the same norms or had the same long-term habitus (or *habitus long*) since they "chose to follow, rather rigorously, the macro-structure, the micro-structure, as well as the order of discourse of the original", even though the marketing scholar was allowed the liberty to adapt the French translation (Buzelin, 2014, p. 86). This example differs significantly from what scholars have observed in journalistic settings (Cherchari, 2021; Davier, 2022b; Van Rooyen, 2019a), where journalists consider sources as "raw material" (Buzelin, 2014, p. 86). Returning to news translation research, scholars have not been consistent in observing the distinction between these categories. We do not advocate for absolute divisions (a stance linked to the Latourian philosophy against dualisms, e.g. macro vs. micro) but instead regard volunteer (often referred to as nonprofessional), paraprofessional, and professional translation as a cline (Jiménez Crespo, 2024) ranging from volunteer journalists untrained in translation (Van Rooyen, 2019b) to paraprofessional translators (Ghignoli, & Torres Díaz, 2016) and professional translators (Bielsa, & Bassnett, 2009).

Methods for investigating paraprofessional translation in the news

In Section 2, we introduced key conceptual aspects of actor–network theory as a toolkit to investigate news translation, including the translation process, translation actors, and/or the translated product. According to Van Rooyen (2019b), the actor–network theory provides a set of methodological tools with which to "trace, follow and observe routine activities (in a newsroom) to identify the news production process and the position of the different actors involved in the opera-

tion of their day-to-day human existence" (p. 76). For Latour, "*everything is data*" (2005, p. 133) [italics in original]. Therefore, a researcher should "follow the actors themselves" to learn from them (Latour, 2005, p. 12) and continuously pay attention to inscriptions, whether text, recordings, or documents, in order to be able to trace the source and target texts (Westney et al., 2022, p. 5). In other words, investigators need to identify what the actors are *doing* to uncover the actors (human and nonhuman) involved in the news production process.

Sociological research into news translation has combined elements at the micro- (analysis of products and agents), meso- (media policy and competition with other news outlets), and macro-levels (influence of language ideology and sociolinguistic context). While research into paraprofessional (or nonprofessional/volunteer) news translation does not always rely on sociological methods (Van Rooyen, & Davier, 2024), we employ a classical sociological distinction to organize our thoughts along the axes of the actor and the product. We structure each subsection according to the terminology of actor–network theory, even though, to the best of our knowledge, only three studies (Cherchari, 2021; Daghigh and Amini, 2022; Van Rooyen, 2019b) have followed this approach.

Sociology of the actor

In news translation, an extensive body of research focuses on how news is produced across linguistic and cultural boundaries in what has been described as a "process-oriented" (Holland, 2013, pp. 335–336) or "participant- and context-oriented" approach (Van Rooyen, & Davier, 2024) but only relies partly on ethnographic methods. We shed light on the human or nonhuman *actors* involved in the translational processes that occur in the news and present examples from studies that investigate human actors, nonhuman actors, and networks.

Davier (2022b), Tesseur (2017b), and Van Rooyen (2021) investigated how communication specialists, journalists, and volunteers (in other words, paraprofessional translators) translate press releases and news stories. While Davier and Van Rooyen spent a week or two at each site, Tesseur remained at each location for one to two months. Tesseur's work (2017b) is therefore probably closer to the classical definition of ethnography, which implies immersion (Marin-Lacarta & Yu, 2023), whereas Davier (2022b) and Van Rooyen's (2019a) studies should rather be described as "ethnography inspired" (Marin-Lacarta & Vargas-Urpí, 2020). Tesseur negotiated access to her field as part of a larger project, namely a doctoral fellowship including secondments financed by the European Commission (Tesseur, 2017b, p. 213). The participatory roles of Davier and Van Rooyen were limited by their positions as university lecturers and the availability of teams of journalists at the respective news organizations. Some participants were par-

ticularly interested in the research because the objectives of the scholars overlapped with questions the organizations had encountered. Amnesty International was exploring and developing translation policies when Tesseur visited various offices (2017b, p. 213). Ici Radio-Canada (the French-language network of the public Canadian broadcaster) has the mandate of serving the French minority language community (Davier, 2022b, p. 36), a responsibility that is intimately linked with linguistic and translational questions.

The three researchers collected inscriptions (i.e., policy texts, publicly available documents, and fieldnotes) and conducted informal interviews in the field. In addition, Tesseur (2017b) and Van Rooyen (2018) distributed questionnaires, Davier (2022b) and Tesseur (2017b) conducted semi-structured interviews, and Van Rooyen (2021) took photographs and made audio and video recordings.

By following these research designs, the researchers were able to document the (in)visibility of the translators and their collaboration. At Amnesty International, volunteer translators were treated differently from other volunteers (e.g. they were not invited to organizational events), a situation which has changed since the conclusion of the research (Tesseur, 2017b). Throughout her work placements, Tesseur (2017b) also witnessed the ongoing professionalization of translation with the development of the Language Resource Centre.

In accordance with the literature on community radio stations, Van Rooyen and Van Doorslaer (2021, p. 12) observed that community journalists had to collaborate. They report on a situation in which a music show presenter helped a news writer to understand a WhatsApp message written in Sesotho by translating it into English so that an isiXhosa news writer could include this story in the hourly news bulletin (Van Rooyen, & Van Doorslaer, 2021, p. 13). At the French-language Canadian public broadcaster, Davier observed a journalist in the field calling a colleague in the newsroom to search for a word on a language reference site on the intranet (2022b, p. 42).

The three scholars would not have been able to access these fleeting translational phenomena mediated by human (and nonhuman) actors had they relied exclusively on interviews. Westney et al. (2022, p. 9) and Koskinen (2020) also criticise research that only relies on interviews. In international business, the decision to rely on interviews is generally motivated by a disciplinary preference for structured and quantitative methods (as opposed to an extended case study or ethnographic research design). We posit that interviews remain an interesting data collection method should newsroom managers refuse access to the newsroom, as happened to Davier (2022b), who attempted to organize nonparticipant observation in anglophone media outlets in the region of the National Capital of Canada.

Latour's concept of the black box (a tool or nonhuman actor that is too complex to understand and too essential to ignore) is central in paraprofessional news translation. Van Rooyen (2019b) argues that the black box could be "reappropriated" for studying the "final news product" (or "final target text" in terms of traditional translation studies) to make researchers aware of all the possible and invisible activities, practices, and multiple sources involved in producing translated news text (Van Rooyen, 2019b, p. 61). Conducting fieldwork while observing nonhuman actors can enable researchers to note the interactions between actors that are invisible or blackboxed in the broadcast/published news story, e.g. a brief interlingual discussion held to understand the meaning of a word to be translated (Davier, 2022a) or a journalist asking help from the researcher to transfer audio material via her mobile phone, because his mobile's battery charge was too low (Van Rooyen, 2019a). Furthermore, in the era of media convergence, actor–network theory provides a framework with which to understand the role of technology and its influence on other actors. The concept of the black box is also central to understanding actors that have become indispensable (e.g. social media for journalists) or products in which the translation practices disappear (e.g. traces of translation in a broadcast or published news story) (Van Rooyen, 2019b). Even if interviews can provide researchers with some insight into nonhuman actors and black boxes (Kumar, & Haneef, 2016), observations, photographs, and video recordings have the potential to make translation and translators visible (Van Rooyen, & Van Doorslaer, 2021). Two studies illustrate the agency of nonhuman actors in paraprofessional environments. In one of her field visits, Van Rooyen witnessed a newsreader having difficulty with a microphone while airing a news bulletin. She saw how another presenter rushed over to stabilize the microphone while the newsreader read the interlingually translated bulletin (Van Rooyen, & Van Doorslaer, 2021, p. 9). This difficulty highlights the centrality of the microphone in the news production process (including the finalization of the interlingually translated product), which is usually unquestioned and thus a Latourian black box when it works well. Davier (2022b) also observed several large screens mounted against the walls of the newsroom showing live figures related to audience engagement with the website of the broadcaster. She was able to understand (or unblackbox) part of the journalists' agency during an informal discussion with a journalist: digital editors and vetters (i.e. "revisers" in the Canadian context) monitor the most-visited web pages to revise the most-read digital stories (Davier, 2022b, p. 42). In Latourian terms, the live audience figures transformed the work of the editors by prioritizing their work at times during which the volume of publications makes it impossible to edit all stories before they go online.

Sociology of the product

Regarding the sociology of the product, news translation has a lengthy tradition of product-oriented approaches (Valdeón, 2015; Van Rooyen, & Davier, 2024), which we could revisit as a "sociology of the product" (Wolf, 2012). In actor–network theory terms, the product is an "inscription" — or anything that leaves a trace (Van Rooyen, 2019b, p. 64).

Inscriptions (or products or traces) do not solely transfer information but also "create[e] order" (Latour & Woolgar, 1986, p. 245). Inscriptions can also function as nonhuman actors, as Luo and Zheng (2017) argue in their analysis of source texts, peritexts, and paratexts regarding the translation of a Chinese classic into English. This conceptualization helps us to discern verbal products as nonhuman actors likely to be associated with and influenced by human actors, while also influencing those actors. When used to uncover linguistic data, actor–network theory therefore requires linguistic or translational analysis in addition to ethnographic fieldwork. Linguistic ethnography (Shaw et al., 2015) and translatorial ethnography (Tesseur, 2017a; Koskinen, 2020) appear to be valid methods for the study of paraprofessional translation. Again, we illustrate the need for a methodology that draws on various data sources with examples of studies on paraprofessional translation in the news. In addition to the analysis of inscriptions, e.g. policy documents, fieldnotes on meetings, discussions with staff, and semi-structured interviews with translators and press officers, Tesseur (2017a) devotes a section of her article to the textual analysis of translated press releases produced by Amnesty International. For this purpose, she compiled a corpus of original press releases in English and the translations thereof into French and Dutch (one Flemish version for Belgium and one for the Netherlands). In the tradition of descriptive translation studies (Toury, 2012 [1995]), she conducted a shift analysis or, in other words, a comparison of the changes introduced in the translated target texts. She notes that the translations of quotations by the French office of Amnesty International rarely included changes, whereas the translations of Amnesty Flanders "contained shifts on a regular basis" (Tesseur, 2017a, p. 639). In Latourian terms, these shifts are processes of transformation, movement, and/or change. The combination of textual analysis and data from fieldwork helped her to understand that the Flemish office of Amnesty International adapted the quotations to the local context, omitted some, added others, and sometimes replaced the name of the source with that of a local spokesperson — a practice that can be qualified as "pseudo-quotation" (Tesseur, 2017a, p. 639). Tesseur organized a linguistic ethnography due to several work placements that were part of her doctoral research and enabled her to function as a translator and researcher in three NGO offices (Pym et al., 2014).

During her fieldwork, conducted in two French-speaking media outlets based in the region of the National Capital of Canada, Davier (2019a; 2022a) also collected policy documents, fieldnotes taken during editorial meetings or the observation of journalists, semi-structured interviews, and news stories produced by the journalists she was shadowing. However, she had difficulties in writing a translatorial linguistic ethnography in the true sense of the term for two reasons. First, as has been observed in previous research into news translation (Davier & Van Doorslaer, 2018; Van Rooyen, 2019b), journalists often draw on multiple news sources when they write news items, and parts of these sources may remain invisible even if the scholar is in the field during news gathering and news writing (Davier, 2022a). Second, as agreed during ethical clearance, participants must remain anonymous. However, in the era of digital news, even a sole phrase (a unique collection of words) from a news report may be sufficient to identify its author: typing the phrase in a search engine may give direct access to the news item and, thus, to the journalist's by-line, which would reveal their identity.

To circumvent this problem, a scholar can desynchronize the sociology of the product from the sociology of the actors, as Davier did in her article regarding indirect translation in the news (2022a, p. 398). A researcher can then study the human and nonhuman actors that are associated in a newsroom and analyse the translated texts at a later stage. In this way, the researcher can apply a general understanding of the actor–network to inscriptions that are produced by different people. Despite the desynchronized analysis, Davier (2019b) was still able to understand the language ideology (Kroskrity, 2004) that guided the use of translation in the news: in written stories, translation was made invisible and could thus provide access to a wider array of sources; in video clips, in contrast, translation was necessarily visible through subtitles or voice-over and was thus avoided as far as possible. In other words, journalists attempted to hide translation and multilingualism when they became obvious to the news user. They seemed to display an ideology of language purism (Kroskrity, 1998). One could wish that the information derived from interviews and observation would be complemented by microtextual analysis. In this situation, microtextual analysis could have revealed the identity of the research participants.

Furthermore, close linguistic analysis may be feasible for ethical reasons but not possible due to a lack of language skills — a situation that is likely to prevail in disciplines other than translation studies. Nonetheless, in the context of translation studies, the example of Van Rooyen (2018) is telling in this regard. Van Rooyen (2018) used actor–network theory to study the translation of news in community radio stations in the highly multilingual context in the Free State province (South Africa). The 12 radio stations under study broadcast news in up to eight languages (Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana,

and Street Lingo). Even though she did not understand most of the languages, this situation in effect forced her to focus on all forms of data, especially the nonhuman, to unblackbox translational processes. As noted previously, Van Rooyen focused on actors and particularly the nonhuman actors that mediated the translation, such as bilingual terminology lists, paper dictionaries, online dictionaries, and machine translation (Google Translate) (Van Rooyen, 2018). The methodology employed in her study could serve as an inspiration for scholars interested in exploring contexts that involve languages that they have not mastered.

A sociology of the product (or inscriptions) may be more flexible than a fully-fledged translatorial linguistic ethnography, which implies fieldwork that is synchronous with the collection of texts, even if this is not made explicit (Koskinen, 2025). In journalistic settings, this requirement may pose ethical and practical challenges, which means that we could not implement translatorial linguistic ethnography in its pure sense with journalists whose news stories are published online and signed, which is extremely restrictive. Only a few types of fields could still be open to linguistic ethnography, e.g. radio news bulletins and video clips that are not available in written format on a different platform (Davier, 2019a; Van Rooyen, 2019a) and news dispatches that are mainly presented as a collective product (Davier, 2014). Despite these challenges, we concur with Koskinen (2025) that combining ethnography and linguistic/translatorial analysis to investigate translational activities and actors in newsrooms is extremely promising.

Conclusion

Based on the preceding discussion, we have identified several avenues that future researchers could explore to unblackbox data regarding paraprofessional translators working in journalistic settings.

First, an actor–network theory approach with an increased focus on nonhuman actors could help to unblackbox translational phenomena that are particularly hidden or connected to the materiality of technology, such as multimodal translation, artificial intelligence, and volunteer translation in community contexts in the Global South (Van Rooyen, 2019b). Even though there are some studies investigating multimodality in relation to news translation (i.e. Altahmazi, 2020; Hernández Guerrero, 2022; and Riggs, 2021, 2024), there are still significant opportunities to investigate the multiple modes (or semiotic resources) used in news production, whether written text, video clips, images, infographics, voice-overs, or photographs (see Adami, 2023, p. 383). An actor–network theory approach could further illuminate the materiality of multiple semiotic resources in any given news production process. In addition, a focus on the nonhuman

could be invaluable in uncovering the role of artificial intelligence in journalistic settings, especially because translation studies scholars working in this area are already aware of the problems posed by machine translation and artificial intelligence (Moorkens et al., 2024). We argue that research into artificial intelligence as a nonhuman actor could contribute to further clarifying the status of the news translator, but it remains to be seen whether the development of machine translation and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence have changed conceptions of the translators involved.

Second, we argue in favour of more comprehensive case studies combining interviews and focus groups with observation, in line with the "*slow*ciology" proposed by Latour (2005, p. 122), as multilingualism and translatoriality may be hidden in oral and fleeting interactions in the field (Koskinen, 2025). In cases where ethnography is difficult to negotiate, researchers could resort to creative methods of data collection, such as questionnaires in ethnography (Koskinen, 2008), love letters and hate mail (Koskinen, & Ruokonen, 2017), or participant diaries (Mossop, 2014).

Third, ethnographic observations and interviews should be combined with analyses of multilingual textual data, especially when translation produces changes in meaning (Piekkari et al., 2020). This combination of different methods of analysis could allow a move from microtextual decisions to language practices and policies at the level of an organization (Westney et al., 2022, p. 9). However, researchers should not exclusively prefer such an ideal scenario but instead remain open to the possibility of employing hybrid methods of data collection and analysis when access to the field is refused. As described by Davier (2022a), this could happen in the context of organizations that are protective of their image, when synchronous translatorial ethnography poses a risk concerning the anonymity of the participants (Davier, 2022a), or, as found by Piekkari et al. (2020), when scholars cannot be reasonably expected to be plurilingual or master translation shift analysis.

Fourth, we contend that further research into volunteer translators, such as community journalists (Van Rooyen, 2019a, 2019b, 2021), could follow an interpretative research design. Thus, research that does not discriminate between volunteer and paraprofessional could include more informal organizational settings, e.g. in the context of citizen journalism, which is more prevalent in the Global South and has been mostly under-represented in research.

Finally, we call for further comparative research between international business (in particular Scandinavian institutionalism) and translation studies, as both fields build on constructivist epistemologies and an understanding of translation derived from actor–network theory. In this context, we argue that news translation research may benefit from conceptualizing translation more broadly as

movement and transformation (Van Rooyen, & Davier, 2024), and international business research may benefit from integrating interlingual translation and analysing translated products (Koskinen, 2020).

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CHAPTER 6

Translation policy research and paraprofessional translation

Kaisa Koskinen

One known feature of paraprofessional translation is that while it is ubiquitous in organizational life, it is often not acknowledged by organizations as a core activity and even more seldom strategically managed. This leaves plenty of room for the emergence of bottom-up policies, practices and norms. It is argued that one good tool for analysing and appreciating what goes on in everyday life is to rely on a Spolskian approach to translation policy that sees policy as emerging from everyday practices and members' beliefs as well as from conscious management efforts (Spolsky, 2005). Translation policy research is already quite established in translation studies, and the existing research will be drawn upon. Most work so far is on public authorities' multilingual practices. This chapter extends this to the business environment. The three layers of translation policy — practices, beliefs and management — call for different datasets and different analytical tools. The chapter will discuss the methodological consequences and the possibilities and limitations of particular research designs. For organizations, translation policy research may enable the recognition of the added business value of paraprofessional translators and also reveal if they have in place practices that are not in the best interest of the company.

Keywords: translation policy, translation practices, translation beliefs, translation management, methodology

Introduction

One known feature of paraprofessional translation is that while it is ubiquitous in organizational life, it tends to live a shadowy existence, not always recognized, appreciated or strategically directed. In this chapter, the focus is on issues related to the management of interlingual translation practices, i.e. written and oral communication that crosses a linguistic boundary. Leaving out, at least for now, the questions concerning crossing other kinds of organizational boundaries and other

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forms of translation enables building directly on existing research on language policy in sociolinguistics and on translation policy in translation studies, both of which are situated in the realm of natural languages. How and whether these can be extended to translation practices beyond linguistic boundaries remains a question to be asked later.

The approach to translation policy adopted in this chapter builds on an influential sociolinguistic theory of language policy devised by Bernard Spolsky (2005). It sees policy as emerging from everyday practices and members' beliefs as well as from conscious management efforts. Spolsky's approach, which emphasizes practices just as much, if not more than, official management efforts in studying language policies, has proven fruitful for researching translation policies as well, and this research strand is already quite established in translation studies (i.a., González Núñez, 2016). Most work so far is on public authorities' multilingual practices. In this chapter it is argued that Spolsky's approach is also fitting for paraprofessional translation in business contexts. In organizations operating in a multilingual and multicultural context (i.e., the majority of organizations), the practice of interlingual translation has increasingly been recognized as a constant and essential element of everyday work. Employees at different levels, from the CEO to the shop floor, engage in shifting between languages to complete their professional duties. One known feature of paraprofessional translation is that while it is ubiquitous in organizational life, translation is often not fully recognized as a competence by those who regularly practice it (Jakkula, 2024), nor is it always acknowledged by organizations as a core activity (Escudero et al. forthcoming), and even more seldom strategically managed (i.a., Piekkari et al., 2013). This kind of invisibility is not new for translation scholars, as it also tends to affect professional translation. Nevertheless, this chapter argues that invisibility is likely to be even more prevalent in paraprofessional contexts where designated translators are by definition absent, boundaries between translation and other activities are often porous, mediation is fluid and practices often collaborative (see chapter 1; see also Koskinen, 2025).

For organizations, this implies that they may not recognize the added value of paraprofessional translators/boundary spanners to their business and are also likely to have in place practices that are not in the best interest of the company (uncontrolled machine translation is a prime example). In other words, translation issues are not typically seen as strategically prioritized and are not necessarily organized in an explicit manner. Moreover, spelled-out language or translation policies beyond specifying official company languages are rare.

The lack of explicitly stated policy lines does not, however, in any way automatically imply a lack of policies and established practices. As this under-the-radar and fluid nature of paraprofessional translation leaves plenty of room for

the emergence of bottom-up policies, practices and norms, one good tool for analysing and appreciating what goes on in the everyday life is to rely on an approach to language policy that sees policy as emerging from everyday practices and members' beliefs as well as from conscious management efforts.

From language policy to translation policy

The starting point of Spolsky's approach to language policy is that policy needs to be understood not only through top-down policy declarations and official documents but also as a dynamic bottom-up process that is in constant movement. Policy is thus seen "as a complex social practice, an on-going process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 1). In a programmatic monograph, *Language Policy*, Spolsky (2004) defines the three components of the language policy of any speech community as follows:

1. Language practices, that is, the habitual patterns of making choices from within the linguistic repertoire of that community;
2. Language beliefs or ideology, that is, beliefs and value judgements about language and language use; and
3. Language interventions, planning and management, that is, explicit efforts to modify or influence language practice.

Bernard Spolsky is not a translation scholar, and his approach focuses on language choices that are not explicitly translatorial. For example, the choice whether to speak the dominant language or minority language, or whether to use the standard version or a dialect, is the focus of his interest. The volume of 2004 does not have translation or interpreting indexed, and in the text, they are mentioned only in passing. In the later volume specifically on language management (Spolsky, 2009, p. 246–248), translation and interpreting are briefly discussed under the heading of language services, largely focusing on anticipating technological solutions. Language services, human or non-human, are seen as providing "work-arounds" to communication problems that a successful language policy may eliminate (p. 248).

The view from translation studies has been quite different, and expectations of language learning ever eliminating the need for translatorial work-arounds are less common. Surely, language learning is a viable option in cases of extended contact, as has been argued by Anthony Pym (i.a., 2021), but it is a slow process that requires a lot of effort. Given that migration and globalization are leading to ever more complex linguistic set-ups in communities, it is very difficult to see how lan-

guage learning could ever solve all communication problems, and it thus needs to go hand in hand with other policy options.

Scholars of translation policy have therefore stressed that in multilingual societies, translation policy and language policy are inextricably linked, and that achieving multilingual practices requires a continuous practice of translation (González Núñez, 2016, p. 53–54). Indeed, there is "no language policy without translation policy" (Meylaerts, 2011, p. 744), as the programmatic statement in translation policy research emphasizes (see also Meylaerts & González Núñez, 2018). To understand multilingual practices, we also need to study translation practices, translation beliefs and translation management beyond language policy lines, company language and house style regulations.

This necessity to also focalize operating with multiple languages and crossing linguistic borders through translatorial means is not regularly discernible in language policy documents in any detail. For translation scholars, the necessity of having translation in the toolkit of solutions for fulfilling language policy aims is self-evident, but for others its role is less obvious. It has been compared to breathing that we also tend not to think about:

> the need for policymakers to take translation into account is a banal truism: between languages, one finds translation, non-translation, or partial translation (just as humans either breathe, don't breathe, or breathe badly, sometimes with the help of machines). However, most language policies do not have translation as a particular focus of attention (just as most accounts of humanity do not particularly mention breathing). (Pym, 2021, p. 30)

The need for a codified language policy arises when institutions and organizations need to "decide how to deal with language diversity" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 1). In an entirely monolingual context, the need for explicit language policy formulations may not be felt that pressing. These contexts are, however, difficult to imagine in our contemporary world that is globalized, networked and connected. Apart from very remote and isolated tribes, they are also hard to find at any point in history, as people have always moved across language boundaries. In local, regional, national and international governance, the focus tends to be on what is to be translated and between which languages. For example, the European Union stipulates very clearly which languages are given the status of official language, and this has direct repercussions to translation decisions. This level of language policy is stipulated prominently, in the very first regulation of the Council of the European Union in 1958 (Koskinen, 2008, p. 62). *How* texts are to be translated is a more convoluted matter of internal style guides, translation tradition stored in translation memory systems as well as peer review and unit norms.

Early work on language policy focused on public institutions and national policies (see e.g. Spolsky, 2004). Similarly, most research on translation policy has so far been on public authorities' multilingual practices, and 'policy' is sometimes defined in a way that even excludes other uses. For example, in a comparative analysis of covid communication, the authors state that in the context of their paper "'policy' refers to the conduct of political and public affairs by a local, regional or national government or administration" (Bouyzourn et al., 2023, p. 72; see also Meylaerts & González Núñez, 2017). The same author team further defines "*translation policies as the legal efforts* by authorities to initiate, impose or restrain translation practices," and they continue to define translation practices as "the actual interlingual activities that ensure communication *between authorities and people*" (Meylaerts et al., 2024, p. 1; emphasis added).[1]

This focus on public authorities is of course a legitimate and societally important approach, and nation states and other governing institutions have played a central role in language policy initiatives. However, for the present purposes it is relevant to emphasise that Spolsky's approach spreads across all levels and domains of language use, from individuals and family to supranational organizations. The domain of the workplace is briefly mentioned separately in the original *Language Policy* monograph (Spolsky, 2004, 52–53). In a subsequent book on language management (Spolsky, 2009), a greater variety of domains is looked into in more detail. The chapter on workplace (p. 53–64) is particularly relevant for the purposes of paraprofessional translation which, by definition, always takes place at work, be that in government institutions or in companies. It will be returned to below.

In the tripartite model of language policy above, Spolsky was cited as tying the practices, beliefs and management to a *speech community*, that is, a social group that shares a "communication network" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 6). What this kind of network consists of in practice can be fuzzy, and Spolsky himself moves on to talk about domains. Domains are distinguished by participants, location and topic (p. 7). Spolsky also defines them in spatial terms, as connecting "people and places", thus recognising the situatedness and social and material base of such domains. But he also opts for a generalizing take, in the sense that one of the domains is a generalized "workplace", as he aims for typical conditions with

1. To avoid confusion, a note on vocabulary is necessary. In the research project reported in these publications, "policy" is defined in a manner that deviates from the reading of Spolsky advocated for in this present chapter. In their vocabulary, policy is more or less equal to management as it is understood here. The focus of the Meylaerts et al. 2024 article is on how to deal with a case where practices deviate from "policy" whereas in this chapter it is understood that the actual policy emerges from the interplay of all three layers and is in a constant state of emergence.

explanatory power (p. 7). As a guideline for anyone embarking on a case study, he underlines that language policy is not autonomous but inextricably linked to the "social, political, economic, religious, ideological, emotional context in which human life goes on" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 9). This calls for an "ecological approach" that aims to take this complexity of social life into account (Spolsky, 2004, p. 218).

The idea of an ecological approach is reminiscent of the ecosystems approach to translation in business organizations, which aims to take stock of the complex networked structures of multinational organizations and the various translation needs that arise both within the ecosystem and on and across its boundaries (see Westney et al., 2022, reprinted as Chapter 7 in this volume; chapter 9 in this volume). In researching translation policy, complexity also manifests itself in data collection and analysis; the three layers of translation policy — practices, beliefs and management — call for different kinds of methods, datasets and analytical tools. In what follows, I will discuss the methodological consequences of different foci, and the possibilities and limitations of particular research designs.

Practices, beliefs and management of translation

As discussed above, Bernard Spolsky (2005, p. 21) defines language policy as a tripartite combination of practices, beliefs and management:

> Language policy [...] includes not just the regular patterns of choice, but also beliefs about choices and the values of varieties and of variants, and also, most saliently, the efforts made by some to change the choices and beliefs of others [...]

Practices are equal to observable language use and actions, which can be seen as part of language policy to the extent that they are regular and follow expectations, while beliefs are the values and attitudes the participants assign to languages and these practices, and management is all the explicit efforts to control either practices or beliefs or both. Spolsky (2005, p. 21) foregrounds practices, that is, the "regular patterns of choice", as the first and most foundational object of empirical analysis: "If you want to find out about the language policy of a speech community, of whatever size or nature," he argues, "the first step is to study its actual language practices". In paraprofessional translation this emphasis on everyday choices makes perfect sense. Most organizations do not have fully developed explicit and documented translation policies that paraprofessionals could rely on and researchers could build their investigations on. However, the lack of explicit policy statements, Spolsky emphasizes, does not necessarily equal to policies not existing; they just need to be distilled from practices and beliefs. Conversely, a formal translation management plan is not a guarantee of its execution in the actual practice; it needs

to be actively implemented or else it remains a dead letter. The mismatch, then, may reveal variation in beliefs between management and staff, for example.

In Spolsky's model of policy formation, beliefs can be seen to occupy a unique position as a motor for both translation practices and management actions. As opposed to practices and management, which are both observable actions, beliefs provide the motivations, justifications and understandings these actions are based on. They can therefore be seen as fundamental to how, or even whether, the policy-forming actions take place, either top-down or from the grassroots upwards. In the context of developing a Spolskian translation policy framework, González Núñez (2016, p. 92) defines them as "the beliefs that members of a community hold about issues such as what the value is or is not of offering translation in certain contexts for certain groups or to achieve certain ends". In a more all-encompassing manner, the idea of translation beliefs has long been an integral part of translation studies. The basic tenet of descriptive translation studies that translation is whatever the receiving culture accepts as translation (Toury, 2012, p. 18) can be deverbalized as the beliefs the culture holds on translation. This *translation concept* (p. 111), collective or individual, underlies prescriptive beliefs on, for example, who should be responsible for translation tasks, what kind of a relationship should the two texts have in order for the one to be considered a translation of another, and are there bans and taboos on translation (Robinson, 1996).

Beliefs can be individually held, but as Toury's definition of translation as a norm-governed activity (2012, p. 61 and *passim*) indicates, the collectively held beliefs tend to have a directive influence on both how we act and what values we hold. Similarly, language management can also be seen to take the form of self-correction by the language users themselves, but it mainly refers to the explicit attempt to affect language choices in a particular domain. This kind of organized language management therefore presupposes more than one participant, one of them managing and another being managed (bringing to the picture also hierarchies and questions of authority), and a degree of explicitness as well as influence of ideologies and normativity (Spolsky, 2009, p. 12).

Following Spolsky, González Núñez (2016, p. 92) defines translation management as "the decisions regarding translation made by people who have the authority to decide the use or non-use of translation within a domain". While the use or non-use of translation is a core decision, translation management can also take on other, more nuanced forms. Translation management, then, can be seen to refer to the whats, whos, hows and whens that deal with managing multilingual communication. These can include statements of languages included in the regime, as discussed above, or even decisions to opt for a monolingual national language or *lingua franca* solution instead of translation. Translation management importantly also deals with who translates and with what kind of remuneration. In

today's world, this is not only a question of either using professional translators and interpreters or opting for paraprofessional solutions but also of how the use of automated translation is forbidden, allowed or perhaps even encouraged. In professional translation contexts, style sheets, multilingual company-voice guidelines and term bases are also used to control the hows of translation.

It is also useful to distinguish between external and internal management, between regulations and directives coming from outside the company and management actions within the organization (Spolsky, 2009, p. 181). For example, European Union regulations dictate that user instructions for consumer appliances need to be provided in the official language of the locale where the product is being sold, and this has translation consequences. However, the company can also see operating in the local language advantageous for its marketing endeavours and make localization decisions independently.

In both these cases, translation is directed outwards. Another useful distinction in translation policy research is indeed between internal/in-coming and external/out-going translation (Koskinen, 2000, p. 57). Internal translations are produced for internal use to support multilingual communication among staff and to communicate in-coming messages. Out-going translations are produced for external use for PR and branding purposes, clients, partner organizations or local authorities. A working hypothesis of paraprofessional translation, until we get more empirical evidence, could be that explicit management of outgoing translations can be expected to be more extensive, and the engagement of paraprofessional translators more restricted in favour of professional language service providers, whereas internal practices can be expected to be more often based on ad-hoc solutions and volunteering translators from among staff members.

Researching paraprofessional translation practices, beliefs and management in businesses

If one wants to develop a system understanding of how paraprofessional translation functions in a particular organizational ecosystem, a translation policy approach can be used to identify how recurrent practices shape the translation outcomes, how shared or competing beliefs enable particular actions and prevent some others, and how and to what extent these actions are being managed, explicitly or implicitly. Since paraprofessional translation is by definition a fluid activity embedded within other professional roles, researching translatorial practices will also help uncover who actually undertakes these roles and to what effect. Additionally, researching translation beliefs and translation management efforts may help identify the thought-leaders or gatekeepers operating in this realm.

These three layers of translation policy — practices, beliefs and management — are interdependent but also semi-autonomous. In research, they call for different kinds of datasets and different analytical tools. In designing a study that aims to uncover translation policy issues, the methodological consequences and the possibilities and limitations of particular research designs need to be considered. In this section, each layer will be looked at separately. Ultimately, a full panorama of an organization's translation policy will need to compare and contrast all three.

Researching practices

In most businesses, the explicit management of paraprofessional (or professional for that matter) translation through policy documents and declarations is likely to be somewhat limited, as documented translation guidelines and policy statements are not always produced, and if they are, they may not be too detailed. A good starting point for researching paraprofessional translation is therefore to foreground the actual, everyday activities as opposed to what the normative statements of policy documents prescribe employees to do or not to do, or what different actors state they do, for example, in interview data. Interviews can indeed be illuminating, but one methodological challenge for studying paraprofessional translation is that it is embedded in the everyday life of the organization members, who do not necessarily consciously deliberate on these practices.

At the current stage when empirically verified understanding of the phenomenon of paraprofessional translation is still quite limited, contextualized and situated knowledge of *what is going on* is crucially important for theorizing further. As many readers likely recognized, "what is going on" is *the* fundamental question underlying ethnography. Indeed, ethnographic fieldwork allows for accumulating the kind of exploratory knowledge that is currently still rare on the conditions of paraprofessional translation work in different contexts and answering the question of what is going on in different locales. I have elsewhere (Koskinen, 2020a) advocated for a particular kind of ethnography, *translatorial linguistic ethnography*, to be practiced in researching translation in organizations. This kind of ethnography is, first, linguistic in the sense that it is language-sensitive, it focuses on multilingual practices, observes not only what is going on but also in which language(s) it is going on, who speaks and who are, or are not, addressed. Second, it is translatorial in the sense that it tries to capture the boundary-crossing movements between different languages and different modes of expression and understand the values and goals of those enabling or hindering these movements. Significantly, it also emphasizes a detailed analysis of the written and/or oral translations within an overall ethnographic framework, "linking the micro ele-

ments of textual detail to the macro level of organizational practices" (Koskinen, 2020a, p. 62).

As all ethnographies testify to, practices on the ground are a messy and complex set of actions. Writing in the context of public policy and translation, Meylaerts and González Núñez (2017, p. 6) emphasise that also translation policies are complex and context dependent. It is therefore to be expected that as knowledge from the field increases, the complexities and situational logics of paraprofessional translation will begin to emerge. One great value of ethnographic fieldwork observations is that it also allows the researcher to capture habituated practice, which may well take place underneath the respondent's active awareness (Jakkula, forthcoming).

During translatorial fieldwork at work, the observer will encounter a wealth of information about translation practices. In the following, some avenues for attention are highlighted, but the discussion is in no way to be considered conclusive. A natural first target of analytic observation are the members of the workplace team. Following their everyday activities will allow the researcher to identify who engages in translation activities and how. Their actions can be studied from the perspective of their linguistic and translatorial repertoires, resources and competences (Koskinen, 2020a, p. 63).

Ethnography is typically about people and their organization into communities. What is specific to translatorial ethnography is its focus on how translation plays into this organization; how translation is used to create meaning, to include and to exclude, and to make things happen:

> [I]t is equally important to follow the texts as the participants take efforts to model and mould them, also through translation processes, for the various organizational purposes, and texts travel in various forms of distribution from one member, department, organization and sometimes country to another. It is therefore important to ask what are the texts used for, how and by whom: who writes or speaks, for which purposes and to influence who and how; who distributes and through which channels and media; who is targeted and expected to read and who is excluded (because of limited access or lacking language resources); who will take the role of explaining to others and how and why; who translates, how and for whom; who revises and reinterprets and for which purposes; who stores and archives and is this organizational memory referred to. And so on.
>
> (Koskinen, 2020a, p. 64)

To achieve this translatorial perspective in practice, it may be useful to differentiate between a *translation act* (the process of actually producing a translation) and the entire *translation event* that stretches from a perceived need for a translation by someone up to its reception by the target audience as well as its social afterlife (see Toury, 2012 p. 67–69). In fieldwork, following the translation event will

allow the researcher to gather information on the strategic goals and perceived outcomes that lead to the decision to translate, the solutions chosen to execute it (who, when, how etc.), the actual translation process with its collaborations, revisions and other twists and turns, and the shared cognitive processes that go into the realization, the reception and degrees of acceptance by those for whom the translation was directed at, as well as the (immediate or long-term) intended and unintended consequences of the chosen strategies.

In order to be able to do all this, the researcher will need to have a good understanding of the organizational realities, a lengthy access to the field and perhaps also a degree of good luck in catching both ends of the event. For example, Røvik (2023, p. 8) reports on a finding that it takes an average of 27 months to transfer "acknowledged and desired knowledge" from the part of the organization where it was practiced to another part of the *same* organization. Moving knowledge across organizational borders can be even more time-consuming. In the reality of fieldwork, it may often be more likely to encounter processes mid-way. It is then important to bear in mind the full extent of the event even though it may have begun before the fieldwork and the repercussions may extend long after it.

One significant source of data for researching translation practice are the translations themselves. Translation has been conceptualized as fundamentally a decision-making process where the competence of the translator lies in the capacity of generating several competing translation solutions for any element of the source material and in the ability to strategically and wisely select the one best suited for the context of reception and the overall goals of the translation project. A comparison of the source and the translation allows for an analysis of these decisions and an evaluation of their success. Commonly used methodologies include, for example, shifts analysis, that is, how and where the translation shifts or sways away from the source either semantically or stylistically or with respect to established expectations of regular transfer. These shifts can be analysed from a number of perspectives. For example, one can investigate the change of interpersonal emphasis (Koskinen, 2008, p. 124) or the (re)construction of affect (Koskinen, 2020b, p. 57–61).

A detail-oriented textual analysis can reveal many aspects of organizational life, but translations cannot answer questions of why a particular solution has been used. A number of methodologies has therefore been devised in cognitive translation studies and translation process studies to investigate the translation act, that is, the actual drafting of the translation. Many of these aim to unlock the "black box" of the translator's mind and involve technical set-ups that vary from less-invasive key-logging and screen recording systems to more intrusive eye-tracking devises and functional magnetic resonance imaging (see i.a. Xiao and Muñoz Martín, 2020). These kinds of laboratory designs can reveal relevant infor-

mation on how translation happens in the human brain, but for our present interests in the contextual translation processes in organizations, applications of the more recent approaches to cognition as a situated, embedded and shared activity are more suited (Risku & Rogl, 2020), and their methodology that favours fieldwork is easier to put in place in paraprofessional translation contexts than the more technical process studies. It is not uncommon for paraprofessional translation to be a team effort, and in those cases observing the preferred translation to emerge through elaborate negotiations can reveal important insights into translation practice, translation beliefs and translation management (see Ciuk et al., 2019). Indeed, studying practices will allow the researcher to also observe beliefs as they manifest in the everyday encounters and management efforts as they unfold in practice.

Researching beliefs

In the above section, we briefly discussed shifts that occur in the translation on the basis of the choices translators make. According to Spolsky (2009, p. 1), the researcher is expected to "account for the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns recognized by the speech community of which they are members". In translation studies the idea of rules, in the sense of binding procedures, behind the translation process is quite alien. Instead, as mentioned above, in (descriptive) translation studies, this could be understood as the classic idea of translation as *norm*-governed activity (Toury, 2012), i.e. activity that is guided by the translation beliefs shared by a target community. The target-orientedness of early descriptive studies fits uneasily with organizational translation, where translation flows can be manyfold and the norms governing translation may just as well originate in the source community. However, the idea of norms as a controlling feature of what gets translated and how is widely applicable and fits nicely with the wide understanding of translation policy followed in this chapter. Norms can indeed be seen as collective beliefs on good translation practice.

Methodologically, the element of beliefs in Spolsky's model is not as systematically developed as the other two parts. In a much-repeated definition of the beliefs, the focus is on values assigned to language variants:

> The second component, formed in large measure by the first and confirming its influence, is made up of the values assigned by members of a speech community to each variety and variant and their beliefs about the importance of these values. At times, the beliefs may be organized into ideologies (Blommaert 2006; Silverstein 1998), more elaborate combinations of the values shared by certain members of the community. (Spolsky, 2012, p. 5)

Moving from language policy to translation policy, the most direct parallel of language variants is to interpret it as the question of which languages are catered for in a translation project. This is the approach chosen by González Núñez (2016, p. 92). It can also be seen to correspond to preliminary norms that govern the choice of material to be translated (see Toury, 2012, p. 82). This is a logical set-up that links prior research to the Spolskian framework, but the downside is that it provides a narrow approach to beliefs. To uncover a more fine-tuned array of translation norms, values and beliefs, one can continue to build a more nuanced methodological apparatus for digging into the value base of the participants.

Ideologies about translation are "largely tacit, taken-for-granted, assumptions" about the status, users and uses of translation (cf. McCarthy, 2011, p. 10). Beliefs can be seen as implicit or explicit. Implicitly they can be recognized as they take shape in the form of repeated (and normativising) practices, for example, by analysing the shifts in translations and identifying regularities and patterns, as suggested by Toury (2012, p. 70–71). Explicitly they can be spelled out in policy documents produced for management purposes as well as verbalized by members in everyday interaction. Various metatexts such as translation criticisms, paratextual materials and public debates are all useful sources of value statements. An interesting recent finding is the role of media narratives in not only reflecting but also constructing translation beliefs (Meylaerts et al., 2024, p. 16).

Beliefs also lend themselves to interview methods and other types of reported data where elements related to translation beliefs can be directly or indirectly probed. More specifically, in these kinds of verbalizations, one can look into:

- normative statements about what translations should be like and why,
- statements of who can or should translate and why,
- expressions of affective stances towards translation, translating or translators.

The first two bullet points refer to explicit value statements, and they are fairly easy to discern, at least superficially. What needs to be taken into account, though, is the gap between what we humans routinely do and to what extent we are able and willing to reflect on our own activities and capable of verbalizing these (Brownlie, 1999, p. 14–15). Affective stances provide a second-level analytic tool that can support the analyses by allowing some access to more implicit beliefs.

This kind of interview study design can take many forms. Conducting multiple interviews in one organization allows for a rich picture of the prevailing translation attitudes among staff, whereas creating a contrastive design of companies in different sectors allows the researcher to see each organization as a distinctive "linguistic ecology" or domain (Spolsky, 2007, p. 2), and to begin to understand similarities and differences in paraprofessional translation policies as they emerge from the regular choices made by individuals and teams. These choices are deter-

mined by their understanding of which translation choices are deemed appropriate to the domain and fitting to their own social roles within that domain (p. 3).

Interview data allows us to access translation practices and management actions in reported form only, and a full understanding of each translation policy would require collecting other kinds of data as well. But what interview data from paraprofessional translators themselves can add to the existing literature on translation beliefs is the viewpoint of those engaged in the everyday translation practices, since the main focus, to date, has been on the top-level of the authorities in charge of (official) translation policies (Jazini, 2021).

Researching translation management

Translation management can be defined as "conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control the choices" (Spolsky, 2009, p. 1) made with respect to translating. In principle, anyone can take the role of a translation manager, but for Spolsky, management presupposes agency and authority. A well-meaning rhetorical statement, for example, is not to be considered as an act of management if it has no force (it is then more like wishful thinking) (2009, p. 6). The issue of who has authority to manage is therefore methodologically relevant for differentiating management from other kinds of advocacy or activism efforts. Spolsky (ibid. p. 15) calls this "a troubling question" that underlines language management and its research; in paraprofessional translation it may be more straightforward than in some other domains, as the workplace hierarchies set some actors in clearly defined authority positions. Spolsky (2009, p. 143) underlines the advantages of a hierarchical structure and clear chain of command in the military domain. Most workplaces are of course less structured than the army, but the same logic allows some people to direct the actions of some others. This does not, however, entail that translation management would always be directed from the top down. Translation competence, for example, can endow lower-level members of staff with content-specific authority that sidesteps organizational hierarchy.

The expectation of explicitness makes language and translation management easier to observe than beliefs. Strategy documents that stipulate translation issues, guidelines for translators and other directive documents and oral statements can be analyzed from the perspective of translation management. The difficulty is that while the contemporary professional translation industry is highly controlled, standardized and managed, paraprofessional translation contexts tend to yield much less explicit guidance to translation-related choices. In research, obtaining these can, and maybe even should, be a first step, but it is likely that, in the absence of any detailed documentation of management efforts, observing the

practices and interrogating the beliefs of the participants will be fundamental for gaining an insight into the translation policy of a particular workplace.

Spolsky (2009, p. 53–64) dedicates a chapter to studying language management at workplaces. By taking a leap from his observations on language management to the perspective of translation management, we can glean a couple of valuable insights. The first, obvious, one is that there is no typical workplace. Language and translation practices, and their management efforts, emerge in response to particular socio-material and cultural conditions and with respect to particular aims, goals and purposes (see also Langinier and Ehrhart, 2020). At work, translation management can be considered a problem-solving activity, aimed at remedying a communicative problem (Spolsky, 2009, p. 53). At different workplaces, different problems arise. The chapter in Spolsky (2009) discusses, for example, the hospitality industry, air traffic, international business and multinational companies, and the problems and solutions are not the same. To give an extreme example, in the cockpit, the solution for language diversity among staff cannot be translation or interpreting to all languages as there is no time to do so and the risks of relayed information are too great. Instead, everyone will need to be proficient in the controlled form of English that is used for communication by all (Spolsky, 2009, p. 63). In contrast, a multinational company that wants to give significant emphasis to issues of work motivation, inclusion and commitment to company values may recognize the value of onboarding everyone by designing an inclusive multilingual policy (Back & Piekkari, 2024).

The second insight that can be gleaned from Spolsky is that the context where workplaces operate is not stable, and policy decisions need to be adaptive to changing government regulations, new recruitments, mergers and acquisitions, moving to new markets and many other issues that will have language and translation policy consequences. Inertia and lack of flexibility and agility can therefore significantly affect brand, profitability and market shares. To an extent, organizations may be wise in keeping documentation limited: an unwritten policy line is more adaptable to new and changing situations than a fixed set of regulations.

Combining the layers

It is, of course, possible to study only one layer of translation policy at the time, but the value of this approach is the highest if one can bring all three layers together to form a holistic picture. The combination of the three layers of analysis and the different datasets will almost inevitably lead to some friction, as the three levels interact with one another in a constant movement and in a complex dialectical relationship. The three sets of findings are therefore unlikely to simply validate one another in a tidy fashion. Rather, the compilation will make findings

more complex (see Koskinen, 2008, p. 150). Realities are almost never neatly organized. They are messy, and full of "friction and slippage" as a key document on linguistic ethnography puts it:

> With varying degrees of friction and slippage, repertoires get used and developed in encounters, encounters enact institutions, and institutions produce and regulate persons and their repertoires through the regimentation of encounters.
>
> (Rampton, 2007, p. 3)

To navigate the messiness of reality, researchers do well in pausing to register the frictions as well as the harmonious unisons and to think through what both of these can tell us about the organization, the actors and the problems they went about solving as the researcher entered the scene. Meylaerts et al. (2024) pose an important ethical question for these moments: who do you listen to? Starting from a statement by Spolsky that in order to be effective language policy needs to be consistent with the practices and beliefs, they report on the realization that such direct causality cannot be found. Instead, in their project on institutional multilingual Covid response, the three levels were found to be in constant misalignment. As one methodological remedy, and as their answer to the question of whom to listen to, they enlist listening to public institutions, community organizations, professional translators and non-professional mediators, users of translations and, importantly, dissenters who mistrusted the official information, that is, gathering a rich array of viewpoints from many stakeholders.

A situated, contextualized approach that tries to capture the translation ecosystem in its entirety will encounter the varied viewpoints of different actors and organizational enclaves. In fieldwork, such an all-encompassing coverage is an idealization rarely, if ever, accomplished in real-life research, with limited resources and constraining timeframes. It is therefore also important to stay alert to who has not been listened to in the research project, and what potential oversights are caused by not studying all boundaries and all translation spaces of the ecosystem (see also Chapter 3).

Concluding remarks

McCarthy (2011, p. 9) lists three dispositions towards language in society, and hence also three distinct approaches that can inform language policy decisions: language-as-a-problem, language-as-a-right and language-as-a-resource. Each disposition extends to translation policy as well. Translation can be seen as a communication problem to be solved, as a means to enhance people's linguistic rights and promote inclusion, or as a resource, and the ability to move between modes

of communication and to cross boundaries as a competence and multilingualism as richness.

Translation is indeed a pragmatic issue, and it requires pragmatic solutions. Existing translation policies tend not to be too detailed, and this may be wise: translation is known to be a context-dependent activity, and flexibility in practical adaptations may be advisable. One of the metalevel questions raised by Spolskian theory is whether and to what extent language — and by extension translation — can or should actually be managed.

Still, both implicit and explicit translation policies deserve scholarly attention as they can reveal underlying causes for organizational successes and failures, or explain sentiments of resistance or rebellion in the office. The affective effects of translation policies can be manifold: they can affect motivation, sense of inclusion and cohesion and well-being at work as well as customer satisfaction, loyalty and interorganizational relations. Awareness of existing translation policies also makes it possible to affect changes in them if need be. In the context of paraprofessional translation, central questions revolve around, on the one hand, recognising and rewarding translation competence and supporting boundary spanners at all organizational levels (see also Chapter 4 in this volume) and, on the other hand, making informed decisions on when to resort to paraprofessional translation and when to invest in professional mediation services to mitigate risks and to ensure accountability.

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CHAPTER 7

Crossing borders and boundaries

Translation ecosystems in INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

D. Eleanor Westney, Rebecca Piekkari, Kaisa Koskinen & Susanne Tietze

The field of INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (IB) has traditionally focused on the crossing of national boundaries. In this Perspective, we argue that organizational, knowledge domain, and language boundaries are equally important for understanding translation activities in cross-border business. We introduce the framework of a translation ecosystem for integrating the micro perspective of translating agents, the meso perspective of organizational units, and the macro perspective of the larger social and linguistic contexts that influence translation. This framework allows INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (IB) scholars to identify important but invisible boundaries in cross-border business. The translation ecosystem requires the kind of multi-level research that has been recognized as crucial for taking the field forward and offers the potential for making contributions both to IB but also to translation research beyond the disciplinary boundaries of IB.

Keywords: cross-border business, boundary spanning, headquarters-subsidiary relationships, organizational translation, interlingual translation, translation ecosystem

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1. Introduction

For many INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS (IB) scholars, translation connotes a fairly mechanical process of converting one language into another as faithfully as possible. Such a view overlooks significant developments over the last two and a half decades in both TRANSLATION STUDIES and ORGANIZATION STUDIES. Each field has developed much richer concepts of translation that recognize how movement

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across boundaries changes what is being moves. In this Perspective, we argue that the disciplinary fields of ORGANIZATION STUDIES and TRANSLATION STUDIES have developed concepts of translation that can be used to address fundamental challenges in working across boundaries and thereby enrich IB scholarship.

Some IB scholars have already begun to draw on these broader concepts of translation, especially those developed in ORGANIZATION STUDIES. The movement of organizational systems and practices from headquarters (HQ) to subsidiaries within multinational corporations (MNCs), for example, has recently been studied as *organizational translation* (see for example Gutierrez-Huerter, Moon, Gold, & Chapple, 2020). This work builds on the subfield of ORGANIZATION STUDIES known as Scandinavian institutionalism, which has used "translation" as a metaphor (Boxenbaum & Pedersen, 2009) to analyze how organizations import management models and practices originating in a different country or industry and how these are reinterpreted in their new context: for example, Danish firms adopting American-style diversity management systems (Boxenbaum, 2006). Other IB scholars have drawn on another literature in Organization Studies, the management of innovation. This subfield has developed the concept of translation to refer to the challenges of *knowledge sharing* across functional or disciplinary specialties, each with its own specialized language and mode of developing and testing knowledge (most notably the work by Carlile, 2004). This concept of translation has been used in recent work on boundary-spanning both within MNCs and with external partners and sources of technology (e.g. Birkinshaw, Ambos, & Bouquet, 2017; Monteiro & Birkinshaw, 2017). IB has been slower to recognize the potential value of developments in the field of TRANSLATION STUDIES (Piekkari, Tietze, & Koskinen, 2020), even though TRANSLATION STUDIES has expanded well beyond purely linguistic or textual analysis focused on fidelity to a source text. Instead, it studies how translations and translators are systemically embedded in their larger contextual and institutional environments and how these affect the choices that translators make in their complex task of conveying meaning across language boundaries.

We believe that a translation approach that builds on the developments in both ORGANIZATION STUDIES and Translation Studies provides a useful framing for a number of longstanding issues in IB research, including headquarters-subsidiary relationships, global integration and local responsiveness, boundary-spanning, and the movement of organizational systems and processes across MNC subsidiaries. It also offers new research avenues for IB. This article aims to demonstrate the value of integrating the work on organizational and knowledge translation in ORGANIZATION STUDIES with insights into the challenges and processes of interlingual and cultural translation drawn from Translation Studies.

Doing so enables IB scholars to identify boundaries that have remained largely invisible but that may be much more important than we realize.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. We illustrate the value of a translation approach in IB by providing a short "mini-case" and interpreting it first from the perspective of IB. We then demonstrate how bringing in the different but potentially complementary perspectives of organizational and functional translation from ORGANIZATION STUDIES and interlingual translation from TRANSLATION STUDIES provides a deeper understanding of the challenges involved in the mini-case. We then review how the changes in the organizational architecture of MNCs since the beginning of the 21st century have increased the number and complexity of boundaries in MNCs, turning the MNC into a *translation ecosystem* in which multiple translations are occurring and interacting across organizational, knowledge, and linguistic boundaries. The MNC's translation ecosystems are, in turn, nested in larger external translation ecosystems. This approach has the potential to integrate across levels: the micro perspective of translating agents, the meso perspective of the organizational units for which translating is an essential element of their activities, and the macro level of the larger social and linguistic contexts that influence translators and translating processes. Finally, we discuss the methodological implications of using a translation approach.

2. IB and the three approaches to translation: An empirical example

This section starts with a mini-case based on a real-life example of a Nordic MNC rolling out its talent management program to an R&D unit in China. We first examine the mini-case in terms of issues raised from the IB perspective, and then turn to three different translation approaches, two grounded in Organization Studies and the third taking in TRANSLATION STUDIES. We demonstrate that each approach brings new dimensions to this particular case, and provides IB scholars with additional insights and relevant research questions. We then show that IB, and the MNC in particular, provides a distinctive context for combining insights across the three translation perspectives and developing an integrated translation approach that contributes to translation research across all three fields.

A Nordic MNC is a service-oriented engineering company that was recently ranked by Forbes as one of the 100 most innovative firms in the world. Prior to this global recognition, it had launched a company-wide talent management program that the corporate headquarters introduced across the network of foreign subsidiaries. The new program aimed at attracting, identifying, developing and retaining employees so that they would have the right knowledge, skills and attitudes for their current and future job roles. This change initiative, advocated by a US-based international management consultancy and orchestrated by the global HR function, was implemented throughout the regional and local organizations that were grouped under the MNC's global matrix structure.

In line with the Nordic values, the company had adopted an egalitarian and inclusive approach to talent management in terms of treating every employee as talent. This was well aligned with its diversity, equity and inclusion policy, inviting all employees to take ownership of their own career development. The new talent management system was also rolled out to the global R&D centers that were located in Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific. These centers played a significant role in developing and sustaining the firm's competitive advantage. One of the global R&D centers was based in China, a strategically important market for the firm. China currently generated more than 25% of the company's total sales and represented more than 25% of its global workforce.

The Nordic MNC rolled out the new talent management program in English, the common corporate language, in which high potentials were expected to be fluent so that they could be sent on rotational assignments to other units for career development purposes. However, in China, the MNC had decided to expand the recruitment base for the company by relaxing the global criterion of English fluency, enabling the routine use of Chinese in internal communications.

2.1 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS approaches to the mini-case

Many IB scholars would first see the mini-case in terms of the classic MNC dilemma of balancing global integration and local responsiveness (Prahalad & Doz, 1987). On the one hand, the new initiative introduces a concept of human resource management HRM and an associated set of practices to be aligned across the company, becoming a vehicle for cross-border integration. On the other hand, most IB scholars would acknowledge the case for at least some local responsiveness to the Chinese environment.

More specifically, the mini-case could be viewed as a case of practice *transfer* from corporate HQ to a subsidiary (Hawkins & Walter, 1981; Stopford & Wells, 1972; Zander & Kogut, 1995). The movement of organizational systems and practices across borders in MNCs has long been recognized by IB as an important area for theory and research: as early as 1958, John Dunning published a study of

how the "managerial techniques" that U.S. firms introduced into their British subsidiaries were influencing U.K. management (Dunning, 1958). The primary focus for IB has been the outcomes (*what*) of practice transfer — what gets replicated, what gets modified and which modifications occur andwhy, and which elements of localization contribute to the local effectiveness of the practices (e.g. Festing & Tekieli, 2021; Kostova, 1999; Ouyang, Liu, Chen, Li, & Qin, 2019).

Most of the IB research on cross-border practice transfer in MNCs since the late 1990s acknowledges that practices change as they cross borders, using various terms to describe the processes involved in the changes: localization (e.g. Björkman & Lu, 1999; Pudelko & Harzing, 2008), adaptation (e.g. Ansari, Reinecke, & Spaan, 2014; Jensen & Szulanski, 2004), hybridization (e.g. Abo, 1994; Yahiaoui, 2015), and recontextualization (Brannen, 2004; Brannen, Liker, & Fruin, 1999). What these different approaches have in common is the assumption that changes occur largely because of the conditions imposed by the external cultural and/or institutional environment (for the mini-case, between the home country of the MNC and China). IB scholars look to those contextual factors, often using quantitative methods, to explain what changes occur in the transferred practices.

Another relevant core IB research area is that of the relations between MNC headquarters and its subsidiaries (Brooke & Remmers, 1970), which provide the larger organizational context for the talent management initiative. As we saw in the preceding section, the roles and relationships involved in HQ-subsidiary relationships have been a central area of IB since its earliest years (see reviews by Birkinshaw & Pedersen, 2009; Kostova, Marano, & Tallman, 2016; Meyer, Li, & Schotter, 2020). Many IB researchers would immediately see the talent management program as an HQ-driven initiative involving complex issues of the relationships, interests, power and politics. IB scholars have identified a range of possible subsidiary response strategies, from resistance through ceremonial adoption to full integration of the initiative with its HR systems (Ambos, Fuchs, & Zimmermann, 2020; Levy & Reiche, 2018; Schotter & Beamish, 2011). Subsidiary responses become especially challenging when, as in the mini-case, an MNC headquartered in a relatively small home country introduces a change initiative in subsidiary located in a very large and growing (i.e. strategically important) emerging market (Bouquet & Birkinshaw, 2008). One key question would be whether key managers in the Chinese unit would see the program as serving their subunit's interests in terms of its local competitive challenges and its position in the MNC (Bouquet, Birkinshaw, & Barsoux, 2016). A closely related question is the extent to which the Chinese subunit had a voice in developing the initiative, or whether it was presented to them as a fully-developed programme (Bouquet & Birkinshaw, 2008; Ferner et al., 2011; Kostova & Roth, 2002).

Recently, research on HQ-subsidiary relationships has identified the critical importance of the boundary spanners who facilitate communications and interactions across the HQ-subsidiary boundary (see the overview by Schotter, Mudambi, Doz, and Gaur, 2017). In the mini-case, this arena of IB research would focus on who occupied boundary-spanning roles between the HQ and the Chinese subunit before and during the talent management initiative: the identities and capabilities of the boundary spanners, and the extent of their boundary-spanning activities. IB researchers have identified a variety of roles for which boundary spanning is a central activity: local subsidiary managers who have returned from foreign assignments (Roberts & Beamish, 2017), expatriate managers in the subsidiary (Harzing, Pudelko, and Reiche, 2016); and HQ executives who travel frequently to subsidiaries (Birkinshaw et al., 2017). However, as Mäkelä, Barner-Rasmussen, Ehrnrooth, and Koveshnikov. (2019) have pointed out, simply because an individual crosses a boundary in their assignments does not necessarily mean that they are effective communicators across that boundary.

Boundary spanning activities are also significant in the third IB topic raised by the mini-case: the internationalization of R&D and global innovation. As a recent review asserts, contemporary MNCs have built geographically distributed networks of R&D centres that enable them to "create, assimilate, integrate, and exploit new knowledge on a global scale" that is, they argue, "the *raison d'être* for the MNE as an organizational form" (Håkanson, Kappen, and Zander, 2021, p.110). For most MNCs, China has become a critically important location for R&D, because of the availability of well-educated technical personnel, the growing innovative capacities of the Chinese technology system, and the size of the domestic market (Asakawa & Som, 2008; Gassmann, Beckenbauer, & Friesike, 2012; Haour & von Zedwitz, 2016). In 2000, there were 200 foreign-affiliated R&D centres in China; by 2015, there were 1500 (Jolly, McKern, & Yip, 2015). Thus Nordic MNC is one of many foreign companies with R&D centres in China, and it faces a common problem: the increasing difficulty of attracting and retaining capable local R&D personnel in competition with each other and with increasingly innovative and attractive Chinese companies, who are themselves becoming MNCs and offering global careers to technical employees (Prud'homme & von Zedtwitz, 2018). From the viewpoint of international R&D studies, the key question would be how effectively the corporate talent management initiative addresses the distinctive recruitment and retention problems faced by the Chinese R&D unit in the intense competition for technical talent in China.

Finally, in addition to these interpretations of the mini-case, a growing number of IB scholars are interested in the implications of language challenges (Karhunen, Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen, & Piekkari, 2018; Tenzer, Terjesen, & Harzing, 2017). For such scholars, the mini-case raises questions

about the potential challenge of the adoption of English as the corporate language in Nordic MNC as a whole and the distinctive commitment to the use of the local language in the Chinese R&D unit. The (in)ability of local key managers and researchers to speak either the home country language of this Nordic MNC or the official corporate language may inhibit knowledge flows between the headquarters and its China operations and between Nordic's engineers worldwide and the R&D specialists in China. It may also mean that the corporate talent management initiative, intended to guide high-potential employees into global careers, may need extensive local tailoring to suit not only the particular language environment of the Chinese subunit but also the unique context of a local subsidiary whose expansion and growing strategic importance may create distinctive opportunities for employees to rise locally, without the need for international postings.

2.2 Building an integrated translation approach

The translation approach that we advocate in this essay integrates three different but potentially complementary bodies of work on translation. Two are grounded in Organization Studies: organizational translation originating in Scandinavian institutionalism (Charniawska & Sevón, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017), and translating across specialized fields of knowledge in the management of innovation (Carlile, 2004). Each has separately found its way into recent IB research: for example, organizational translation into research on MNC practice transfer (e.g. Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2020) and Carlile's model of translating across knowledge boundaries into work on MNC boundary-spanners (e.g. Birkinshaw et al., 2017; Mäkelä et al., 2019). The third is the discipline of TRANSLATION STUDIES, which focuses on interlingual translation and which has yet to be fully recognized as a potential resource by IB scholars.

In the following sections, we briefly explain the approach to translation developed in each of the three areas, and suggest what each would add to the IB reading of the mini-case. We then demonstrate that the three translation approaches are potentially complementary (see also Røvik, 2016; forthcoming), in part because each focuses on a different type of boundary. Organizational translation focuses on inter-organizational and intraorganizational boundaries, as externally generated organizational models and practices cross first the boundary between the organization and its external environment and then move across the organization's hierarchical levels. Knowledge translation focuses on translation across different expert domains, both between external and internal knowledge communities and across functional boundaries within the organization. TRANSLATION STUDIES focuses on interlingual boundaries, both across and within national bor-

ders. We build on this complementarity to discuss what an integrated translation approach can bring to IB.

2.2.1 *Translating across organizational boundaries*

Over the last two and a half decades, ORGANIZATION STUDIES scholars have developed the framing of *organizational translation* to study how management models (concepts and practices) travel. Originating in the Nordic countries and seen as a hallmark of "Scandinavian institutionalism" (Boxenbaum & Pedersen, 2009; Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996), this approach focuses on the travel of ideas about organization and management across societies. It was both a further development of the work of John Meyer and others on the global diffusion of Western forms of organizing, such as universities, corporations, and public administration (see Strang & Meyer, 1993; Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997; Meyer & Bromley, 2013) and a critique of its framing of the travel of ideas as "diffusion" — a term whose passivity seems to attribute the travel of ideas to the irresistible power of the ideas rather than to human agents (Boxenbaum & Pedersen 2009; Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). It also drew on Actor-Network theory (the work of Callon and Latour) to substitute the more active "translation" for "diffusion" to describe the process by which ideas and organizational models travel across borders between countries and boundaries between organizations (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). The Scandinavian institutionalists drew on the work by Meyer and his colleagues to look at the macro-level actors — consultants, academics, the business press — who transmit general models of organization and management and the institutional influences on how those general ideas changed in new institutional contexts. They also looked at how local translators shaped and re-shaped those models in specific local contexts, drawing on the work of March and Olsen (1983; 1989) to examine editing processes as being shaped by institutional "logics of appropriateness."

Organizational translation research does not start from an analysis of the larger context of the receiving organization — such as national culture or institutional logic — and its similarity to (or difference from) the originating context (though when translating the research into an academic article, such context often provides the frame for the research account). Instead, it focuses on identifying the *translators* and the *translation processes* by which those translators modify an abstract model or practice to make it both comprehensible and acceptable to local receivers (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008). For example, *recontextualization* is a translation process, built on the work of Latour and Callon, which points out that bringing an idea or model into a local context requires using its local "cultural code" (Rottenburg, 1996). This concept focuses on how a practice moving into a new setting may seem to be the same but is given a different meaning by those participat-

ing in its adoption. The concept of recontextualization has also informed some IB work on localization of transferred practices (e.g. Brannen, Liker, & Fruin, 1999; Brannen, 2004; Värlander, Hinds, Thomason, Pearce, & Altman, 2016). In the organizational translation approach, it is usually paired with the process of *decontextualization* — the construction of abstract models stripped of their originating context (as with "lean management" that was originally derived from the Toyota production system). A recent IB study using a translation approach to understand the introduction of a new method for CSR accounting in MNC subsidiaries (Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2020) drew on a different set of translation processes suggested by Gond & Boxenbaum (2013): *filtering, reframing*, and *bricolage*. These are specific examples of a larger set of translation processes identified by Sahlin-Andersson as *editing* processes, by which elements of the original model are changed or removed to appeal to a specific receiving audience (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson & Wedlin, 2008). Finally, the translation process of *materialization* focuses on the process by which an abstract general model is turned into physical artefacts (such as codes or rules posted on office walls or printed onto individual wallet-sized cards), incorporated into training materials or programmes, and finally materialized into physical activities.

Most organizational translation research has centred on translators and translating processes in the receiving organization or context, such as European health systems emulating the very specific model of Johns Hopkins Hospital (Kirkpatrick, Bullinger, Lega, & Dent, 2013), or New Zealand unions introducing a UK model of trade union-supported learning for workers (Cassell & Lee, 2017). In keeping with institutional theory, the approach recognizes that in their efforts to produce a translation that is comprehensible to receivers, translators are constrained by the cultural codes and established practices of the receiving context, but that these are neither unitary nor unchanging, providing translators with some measure of choice. In organizational translation, translators rarely work alone: their interactions with other local translators and with receivers, and sometimes with the "sources" of the original, influence their translations.

An organizational translation approach to the mini-case would focus on identifying the key local translators at various levels of the Chinese unit and the translation processes they use to explain the model and edit it for their local unit in terms of specific practices and activities. It would look at the interactions between the local translators and the HQ-based initiators of the talent management model, both as the model was being formulated and after it was introduced into the Chinese unit. It would ask how those interactions shaped how local translators interpreted and translated the model. Moreover, it would focus on the initiative after it moves across the boundary between HQ and the Chinese R&D unit, and on what happens as it crosses organizational levels within the Chinese unit. It

would examine how the model is translated into specific documents and on-line materials (such as training materials and the templates for collecting and encoding information about employees identified as high-potential "talent"). It would emphasize that moving the model into the Chinese subunit is an ongoing process, involving sequential acts of translation as it moves to the front lines.

Scandinavian researchers in this tradition also have an interest in the broader infrastructure of global "management knowledge" (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002; Wæraas, 2021), which is composed of an array of consultants, academics, and business media that generate and disseminate management models of "best practice." This is highly relevant for the mini-case: the concept of "talent management" originated with McKinsey in the late 1990s and was picked up by practitioners and consultants in the early 21st century (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). Academics were slower to translate it into a focus for further theory and research (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), but they have increasingly added to the flow of translations from practice to abstract model and from models to practices (e.g. Claus, 2019; Schuler, Jackson, & Tarique, 2011; Meyers, van Woerkom, Paauwe, & Dries, 2020). The mini-case would provide an opportunity to explore the role of consultants in bringing the initiative into the Chinese unit, and the extent to which the Nordic MNC's approach to talent management is similar to or differs from the approach that has been taken up in Chinese business schools, local companies, and other MNC subsidiaries in China.

2.2.2 *Translating across knowledge domain boundaries*

The second ORGANIZATION STUDIES translation approach comes from Carlile's (2002; 2004) work on the challenges of working across specialized knowledge domains in new product development. Carlile pointed out that each domain of knowledge develops a specialized language, by which he meant not only terminology but also cultural codes: specifically, basic and often unarticulated assumptions about how to generate and validate knowledge (such as the value of experience, what constitutes valid data, or even causality). Carlile argues that routine interactions across domain boundaries lead to and depend upon developing shared knowledge and a common language at the interface, which facilitate knowledge *transfer* across those boundaries.

However, as the novelty and complexity of the task necessitating cross-boundary interactions increase, the common language's capacity to represent adequately the differences and dependencies across the knowledge domains falls. Knowledge transfer is no longer an adequate description of the process needed for effectively working across the knowledge boundary, because, in Carlile's words, "the current lexicon is no longer sufficient to represent the differences and dependencies" of the knowledge domains (Carlile, 2004, p. 558). What is required is

translation to expand the shared meanings and interpretations through the activities of boundary spanners, communities of practice, and close interactions on cross-domain teams, a key activity of all of them being translating across knowledge boundaries (Carlile, 2004, p. 558).

The work on boundary spanning in the knowledge management literature focuses on *horizontal* translation across knowledge domains — which adds an interesting dimension to the use of the term "boundary spanners" in research on HQ-subsidiary relations. The use of the term "boundary spanners" in HQ- subsidiary research recognizes, explicitly or implicitly, that the boundary between HQ and a subsidiary is a knowledge boundary as well as a boundary in an organizational hierarchy (implicit in the terms "HQ" and "subsidiary"). A subsidiary has specialized local knowledge, whereas the HQ has specialized strategic knowledge of the MNC system as a whole, and these involve different languages, as Brannen & Doz (2012) have suggested. In addition, in the networked MNC, subsidiaries have specialized mandates for certain activities in which they are the knowledge experts, and confront translation challenges in crossing knowledge domain boundaries with HQ and other subsidiaries (Cantwell & Mudambi, 2005; Meyer, Mudambi, & Narula, 2011).

Schotter (2021) recently pointed out that collaborative boundary-spanning in projects (the context in which the term "boundary spanners" was developed) may differ from the hierarchical boundary-spanning in HQ-subsidiary relations. He suggested an incompatibility between the responsibilities for control and for knowledge transfer involved in executive HQ roles, observing that effective boundary spanners in HQ rarely resort to invoking hierarchy to resolve tensions and misunderstanding and work instead to develop mutual comprehension and shared interpretations (*translating* in the framing of the translation approach). Explicitly comparing HQ-subsidiary boundary spanners engaged in facilitating coordination and control relationships with those involved in horizontal knowledge sharing is a potentially fruitful area for future IB research.

In the mini-case, this perspective would focus on the challenges of working across the boundary between two expert functions: HR and R&D. Carlile's model suggests that the magnitude of those challenges and the extent of translating required will depend on the complexity and novelty of the initiative. If it is an incremental addition to established HR systems and processes, translation across the two domains will proceed relatively smoothly; if it constitutes a significant departure from current practice, translation will be much more demanding. Researchers using this perspective would be alert to the creation of "boundary objects" to aid translation (Carlile, 2002; 2004): materializations of the new system with which both sides can interact and explore (for example, test versions of the forms to be filled out by high-potential employees).

2.2.3 *Translating across language boundaries*

TRANSLATION STUDIES as an independent discipline, breaking away from comparative literature and applied linguistics alike, dates from two parallel developments in the 1970s. In and around the Netherlands, a group of young scholars began to emphasize the cultural context of translation, the independent relevance of the target text and the textual manipulations needed for it to fit the receiving local environment and expectations — hence the (contested) label of the Manipulation School (Hermans, 1999). At the same time, German researchers were creating an approach that also focused on the receiving end, emphasizing the necessity of fitting the translation to its purpose, the aim for which it was needed. This *Skopos* (from the Greek word for purpose) School emphasized the functional nature of translation (Nord, 1997). What these two approaches have in common is a break from the dominance of the source text and the idea of fidelity as the guiding principle of translation work. Instead, they emphasize the purposeful re-creation of a new text across a linguistic and cultural divide, into a particular context and for a particular audience. The discipline was institutionalized in the 1980s and 1990s along with this cultural, functional and target-oriented ideology that was increasingly grounded in the recognition that translation changes the source, and that the choices made by translators shape those changes (*translator agency*).

TRANSLATION STUDIES has provided a useful framing of translator strategies with Venuti's (1995; 2013) distinction between the two contrasting translation strategies of *domestication* (for example, by employing familiar terminology and explications of context, and even relocating the physical settings) and *foreignization* (strategies such as using some foreign words from the original text, and deliberately emphasizing the different and the innovative). The two strategies posit two different ways in which a translation can be made acceptable to receivers: as an extension of what they already know, versus something innovative and new. This means that translation is inherently ideological and "a political act" (Laaksonen & Koskinen, 2020).

TRANSLATION STUDIES reminds IB researchers that interlingual translations will still be required in many locations where the MNC operates, regardless of whether the company has formally adopted English as the official corporate language. The need for such translation is also likely to increase the closer the organizational unit is to the operating front lines. However, the level at which interlingual translation becomes necessary will vary considerably across countries, and China (the site of the mini-case) is a country where local languages are commonly used in MNC operations. It is also a country with a large and well-developed translation industry, supervised by the government, which educates and certifies professional translators in large numbers (Hu, 2020).

This raises several questions from the TRANSLATION STUDIES perspective on the mini-case that IB scholars rarely ask. Are communications from HQ routinely translated, or only selected communications, and if the latter, how are these selections made and by whom? TRANSLATION STUDIES also draws our attention to the question of who is providing these translations and to their "translator competence". Are the translators professional translators, or paraprofessional translators who provide informal translations in the course of their managerial or operating roles? How skilled are they at translation, and how do they acquire those skills, especially the paraprofessional translators? And if professional translators are used, do they have repeated engagements with that MNC (or even full-time positions within the MNC) that enable them to develop organization-specific knowledge that contributes to effective organizational translation as well as interlingual translation? Is there less variation across translator strategies and processes in China because translator education and certification are centrally supervised and standardized by the government? Do local editing practices that render foreign terminology into locally familiar terminology reduce the potential innovativeness of talent management as a practice introduced in an MNC subunit?

A TRANSLATION STUDIES research team investigating the mini-case would require expertise in Chinese language and culture. The researchers would seek to identify and collect a paper trail of documents, or recordings of oral translations, from source to target. The original source in this case is the consultant-originated practice, but it might well be that the translation process would start with the documentation sent by the headquarters. Depending on how systematically the translation practices were organized (another relevant object of analysis in itself), this paper trail would likely also include previous translations on the same topic, glossaries, terminology and other relevant material used in the process of translating. In contemporary translation processes, these are often digitalized, and the role of translation technology would also be of interest, and the potential use of computer-aided translation and machine translation solutions would be investigated. As the English-Chinese language pair is among the most mature in automated translation technology, some of these tools are likely to be used not only by professional translators but also by other employees working across this linguistic boundary. A rising research interest in TRANSLATION STUDIES is collaboration, both among humans and between humans and non-humans, tools and artefacts, and the ways in which translation processes are situated in a network of relations (Risku & Rogl, 2020).

2.3 Identifying the synergies across the literatures

We argue that each of the three translation perspectives provides useful insights for IB research, although they differ in significant ways (summarized in Table 1). The differences across them can become complementarities in the context of the multiple complex boundaries of the MNC.

As the table shows, the three perspectives address different kinds of boundaries, all three of which are present in MNCs. Scandinavian institutionalism focuses on the boundary between the organization and the external environment, the source of "imported" management models and practices, and the boundaries between the levels of the organization as the imported model moves closer to the front lines where models are incorporated into specific activities. The management of innovation focuses on the horizontal boundaries between specialized domains of knowledge. TRANSLATION STUDIES is concerned with interlingual boundaries, recognizing that these are also cultural. What IB provides is both a focus on yet another kind of boundary — national borders — that has yet to play a significant role in either ORGANIZATION STUDIES approach — and a context (the MNC) in which all these types of boundaries and translations are relevant, frequent, and interacting.

The field of TRANSLATION STUDIES has developed an approach to understanding boundaries and translation that is highly relevant to IB. A boundary delimits two spaces (in/out, us/them, familiar/foreign). Boundary work can be seen to take place in a liminal space, between entities that are separated by difference. Conroy, Collings, and Clancy (2019, p. 519), for example, discuss how managers in MNC subsidiaries "create, maintain, and develop social spaces of engagement with key decision makers" as they try to understand and influence HQ decision-makers. Such social spaces can be seen as translation spaces: i.e. "a space where translation needs to happen for mutual comprehensibility and where multilingual repertoires meet and mix" (Cronin, 2006, p. 68). Translation activities highlight the existence of a boundary to be spanned, which renders the need for translation visible.

Whereas IB has tended to focus on HQ boundary spanners, a consistent theme of the organizational translation literature has been that most translation work is carried out by local translators at each level of the organization. This body of work highlights the choices and constraints translators confront in producing translations that are accessible and acceptable both to local receivers and to the initiators/commissioners of the translation. As a conceptual framework, the translation approach provides important insights on the range of translator strategies adopted by local translators and inquires into why they are adopted. Strategies for comprehensibility range from domestication/foreignization to materializations of the translation (text formats, presentations, visualizations, demonstrations).

Table 1. Comparing IB with three translation approaches

Comparative dimension	International business	Organization studies		Translation studies
		Scandinavian institutionalism	Innovation and R&D studies	
Core focus	Cross-border business activities and how they are organized	Movement and transformation of management ideas and organizational practices from one institutional context to another	Developing innovations across specialized knowledge domains	Re-verbalization of the meaning in another language and inevitable shifts in meaning between source and target texts
Type of boundary	National and MNC boundaries	Institutional and organizational boundaries	Knowledge boundaries between domains of expertise	Interlingual and cultural boundaries
Type of translation	Beginning to draw on Organizations Studies for translation approaches	Organizational translation — management models & practices	Knowledge translation — communicating across and combining fields of expertise	Interlingual translation
Level of analysis	The firm on the meso level	Institutional fields on the macro level; institutional work and micro-processes of translation on the micro level	New product development project groups on the micro level	Minutiae of texts and meanings on the micro level; agency of the translating actors
Dominant explanations of changes in what moves across boundaries	Cultural and institutional distance between home and host country	Institutional frames/ filters; active agency of local translators	Novelty and complexity at the knowledge boundary	Purpose (*Skopos*) of the translation; intervening cultural and contextual factors

The translation approach also highlights the significant challenges of translating across the hierarchical levels of an organization. The translation processes required for attempts to learn across the organizational hierarchy and to cascade down directives, requests, and other communications within the MNC are com-

plex and extensive. Early organizational translation scholars focused on the process of decontextualization as translations travel up an organization, losing contextual information and being framed in increasingly abstract terminology. Recontextualization was used to refer to translations as they move down, requiring increasing levels of interpretation until they are translated into activities on the front lines (e.g. Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996). Later work has elaborated on the specific translation processes and strategies for decontextualization and recontextualization, and have called for more research into translating norms and processes (e.g. Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). More recent organizational translation work has also highlighted the various forms — *materializations* — that translations take, from the ubiquitous PowerPoint decks that travel around a company to the reduction of complex organizational concepts and "strategic intents" to large numbers of measurable "metrics" that HQ requires its subunits to prepare and submit upwards on a regular basis.

However, many of the translators and their translations can be challenging for researchers to identify in the MNC without extensive fieldwork. In this context, TRANSLATION STUDIES refer to the concept of *translator invisibility*: Venuti (1986, p. 2) observed that "the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator". He asserted that those receiving a translation often look for "immediate intelligibility and the appearance of factuality" (Venuti, 1986, p. 5) but fail to recognize the translator's role in shaping what is reaching the receiver — and what has been left out. The complexity of translation and the "invisibility" of local translators and local translations may well be important in explaining the frequently observed paradox that MNC HQs today have more information about and communications with their geographically dispersed subunits than at any time in their history, and yet frequently misjudge the effects of their communications, actions and initiatives on those subunits.

TRANSLATION STUDIES reminds IB researchers that interlingual translations will still be required for organizational and knowledge translation in many locations where the MNC operates, regardless of whether the company has formally adopted English as the official corporate language. The need for such translation is also likely to increase the closer the organizational unit is to the operating front lines. That need also increases, as Carlile's work indicates, as the novelty and complexity of the tasks increases. Any new initiative will require more interlingual translation than routine communication, and the amount of translation will vary across countries. TRANSLATION STUDIES also, as we have pointed out, draws our attention to the question of who is providing these translations (professionals or paraprofessional, informal translators) and to their "translator competence" (Røvik 2016; 2022, forthcoming). Arguably, subunits vary considerably in the number and skills of the people available for translating roles. However, IB has

paid remarkably little attention to how translators in MNCs increase their translation competence through experience and through working with more experienced translators.

The challenges of translation may be opaque to the HQ initiators who roll-out corporate programmes. By investigating what, if anything, gets fed back to the initiators of translations in MNCs and how these initiators respond, the translation approach could complement IB's established interest in reverse transfers of innovation (largely in terms of technological innovation). Furthermore, local translator initiatives across the MNC are part of the equation, too. They matter not just in terms of whether local modifications are accepted but also whether they are even noticed by the initiators, and if so, whether they affect HQ translation strategies.

The ubiquity of translation processes, both organizational and interlingual, in MNCs raises the question of how these processes develop and change within an MNC over time, as individuals and subunits engage in repeated translating activities. One way of approaching this has been suggested by organizational translation scholars — the translation ecosystem (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) — to which we turn next.

3. An integrated translation approach: Translation ecosystems

Crossing national borders is the defining feature of the IB field. IB scholars, especially those studying MNCs, must also deal with the complications of interactions between borders and other kinds of boundaries, both within the MNC and, in many cases, in external business networks. Within the MNC, four types of boundaries — national, organizational, knowledge domain, and interlingual — are present, and translation activities of various kinds are occurring simultaneously and interacting in ways that have yet to be explored. The ubiquity of translation in MNCs raises the question of how translating processes develop and change within an MNC over time, as individuals and subunits engage in repeated translating activities. One way of approaching, translation ecology, has been suggested by Wedlin and Sahlin (2017). Translation ecology recognizes that any specific translation process is influenced by previous translations and by other translating activities that are occurring simultaneously elsewhere in the same social system (an organization, an industry, or a country).

From this perspective the MNC can be seen as a *translation ecosystem*. The concept is drawn from biology, where the term "ecosystem" refers to a bounded system (a physical space) populated by different species connected by complex processes of resource exchange and conversion. "Ecosystem" refers to the empir-

ical phenomenon and the term "ecology" to the theoretical approach to the phenomenon. Several aspects of this concept make it a stimulating metaphor for advancing our understanding of translation in IB, as it has in other subject areas such as strategy (e.g. Jacobides, Cennamo, & Gawer, 2018). Ecosystem analysis focuses on how resources are changed (converted or "translated") in different ways by different species/actors in an ecosystem. Whereas social network analyses focus on links between the nodes of a network system, the different actors in an ecosystem may not interact directly, even though they are drawing on (and translating) the same resource. Ecosystems are *nested*: the shallow end of a pond, for example, can be analyzed as an ecosystem, but it is also an interdependent part of progressively larger freshwater ecosystems (the pond, the regional watershed, etc.) and overlapping diverse ecosystems (such as the grasslands that surround it).

In the following sections, we first explore how the MNC can usefully be studied as a translation ecosystem, and then how locating the MNC in larger translation ecosystems sheds light on a number of key IB issues.

3.1 The MNC as a translation ecosystem: Borders and boundaries

In MNCs, national borders and organizational boundaries coincided until well into the 1990s. The country subsidiary was the basic building block of MNC organizational architecture (Stopford & Wells, 1972; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Birkinshaw, 1996). Some MNCs had a geographic structure, in which a single national subsidiary in a host country covered the range of products and functions in that location. MNCs with a global business division structure, on the other hand, might have several subsidiaries in a host country, one for each major business, each responsible for the local value chain, reporting to the global business division headquarters (HQ), which in turn reported to corporate HQ. In the late 1980s, when IB research began to embrace the model of the MNC as a differentiated network, the principal intra-organizational boundaries across which the activities they studied were conducted was simultaneously a subsidiary boundary and a national border. The networks linking country subsidiaries with each other and with "headquarters" (corporate or divisional) became the primary focus of the growing number of studies of MNCs as transnational networks (e.g. Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989; Gupta & Govindarajan, 1994).

In most contemporary MNCs, however, changes in organizational architecture in the last two and a half decades have made the relationship between national borders and MNC organizational boundaries both much more varied across companies and more complex within each MNC. The change most widely studied by IB scholars has been the outsourcing of various activities in the value chain, especially in manufacturing MNCs, in what Peter Buckley has called the

"global factory" (Buckley, 2009; 2011). Value chains have been divided into increasingly focused and specialized sets of activities — "fine-slicing" (Buckley & Strange, 2015) — and contracted to external suppliers operating in advantaged locations. This has created increasingly numerous and complex interactions — and translating activities — across the boundary of the MNC. This external fine-slicing has been accompanied by a parallel internal fine-slicing of activities into increasingly specialized subunits. The integrated country subsidiaries that were the organizational "nodes" in the differentiated network MNC of the late 1980s and early 1990s were being dismantled by the early years of the 21st century (Birkinshaw, 2001). In the subsequent decade, they were sliced into multiple smaller subunits in each country, focused on a single function (sales, production, R&D, even support functions such as IT or finance), often in a single business or product line (Mees-Buss, Welch, & Westney, 2019). In many manufacturing firms, a "front/back" structure separated local market-facing activities (marketing, sales and distribution) from the "back end" of technology development and operations. Managers of these different subunits, though located in the same country, engaged with different sets of external partners and suppliers and reported to different upper-level executives. They routinely engaged in working across borders, often across linguistic boundaries, and always across organizational boundaries.

In addition, a growing number of corporate activities have expanded their reach into the various subunits of the MNC (Strikwerda, 2014). To give one example, P&G, the global consumer products company, lists on its "Executive Team" website corporate officers for its global businesses, five regional geographies, and for R&D. In addition, it includes a corporate officer for each of the following: Sustainability, Analytics & Insights, Product Supply, Communications (responsible for "every aspect of P&G's ongoing IT and Digital transformation"), Equality & Inclusion (in addition to the HR executive), and Global Business Services, which "operates and supports the infrastructure, operations, systems, and shared services that run P&G" (P&G, 2022). These corporate activities are geographically distributed, and often have employees physically located within the operating units but with either a shared reporting line to a local manager and to the corporate function, or only to the latter. In the words of a recent study, "a range of international structures appear to have taken over the national subsidiary from above" (Edwards et al., 2022). They have also transformed "HQ" into a more complex and geographically distributed set of specialized activities (Nell, Kappen, and Laamanen, 2017). Each of these corporate functions is an expert knowledge domain with a specialized language and models, engaged in ongoing translation activities as it interacts with various operating units.

Organizational translation — in terms of moving new models and practices into geographically distributed subunits — has long been an important activity

in MNCs, and has become increasingly so in the 21st century. MNCs have responded in recent years to volatile and complex international environments by changes in their strategies, organizational architectures, systems, and processes, engaging in multiple initiatives across the complex, dynamic, and interactive boundaries involved in cross-border business. Moving these initiatives into the geographically distributed network of focused subunits involves not only organizational translation but often simultaneously involves translation across language and knowledge domain boundaries. We know very little about how these various initiatives are related, either at the initiating corporate level or within the various receiving subunits, or about how MNCs foster what Røvik (2016; 2022) has called "translation competences" at these levels. Although the IB field has increasingly recognized that "history matters", IB researchers have tended to analyze MNC change initiatives independent of past initiatives. However, both organization theory and managerial experience attest to the power of the legacy of previous change initiatives on how new initiatives are shaped and received. Viewing the MNC as a translation ecosystem brings these issues into sharp focus, and opens up new avenues for IB research.

3.2 MNCs in translation ecosystems: The external context

An MNC is also nested within other translation ecosystems that affect the MNC's translation processes. One is the larger global translation ecosystem engaged in identifying "best practice" and translating it into general management models — an ecosystem that includes global consultancies, business schools, other MNCs, the business media, and professional associations (Engwall, Kipping, and Üsdiken, 2016; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002). Each local subunit is in turn nested within the local translation ecosystems of organizational translators in other companies and the interlingual translations and translators. How an MNC's translation processes influence — and are influenced by — these varied related ecosystems is an area of theory and research where IB could make a significant contribution not only to longstanding IB research areas but also to ORGANIZATION STUDIES and TRANSLATION STUDIES, where translation ecology has yet to be empirically developed.

Translation ecosystems are differentiated by level (global, regional, national) and by translation domain (the CSR translation ecosystems differ from the accounting ecosystems, for example). The mini-case of the R&D unit in China presented above provides a useful example, depicted in Figure 1.

The Nordic MNC's internal translation ecosystem involves primarily the HRM/Talent Management unit at both the corporate and local levels and the R&D organization. These two knowledge domains interact in translating the

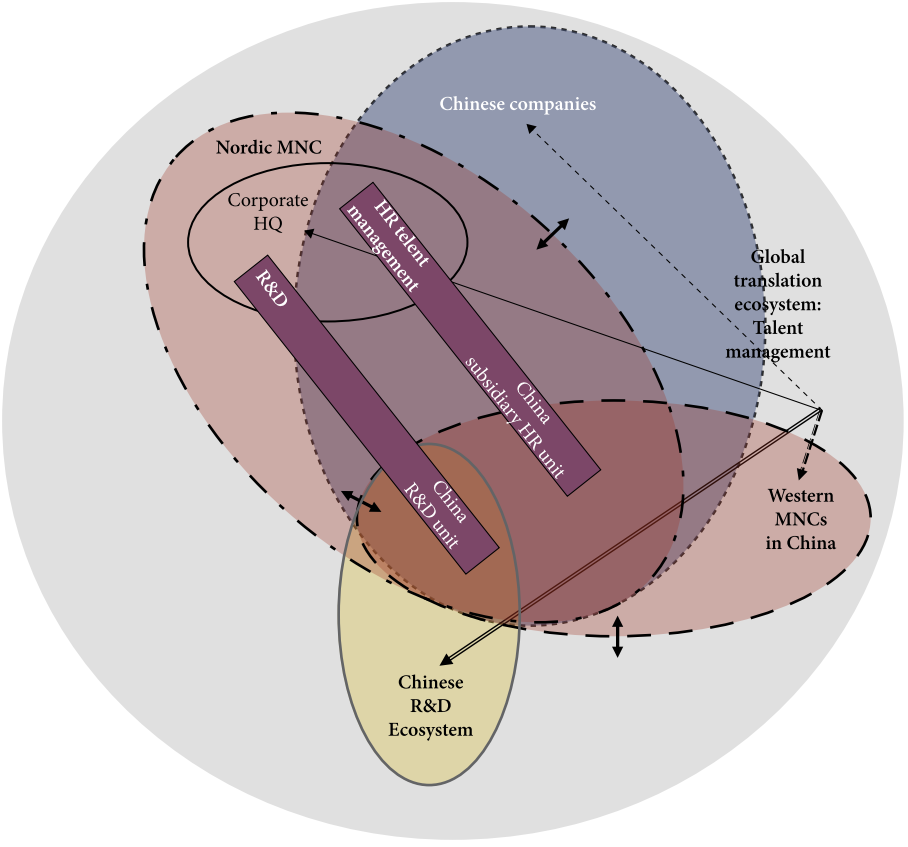


Figure 1. Translation ecosystems

organizational practices associated with the talent management initiative into the Chinese R&D unit. Nordic MNC is itself nested within the global HRM/Talent management translation ecosystem, which developed the concept of talent management, and from which the external consultants involved in launching Nordic's initiative were drawn. However, as Figure 1 shows, there are also external Chinese HRM/Talent Management ecosystems, one composed of local companies and one composed by other Western MNCs, which influence how the models are translated, in both linguistic and organizational terms. The R&D unit, in turn, is embedded in an R&D translation ecosystem populated by other R&D organizations in China, both local companies and other Western MNCs. The extent to which the MNC's local and corporate translators are aware of and influenced by translators and translations in these ecosystems is a promising area for research.

4. Methodological implications

All three translation approaches recognize that translation is far from being a technical process grounded in stable equivalence of meaning across boundaries. Translation changes what moves across those boundaries, whether they are organizational, knowledge domain, or linguistic boundaries. Seeing the MNC as a translation ecosystem recognizes that bringing a management model, an innovation, a practice, or a change initiative into an MNC and moving it across the subunits involves all three types of boundaries simultaneously, and inevitably, the different kinds of translating processes will interact. As yet, however, we have almost no understanding of *how* these translation processes interact in an MNC ecosystem. Undertaking empirical research that explores the complex translation ecosystem of an MNC will require that IB's research paradigms are reoriented to better address the processual, spatial, and temporal dimensions of translation. In the following section, we briefly explore some of these implications.

4.1 From the meso level to macro and micro levels of analysis

The case study, which is the dominant research strategy in IB, remains useful for developing the translation ecosystem approach because it incorporates multiple layers of context (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011). Inspired by the extended case method in anthropology and sociology (Burawoy, 1998; 2009; Welch, Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, Piekkari, & Plakoyiannaki, 2022), we argue that the translation ecosystem takes a specific translation activity (such as introducing a new talent management program into the Chinese R&D subunit) as its point of departure, and then empirically defines the boundaries of the case through what Ragin (1992) calls "casing." Building on Burawoy's (1998) approach, Welch et al. (2022, p.16) argue that in case studies "theorizing requires 'extending out' from immediate field observations to the general, from the micro site to macro forces, and from the present to the past". These broader, macro-level forces at the national, regional, and the global levels of analysis are mutually constitutive of each other, and have an impact on the immediate social interactions underpinning translation activities. In ecosystems, translations build on earlier translations, both external and internal, involving path dependency and historical influences of past translator decisions on contemporary ones.

However, as an ethnographic method the extended case method has not been much used in IB (Nguyen & Tull, 2022), perhaps because methodological innovations developed in one disciplinary field are often confronted with "translational distance" before they are considered applicable and legitimate in another. Another reason may be that making the analytical move across micro and macro is chal-

lenging. Macro-level forces such as trade relationships between countries, diffusion of new management fashions, changes in geopolitics or financial markets are easily overlooked or taken for granted both by researchers and participants in the field (Burawoy, 1998; Welch et al., 2022). Participants may experience macro forces locally without necessarily being aware of them or able to articulate their effects in a research interview. As a result, scholars tend to assume that the social structures and relations they are observing are more stable and enduring than is the case (Welch et al., 2022, p. 15).

4.2 From heavy reliance on interviews to multiple data sources

In a translation ecosystem, a change of language is a tangible marker of a boundary. Since crossing language boundaries often leaves a paper trail (which is increasingly "virtual" — in digital archives), IB researchers can expand on the use of documents and web-based materials such as on-line training sessions, for example. Textual analysis can identify elements tailored for local needs and negotiations inscribed in these texts. A translation ecosystem approach can therefore encourage IB researchers to reduce their heavy reliance on interviews as the main data source (Piekkari, Welch, & Paavilainen 2009). By studying the nitty gritty of the everyday work on the micro level through ethnographic methods (Koskinen, 2020), IB researchers could analyze how small decisions grow into policies and practices, and what a large amount of translation work is needed to implement a change.

When using interviews, IB researchers could include retrospective questions about previous translation initiatives or knowledge of similar initiatives in other companies to capture the historical and temporal context of translation processes. Research participants could also be asked about the language resources devoted to the translation initiative under study, the role of translators, and the availability of supporting materials in the corporate language (usually English) as well as local languages. When the data show that a particular translation strategy is in use, interviewees could be invited to comment on the actual interlingual translations on the basis of a fragment of text, PowerPoint slide or other such textual artefacts. It would also be interesting to ask whether the allocation of language and translation resources varies between locations within the MNC. For example, would the Nordic MNC in our mini-case also relax the corporate language requirements for English language fluency for its Spanish-speaking or French-speaking countries? Probably not, as these markets were not regarded as strategically important as China. The allocation of critical resources raises questions about the internal hierarchy and status within the MNC from the viewpoint of corporate management's future expectations.

Translated texts could also be studied as boundary objects, allowing for "different groups to work together" (Star, 2010, p. 602). As a boundary object, translations create positive or negative emotional bonds towards both the content at hand as well as the communication partners in question. They can be analyzed "as a repository of documented information on how the intersection of social worlds (Star & Griesemer, 1989) has been constructed and negotiated in a particular boundary crossing event" (Piekkari et al., 2020, p. 1325).

4.3 From solitary to collaborative and linguistically reflexive research

The design and execution of a study framed as a translation ecosystem may be more achievable for a research team rather than a sole researcher. The team members need to have competence in a wide range of data gathering and analysis techniques combined with requisite language and translation competence. Undertaking cross-language research for generating novel findings also calls for reflexive skills on the part of the researchers. Reflexivity is based on awareness of "what we know and how we know it, by revealing some of the assumptions on which knowledge is based" (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008, p. 190). Translation requires such reflexivity about how and why practices and knowledge change when crossing language boundaries.

Based on their own experiences within a bilingual (Finnish, English) research team with asymmetrical language relationships, Thomas, Tienari, Davies and Meriläinen (2009, p. 321) advocate "a form of radical reflexivity". It refers to awareness of how language asymmetries inform the relative constellation of researchers and consequently also the very generation of knowledge itself, because English tends to be attributed — unconsciously — as the language of knowledge. In a "dialogical space… the members of a research team can explore theoretical assumptions, power relations, and identity work within the research collaboration" (Thomas et al., 2009, pp. 32–322). Horn, Lecomte and Tietze (2020, pp. 224–229) establish the term "linguistic reflexivity" which enables researchers to question received vocabularies and analyze data differently as a reminder to remain open to emergent meanings. They also add that "translatorial reflexivity" may be a way forward to better understand how the role of translation shapes the outcomes of research (Horn et al., 2020, p. 229).

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this Perspective, we have argued that the MNC offers an ideal setting for integrating the three perspectives on translation. A translation approach allows us see

the MNC — the key object of much of the IB research — in a different light. It also invites us to rethink reflexively the ways in which we study core IB topics and questions. Despite the many changes in the MNC architecture during the past two decades that have transformed the internal and external organizational boundaries and turned national country subsidiaries into specialized subunits, IB scholarship has clung to the traditional vocabulary such as "subsidiary" (Edwards et al., 2022). In other words, we have domesticated the organizational transformation of the MNC by translating the changes into familiar language such as HQ-subsidiary relationships.

Ecosystems are in a constant state of emergence and change, and the same is true of translation ecosystems. Management styles, organizational structures, recruitment policies and new generations of workforce, among other things, constantly reshape — translate anew — the ecosystem under study. Researchers therefore need to be alert to the temporality and ephemerality of what they observe, both looking backwards into the historical developments and alert to weak signals that may indicate radical retranslations in the making. One global megatrend that is already affecting organizations and organizing is digitalization and the increasing role of artificial intelligence in previously human-led processes. Interlingual TRANSLATION STUDIES has been one of the first areas to develop functioning machine translation solutions based on AI, and the discipline has already witnessed a radical reorganization of practices. As organizational translation is now increasingly encountering similar phenomena, multidisciplinary approaches will be useful in understanding the new roles for humans in collaboration with learning machines in the translation ecosystems of today and tomorrow.

In this essay, we have argued for the translation ecosystem as a metaphor for understanding IB phenomena more holistically. Like a biological ecosystem, the MNC is connected to numerous ecosystems through its locally embedded units, but the MNC itself can also be conceptualized as a translation ecosystem. It is composed of many varied translators and translation activities, which draw on (and react to) past and current translations and translating activities. Theoretically, we have made the case that the concept of the translation ecosystem enables a more holistic understanding of how management models and organizational practices move across borders, uncovering the multi-level nature of translation processes taking place in the MNC across different "webs of meaning". Karl Weick (1989, p. 529) has argued that metaphors are among "the few tools to create compact descriptions of complex phenomena". Boxenbaum and Rouleau (2011, p. 290) add that metaphors "make it possible to creatively combine multiple perspectives and to envision entirely new conceptual landscapes." Metaphors are particularly useful in early stages of theorizing because they provide a provisional way of seeing organizational life — they signal and open up new research streams

(Cornelissen, 2005). The translation approach provides IB with just such a stimulus for theorizing.

However, TRANSLATION STUDIES reminds us that in IB, translation is much more than a metaphor. Working across boundaries involves linguistic translation, both intralingual (when communications cross boundaries of expertise and interest) and interlingual. TRANSLATION STUDIES expands our understanding of the set of actors, activities, and outcomes that that underlies the organizational translation metaphor. As we have shown in this Perspective, integrating the insights of these two fields into IB theory and research can provide creative directions for the IB field.

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PART II

Empirical studies

CHAPTER 8

Paraprofessional translation in a Franco-German joint-stock company

The case of Saarlor

Andrea Wurm

Paraprofessional translation is often seen as consisting of ad hoc solutions within international business or multinational administration. The case of the sales company Saarlor, however, illustrates the institutionalization of paraprofessional translation activities over several decades. The Saarlor research project aims to gain insights into how exactly the European idea was "translated" into a commercial enterprise at the very junction of two nation states and languages and to uncover the role of paraprofessional translation and boundary-spanning in this process. Micro-historic, ethnographic methodology and a longitudinal view are applied to archival documents to trace and contextualize translatoriality (Koskinen, 2020) and its multiple realizations. The results are discussed and interpreted within the translation ecology framework stemming from economics and organization studies (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) where transfers of texts (interlingual) and practices (metaphorical translations) are intermingled (Piekkari et al., 2020). Focusing on one central manager as nexus, it can be shown that an institutionalized translation ecosystem existed around him within Saarlor, and that it was linked to other such systems outside of the company in a much larger translation ecology. The actors in the ecosystem blended interlingual and metaphorical translation to varying degrees depending on their position in the ecosystem.

Keywords: archive, micro-history, institutionalization, translation ecosystem, cross-border company

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Introduction

Jean Weill[1] entered in 1948 a newly founded sales company dealing with coal, buying in French Lorraine and in German Saarland and selling in different countries, mainly southern Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy. In 1958, his employer Unichar was transformed into the Franco-German joint-stock company Saarlor but continued the same business with the same staff. Nothing is known about his origin or professional training. He made a career as a commercial agent in the coal business and wherever he had learnt German, it was useful to him. He assisted the director of Unichar, who became one of the two necessarily bilingual directors of Saarlor; Weill succeeded him in 1962. In both positions, he managed translation processes and contributed to the drafting of French and German documents. He collaborated with speakers of both languages in both countries. Jean Weill was a paraprofessional translator, certainly without ever thinking of himself as such.

The present chapter gives insights into Weill's career within a company that straddled the national border between France and Germany for several decades in the 20th century. Political will created it in a legal setting specifically set up to promote Franco-German reconciliation and Germany's integration into the West (Thoß, 1990).

The chapter will zoom in from the macro-level to the single company and the people running it on the meso-level and then zoom in on Weill's role on the micro-level to uncover often invisible mechanisms greasing the machine of European integration. The chapter is structured as follows: In this section, the aim of the chapter is sketched out and the company Saarlor presented. Section 2 details the theoretical, methodological and data basis for the study. The institutionalization of translation processes within Saarlor, in which Weill assumed a central role, is laid out in Section 3, using the approach of "translation ecology" (see below). Section 4 concludes the chapter with some general observations.

1. The full name is given to honour Weill's dedication to Saarlor and the tasks he fulfilled for the company. His work is central in this chapter and serves as illustration for many others in demonstrating the ongoing institutionalization of translation in an organization building mainly on paraprofessional translators. For ethical reasons, other actors are referred to with their position alone.

Aim of the chapter

The present chapter offers a description and analysis of paraprofessional translation practices within Saarlor. The case study aims at beginning to answer the questions "who with what qualifications and situatedness translated what how to which purpose and effect and according to which translation regime?" The methodology used is a combination of historical-ethnographic and translation sociologic approaches with a situated, micro-historic view on cultural phenomena. A micro-historical approach is applied, which has already been explicitly called for in translation history (e.g., Adamo, 2006; Munday, 2014); inspiration was also drawn from Kaisa Koskinen's "translatorial linguistic ethnography" (Koskinen, 2020). This is complemented with the "translation ecosystem" metaphor from organization studies (e.g., Piekkari et al., 2020; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017; Westney et al., 2022). "Translation" in this research field is mostly "metaphorical translation" of management ideas and practices from the headquarters of multinational corporations to their subsidiaries. The process of transfer, adaptation and localization nearly always includes "interlingual translation" which, however, is seldom explicitly considered in the studies. Stronger integration is now called for by some researchers belonging to the fields of organization and translation studies alike (Barner-Rasmussen, this volume; Piekkari et al., 2020; Tietze et al., 2022; Westney et al., 2022). The chapter contributes to giving answers from a historical perspective.

Saarlor no longer exists and the archives of the Strasbourg branch are available, so the case study can build on many more internal details than contemporary studies, where managers are reluctant to give researchers access to internal communication (Winkelmann, 2016). The archival documents are queried with an approach that is ethnographic but also historical, starting from the central concepts of translation ecosystem (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) and translatoriality (Koskinen, 2020) and observing the institutionalization of mainly paraprofessional translation over a number of decades in one company.

Saarlor as a company

Saarlor existed from 1958 through 2001 and its creation owes a lot to wars and the power to use resources. After the Second World War, the Saar region was separated from Germany again, as it had been during its administration by a League of Nations commission from 1919 to 1935, when France was in possession of Saar coal mines. In 1945, the Saarland was integrated into the French economic space and France exploited Saar coal mines as war reparations. At the time, a sales company marketing Saar and Lorraine coal, Unichar, was created. When the Saarland

re-joined the German political and economic space in 1956/59, the intergovernmental treaty[2] included an agreement on further collaboration in commercializing coal from state-owned Saarbergwerke AG and Houillères du Bassin de Lorraine (HBL) in a binational company, the Saarlor coal union (section 84 and annex 29). The stock was distributed between Saarbergwerke and HBL plus the French nationalized coal mining organization to which HBL belonged. Saarlor's statutes were based on the treaty and elaborated by lawyers from both nations who retained similar aspects in the national corporate laws, decided to adopt norms from one system when the differences were too important and drafted new regulations where none existed for the international action of a "European company". Since the firm was supposed to act in two economic and legal spaces, the decision was taken to establish two headquarters, one in Strasbourg (France) and one in Saarbrücken (Germany), each headed by a director. The decisive organ was the board with a French president and a German vice-president. The structures corresponded neither to French nor to German legislation, so the terminology adopted differed from both legal systems to indicate its particularity (Rolshoven & Jehne, 1979). The company was closed down when the regional coal production ceased.

The corporation thus created falls under the definition of a boundary object given by Star and Griesemer (1989), in that it enables cooperation across boundaries for two distinct social groups. The creation of Saarlor can already be considered a "translation" in the sense of Wedlin and Sahlin (2017) within the concept of ecology of translation. The approach deals with single (international or interunit) transfer processes in an organizational ecosystem and enables researchers to contextualize individual acts as well as to explain some of their aspects in context.

Saarlor differs from the prototypical multinational corporation investigated in international business studies as it does not consist of headquarters in one country and subsidiaries in other countries. Instead, there are two main owners, the coal producers in the Saarland (Germany, Saarbergwerke) and Lorraine (France, HBL). The joint-stock company selling their products is a common space, a translation space (Cronin, 2006), in which the two sides bring in their solutions to the same problems and where they need to negotiate the way in which Saarlor functions. Flows and hierarchies are not the same as in classical multinational corporations. However, the mechanisms are very similar and metaphorical and interlingual translations do exist; the latter are executed mostly by paraprofessional translators.

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2. Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Französischen Republik zur Regelung der Saarfrage — Traité entre la République Fédérale d'Allemagne et la République Française sur le règlement de la question sarroise. 27.10.1956 (BGBl. II. Nr. 36 vom 24.12.1956 S. 1589–1836)

Theory and methodology

Translation ecosystems

Many studies in translation history covertly use micro-history as methodology when taking the perspective of certain translations or translators (Pym, 1998, pp. 1–19). Significantly fewer historical studies of translation and translatoriality focus on a certain company, at least in translation studies, where economic translation remains under-researched in general (Biel & Sosoni, 2017). The situation is different in other fields.

The concept of ecosystems of translation has been developed by Wedlin and Sahlin (2017) and widely taken up in organization and international business studies. In these domains, researchers observe several intertwined and interdependent processes of "translation", i.e. transfers, that are spreading management concepts and practices — and in the process modifying them — across national, organizational, knowledge, and linguistic boundaries (Westney et al., 2022). "Translation" of management practices is thus not primarily or not at all thought of as interlingual translation of complete texts. Translation ecology enables researchers to think and analyse in one framework interlingual translation and professional activity of paraprofessional translators, their working environment and their mediation, i.e., metaphorical translation (Piekkari et al., 2020).

Translators and in particular paraprofessional translators often assume the much wider role of boundary spanners, a concept developed in organization studies and describing individual employees being perceived by their in-group and by one or more out-groups as engaging in interaction between the groups within a multinational corporation or an institution; they need linguistic and cultural skills to do so and combine them with professional competence and organizational knowledge (Barner-Rasmussen, this volume; Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014, p. 887). As they act within their organization, embedded in a certain context, they have agency of their own, albeit in different scopes depending on their position. Piekkari and colleagues (2020) put forward a more agentic role for non- or para-professional (interlingual) translators compared to external professional translators and are backed in this by Barner-Rasmussen (this volume) and by several authors in translation studies (e.g., Kujamäki & Pasanen, 2019). Both papers stress the fact that the hierarchical position of boundary spanners can vary (in sociolinguistics also Lesk et al., 2017) and that they mostly engage in interlingual and metaphorical translation alike. Piekkari and colleagues, in one of the recent efforts to combine organizational and translational disciplinary perspectives, distinguish four prototypical types according to the varying proportions of interlingual and metaphorical translation. The result of a combined view is a

stronger integration of interlingual translation into the processes studied (Barner-Rasmussen, this volume; Westney et al., 2022, pp. 3–5).

Translation ecologies as an analytical framework cover a wider scope and are better suited for investigating companies than comparable approaches like translation cultures describing the norms (e.g., Prunč, 1997) or translation regimes focusing on the principles of translatorial action (Pym, 1998, pp. 125–142). Translation ecologies explicitly consider the organizational context, which surrounds not only one but whole sets of translations, and they allow for an inclusive ethnographic view on translation processes in a company and their development and interaction over time. Therefore, the approach is also apt for studying the institutionalization of translation in surroundings using mainly paraprofessional and not professional translation.

When the research object is a complete organization, it seems sensible to look at it through the lens of institutional translation as defined by Kaisa Koskinen (2008, p. 22).[3] Translations in these cases are — oftentimes like the original documents — not the product of a single author but are produced collectively (2008, p. 24). The stance of institutional documents is collective and collaborative, they speak for the organization, and their production process is rooted in the institutional ecosystem. The translation ecosystem approach caters exactly for that and is therefore especially suited to analyse the processes leading to such texts and their institutionalization within a company like Saarlor.

Translatorial linguistic ethnography

Studying internal workings of organizations is best done using ethnographic methods. If the focus lies on multilingualism, language use, and translation this could be called "translatorial linguistic ethnography", as Koskinen (2020) has suggested, and the overall approach of this chapter easily falls under this category. Saarlor can be conceptualized — besides its structure as a translation ecosystem — as the actors' translatorial space, a space in which translatoriality happens and is omnipresent, when actors move messages between languages in a fluid manner to fulfil their everyday tasks (also Barner-Rasmussen, this volume, speaking of "omnitranslatoriality" encompassing the interlingual and metaphorical translation activities of boundary spanners; Koskinen, 2020; Piekkari et al., 2020; Tietze

3. Koskinen (2011, p. 57) withdraws from the wide conception of institutional translation and wants to "restrict the concept to those concrete institutions that directly serve the societies' control and governance functions". Considering that analyses demonstrate institutionalization of translation in the realm of mainly paraprofessional translation, it seems justified to subsume the case to Koskinen's (2008) definition of institutional translation.

et al., 2022). The Saarlor case is one of many examples of intermingling bilingual action with translated mediation in the same organization and by paraprofessional translators.

Situating single translation acts and translator personalities highlights the fact that translating often is only part of professional activities and that translators do more than just translating, a fact acknowledged in translation studies (e.g., Pym, 1998, pp. 161–166). Nevertheless, Pym (1998, p. 161f) observes a tendency in translation research to believe in specialist translators since translation training has been institutionalized, meaning an implicit assumption of "monoprofessionalism" in which translators do nothing else than translate. The case study from the 1950s onwards, when translator training had been established only recently, reveals the normality of paraprofessional translation and translator personalities assuming many tasks of which the rendering of a text in another language was but one part.

Micro-historical approach

Identifying paraprofessional translations and translators, however, is a challenging task due to many translators' invisibility (Venuti, 1995) and needs extensive fieldwork or archival studies (Kujamäki & Footitt, 2016, p. 61f; Pym, 1998, p. 5; Westney et al., 2022, p. 6). Considering that the present study is historical in nature and analyses an individual in his ecosystem, i.e. uses data on micro-levels and on the meso-level of a company, the micro-history approach suits our needs (Ginzburg, 1993), especially as it combines historical with ethnographic methods.

When studying a historical case, researchers are limited to drawing on the available documents and cannot elicit the information they would need as ethnographers normally do. The research process resembles detective work, and some information is only accessible via hints in different places. This constraint is balanced out by unrestricted access to company-internal documents which would most certainly not be part of the study in a contemporary setting (Winkelmann, 2016). Moreover, the diachronic perspective offers insights into the establishment of procedures and the institutionalization of translation and boundary-spanning in the dynamic context of beginning Europeanization with a vision of eliminating borders.

The Saarlor research project, of which the present chapter is only a part, aims to gain insights into how exactly the European idea was "translated" into a commercial enterprise at the very junction of two nation states and languages and at uncovering the role of paraprofessional translation and boundary-spanning in this process. The micro-historical method offers the means to put one organization and one person in the centre and to study them as the nexus in a widespread, tightly interwoven net.

The study and the ethnographic/microhistorical method are based on multiple data sources. All data used is either naturally occurring archived data from Saarlor or its owner companies, or company publications and scholarly texts dealing with it (esp. Rolshoven & Jehne, 1979). The archives derive mainly from the French headquarters in Strasbourg, while the archives of the German branch could not yet be located and are probably lost. Besides files and records, an important body of texts consists of the bilingual minutes of board meetings. Inspired methodologically by ethnography and historiography, a scaffold of facts is constructed first and based on a vast array of data belonging to various categories and modalities, while the interpretation and argument are developed in classical humanistic fashion using the translation ecology model.

In changing perspectives, the researcher can paint a picture as complete as possible of, for example, a person's biography and tasks (micro-level), but also of the institutional action of individuals and thus of the norms of the institution (meso-level). The perspective constantly switches between different angles and targets, and micro phenomena hint at meso or macro systems and the other way round. In line with new trends in sociolinguistics (see e.g., Spitzmüller, 2022, p. 39) and border studies (transscalarity; see e.g., Wille, 2024, p. 34f), I tend to see micro-meso-macro not as scales to be investigated separately, but rather as spots in a tightly interwoven and interacting continuum or texture forming a complex system (i.a., Wille, 2024), and the data and method combination in a case study is a way to overcome container thinking and lay bare interconnections. However, a case study based on historical data is always in danger of containing blind spots and incorrect conclusions. Combination of data and methods is equally a way to limit the effects of missing archival documentation.

The present chapter will focus on Jean Weill, a central figure within Saarlor, the director of the French branch from 1962 to 1976. He was closely involved in interlingual translation and the management of the respective processes. At the same time, he managed the functioning of the branch in close collaboration with his German counterpart as well as the French president and the German vice-president. His role was therefore that of a boundary-spanner. Perhaps he did not do many text translations himself, but certainly he was a paraprofessional translation project manager. The main part of the chapter discusses Weill's microcosmos and tasks within Saarlor.

The translation ecosystem of Saarlor: Institutionalizing paraprofessional translation

Saarlor was a binational, bilingual and bicultural company with two branches, one in Saarbrücken (Germany), one in Strasbourg (France), and an office in Paris. The owner companies and the members of the board came from both camps and the presidency united a French president and a German vice-president. The activity of the company spanned different markets using several languages. The main part of the internal and external communication was conducted either in French or in German or in both languages "simultaneously" (statutes, board meetings, balance sheets, letterheads, etc.). Part of the staff members had to be bi- or plurilingual and translations or interpretations had to be supplied to ensure the plurilingual communication.

Translators and translation management

The nexus of translatorial tasks and translators executing them is varied. Roles were fluid and changed depending on the task at hand for most of the translators, with one exception: A trained mono-professional interpreter from outside the company took on a neutral and exclusively mediating role in board meetings.

For the rest of the translation work, no mention of professional services outside the company has been found. Untrained paraprofessional translators with linguistic skills mediated texts written by others. They had no agency of their own, as the writers were located outside their own professional field. However, they worked for the same employer. Over time the untrained translators could gather experience in translating the reduced text types and contents. In some cases, their work domain and the content of the translations overlapped without giving them agency.

These translators are quite invisible and locating them and giving them names requires detective work.

For the Saarbrücken branch, no documentation of staff and job descriptions could yet be located, but two memos dating from 1959 give insights into the management of the translation processes (923CAITM19). Jean Weill, at the time management assistant in the Strasbourg branch, gives instructions to a Saarbrücken employee which texts should be translated into German for the next board meeting. The addressee of the memo probably is the same person as the one with the same name mentioned in the organizational chart of 1985 in the sales department, for this person worked for Saarlor Saarbrücken right from the start in 1958. In one of the memos, another Saarbrücken employee from the accounting department is said to have taken French texts dealing with finances with him and to have been

"taking care of their translation" (all citations translated by me), either doing the translation himself or handing it over to someone else, which is not clear from the memo. Based on this information, it seems likely that paraprofessional translators were doing the German translations for board meetings and probably for the minutes also, at least in the first months of Saarlor's existence.

Those documents were not marked as translations, and often it was not even clear which one was the original. When memos had to be translated, though, "Übersetzung" or "traduction" appeared right before the title so that the fact of translation becomes more apparent and allows for the distinction of source and target text. The file reference of one of those memo translations,[4] from 3 June 1971, contains two letters of the family name of the woman translating in the Saarbrücken branch in 1959. This suggests that the same person still did translations more than ten years later.

According to the memos mentioned, the woman doing the bulk of the German translations also seems to have been in charge of collecting from different sources and distributing to board members German versions of the texts needed that were produced somewhere else, e.g., by the European Coal and Steel Community working in four languages and addressing the owner companies of Saarlor in their respective language (another facet of intermingled translation ecosystems). Moreover, a parcel with copies of a bilingual statistical document is announced and she is asked to complete the board members' dossiers with them. This employee (probably in the sales department) thus assumed tasks not only in translating but also in managing the translation process necessary for the bilingual documents needed for board meetings. However, the project manager was the French director's assistant and later director of the Strasbourg branch, Jean Weill, who signed those memos and established a list with all documents and their availability in the two languages.

The inter-branch communication within Saarlor was thus, to some extent, executed by in-house collaborators but guaranteed by other untrained paraprofessional translators with agency as well as linguistic and cultural skills. These mostly were the respective directors of the two branches. They produced two language versions of texts they dealt with as part of their professional duties and were — at least in part of the documents — the ones speaking. Their mediating role was thus reduced, and their agency strengthened compared to paraprofessional translators without agency. Their loyalty belonged to the company as a whole and they managed to balance the interests of both sides, at least according to the speeches held in board meetings when they retired (for Jean Weill in the meeting of 25 June 1976, 923CAITM17).

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Jean Weill also relied on bilingual staff members in a translatorial space to perform their professional tasks within the company; linguistic and cultural skills were needed, though. Obviously, in the Strasbourg headquarters it was seen as necessary for day-to-day work that every secretary had a knowledge of German. Research confirms that bilingual employees play a crucial role at all levels of hierarchy.[5] A remark by Jean Weill in the memo to his successor is especially enlightening (1812CAITM52, translated by me): Meetings were no longer held in Paris "since the former secretary, completely bilingual, [...] retired" (p. 6). It was she who organized everything from the restaurant and the seating plan for lunch, up to laying out paper, pencils, drinks, and cigars (!) in the meeting room, and was also responsible for the "transmission and reception of messages for the Germans" (p. 6). The overview of all board meetings confirms that in 1976 and 1977 meetings took place only in Saarbrücken and Strasbourg. After that, a solution had been found.

The role of the secretary in the Paris office gives, however, a hint to a mediating role between the Paris-based president of the board, a monolingual, and the equally monolingual German members, even if her task probably did not consist in doing text translations in a narrower sense, either in written or in oral form, making it translatoriality in Koskinen's sense.

These translator roles were probably not absolutely fixed, so that a bilingual secretary, while organizing a board meeting, could also take on a mediating role. The bilingual work was regulated by the norms of the organization, in part legally fixed in international treaties and the bilingual statutes, in part deriving from the international activity of the company and being developed over several decades. Koskinen (2008, p. 22) widens the scope of "institutional" translation beyond institutions. In her definition, she counts a private company with government agencies and multinational organizations as an "official body" that "uses translation as a means of 'speaking' to a particular audience" so that "the voice that is to be heard is that of the translating institution". Institutional translation in Saarlor happens collectively and the (para-)professional translators are socialized to the organization they work for; the company's norms govern their translatoriality (Koskinen, 2008, pp. 24, 96, 148).

The (para)professional translations dealt with before addressed mainly stakeholders: the presidency and the board. The texts mostly spoke on behalf of the company instead of individual authors. In contrast, the bilingual sales agents, secretaries and accountants employed their linguistic skills to intervene in inter-unit

5. So e.g., Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) from international business studies, Lesk et al. (2017) from sociolinguistic workplace studies; Polzin-Haumann and Reissner (2016) from linguistic border studies call for a detailed linguistic profile for different positions.

interaction but also to give the institution a voice towards the monolingual suppliers and clients.

Not all persons even inside Saarlor were bilingual. But the multitude of linguistic boundary-spanners guaranteed that monolinguals like the French president, other monolingual members of the board or commercial and technical staff could rely on mediators to provide information in their language. The translation ecosystem and the institutionalized translation processes created an environment in which cross-border work was possible for everyone.

Realia translation and the role of revision

Besides linguistic skills, mediators need cultural skills to make transfers acceptable to a monolingual and monocultural group. In translation studies, realia and culture-specific items are a well-discussed subject since some "textually actualized items" do not exist in a target system or have "different intertextual and cultural implications" (Franco Aixelà, 1995, p. 114). They explicitly call for more than "only linguistic" transfer. An example of collaborative and quite competent realia translation can be found in the file on the nomination of the French director (1812CAITM45).

Jean Weill, the long-standing director's assistant, became director of the Strasbourg branch in 1962. When it came to announcing to an external audience (the suppliers and clients) that Weill would take over from his predecessor, the German director himself sent a telex (in German) to the Strasbourg headquarters to suggest another formulation of Weill's new and his former position (dated 29 March 1962 in 1812CAITM45). He thought Germans would not understand correctly what competences Weill had already had within the company due to the fact that in the German legal system a "stellvertretendes Vorstandsmitglied" had more competences than a "directeur-adjoint" in French corporate law; he asserted that "Prokurist" shall be added to make clear Weill's former position. The telex makes it clear that the director himself was involved in the (revision of the) translation of the company's outside communication (see also the file reference on a memo translation from 3 June 1971:[6] A-II/Ec/je, suggesting that the director (je) has supervised the work of the translator (Ec)). The director's acting could be called realia translation in translation studies terms, or editing in Wedlin and Sahlin's (2017) sense, or be framed as one of the "translation processes" discussed by Westney and colleagues (2022, p. 4). It might be that the French version has been equally changed after the correcting remarks, because the German and the French final version are literal renderings of one another: "Fondé de pouvoirs-Directeur

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Adjoint" — "Prokurist und stellvertretender Direktor". It is not fully clear how the first translation read, since drafts are not preserved in the dossier. Obviously, the translator had mentioned "stellvertretendes Vorstandsmitglied". This is far from a literal translation a translator without formal training would tend to use while the final version is exactly this — a literal translation (circular dated April 1962 in 1812CAITM45). If the original French text only mentioned "Directeur Adjoint", without the "Fondé de pouvoirs" (meaning "Prokurist"), a translation with "stellvertretendes Vorstandsmitglied" seems quite plausible. A translation process would thus have back-influenced the wording of the "original". Professional competence and established revision processes seem to balance out lacking formal translator training.

Whatever the actual process looked like, we can see the interconnected "complex webs of imitation processes" at work, and observe that "one process of imitation may lead to another" (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111) as the same telex exemplifies a "chain of translations" (Westney & Piekkari, 2020, p. 61). In the same telex, the German director thinks the translator of the circular wrote the word "Generaldirektor" based on article 31 of the statutes, where in the German version "Generaldirektion" had been used to "outline according to French custom the remit of the governing body provided for in the statutes" (translated by me). The statutes were decided on by the French and German governments in both language versions. They form a sediment in the chain of translations on which the later translator possibly built their work. Another explanation could be the widespread use of "directeur général" in France which differs from the special terminology of Saarlor (for the distinctive terminology see Rolshoven & Jehne, 1979; for a definition of sedimentation see below, Subsection 3.4). This was corrected by the German manager executing the same function in the Saarbrücken branch and thus knowing how to express it correctly with respect to German legal and economic requirements and to specific Saarlor circumstances.

Drafting the minutes — complex institutionalization

From 1972 onwards, the directors were nominated secretaries of the board. Even before, both had been involved in the drafting of the minutes. From the above description of Weill managing the translation processes in 1959 we can assume that the former board secretary, an external to the two branches, did not take on these duties. After retiring, Weill accepted to continue functioning as consultant in the first year, and as secretary of the board at least until 1983 (minutes of the June/July meetings in 923CAITM17 and 923CAITM18). This hints at Weill's strong commitment to Saarlor and great personal engagement.

At the latest from 1972 through 1976, Weill and the then current German director had to establish the documentation for and the minutes of board meetings in French and German. The Saarlor statutes called for minutes in both languages (article 26) and the mostly monolingual board members needed to have access to the documents and minutes in their language. Compiling the documents for each board meeting and making sure they existed in two languages was a complicated process, as shown above. We know about this and the drafting of the minutes from a detailed memo Jean Weill wrote to his successor (dated 1 September 1976 in 1812CAITM52). He mentions many aspects giving insights into the mechanisms of a bilingual company's internal organization.

The meetings themselves were held bilingually with simultaneous interpretation by a professional interpreter and a mobile interpretation device for Saarbrücken and Strasbourg (a fixed one in Paris). Weill and the German director took notes during the meeting. Weill tried to translate immediately into French what was being said in German. He produced a first draft in French together with the board's president and gave it to Saarbrücken to be translated into German. The German director changed what Weill had got wrong, based on his own notes in German (Weill writes "he corrects and completes what I have translated and where there are often errors or content lacking", p. 8; translated by me). The president and vice-president could then revise what they deemed necessary in a version in their own language, and their modifications were integrated in both language versions.

Weill reminds of the importance of a last revision step, checking if the two versions coincided with each other, before they were distributed to the board. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies remain in final versions, as the comparison of the minutes of the 54th meeting has revealed. This meeting took place in 1972, when Weill was new to the drafting of the minutes, and it might be that the final revision was only established later. In 1976, when advising his successor, it was in place. Up to now, no mention could be found of who translated the minutes into German (only "meanwhile, Saarbrücken has translated the draft into German", p. 9; translated by me) but based on the above information on other translation processes, I think it likely that in-house paraprofessional translators were charged with the task.

The details of the drafting process make clear that in the 1970s, a complex system had been established to provide two language versions of each document where it was necessary. This happened for board meetings alone three to four times a year for Saarlor and similarly for its four subsidiaries, where oftentimes the same persons were in charge (Weill in his memo of 1976 in 1812CAITM52). Without installing a separate translation service or organizing outside professional translation, the institutionalization of translation processes within Saarlor can be

considered quite advanced and being so right from the start in 1959. Presumably, the basis for the elaborate processes lies in former experiences of the same staff in Saarlor's predecessor company Unichar, which was French only but collaborated closely with the Saar mining corporation, and generally from the French administration of Saar mining 1919–1935 and 1945–1957. Thus, being a translation ecosystem itself, Saarlor was embedded in and built on other, in part larger, translation ecosystems.

Institutional ecosystem: Sedimentation and chain of translations

It has already been mentioned above that certain ways of expressing or doing things get sedimented in interlingual or metaphorical chains of translations, and that the slowly grown context of a particular organization determines to a large extent the actual texts and ways of doing things.

One of the "translation processes" in the ecosystem approach is materialization, by which "an abstract general model is turned into physical artefacts" (Westney et al., 2022, p. 4). The bilingual letterheads and the financial reporting handed out in board meetings would be such a materialization of the decidedly binational, bilingual, and bicultural spirit of Saarlor and the far-reaching interweaving of both sides. For the letterheads of both branches, the graphical layout, typography etc. are completely aligned, but German and French elements (company name, placename with the date) as well as information concerning the Saarbrücken or the Strasbourg branch (address, director) are ordered in a way that the language and information of the branch "speaking" comes first. Balance sheets are even more interwoven, as they exist in one bilingual/bicultural version only. The categories are given in both languages,[7] the numbers in two currencies. The same model could be re-used every year so that the translation had to be done only once and adapted when necessary.

As it was always the same persons who translated repetitive documents in the same domain and organization, a sedimentation effect can be postulated in which "later translations often built on and incorporated elements of earlier translations" (Westney & Piekkari, 2020, p. 77). The corpus of bi-texts was growing continuously and new translations were being produced by those familiar with former translations, as even the external interpreter seems to have been called for regularly, as Weill mentions in the memo to his successor. The directors and the presidency constituted a living memory of the company in overlapping periods and spanning even the transition from Unichar to Saarlor in the first place: when one

7. A one and a half page glossary of terminology is preserved in the estate of the first vice-president, Saarländisches Landesarchiv, NL.Rolshoven, 4 AR-Saarlor NN-11, 18 November 1970.

left, others were there to carry on and familiarize newcomers with Saarlor's way of doing and naming things. Weill left a written "note" to his successor, detailing important processes that guaranteed the smooth functioning of the (translation) ecosystem. This could be considered a knowledge translation within the Strasbourg branch from predecessor to successor. Overall, these persons advanced institutionalization.

Communication worked horizontally and vertically, between organizational units located at the same hierarchical level (Strasbourg and Saarbrücken branch, the two coal producers/owners HBL and Saarbergwerke) or on different steps of the ladder (the Paris-based president and the branches, European institutions or national governments and Saarlor, French national coal mining and Saarlor). International business research and organization studies have tackled this kind of cooperation and developed the concept of boundary-spanner.

Saarlor is a case in point: With its board meetings three times a year, the two branches and their long-standing collaborators, the close collaboration between at least the directors of the branches and its strong ties into the coal producers and owner companies HBL and Saarbergwerke, Saarlor would have formed a community of practice (Spitzmüller, 2022, p. 33). Weaker ties link Saarlor to national institutions like the French state coal mining company, of which HBL was a part, and to the national governments. Moreover, the president and the vice-president (director of Saarbergwerke from 1957 to 1969 and afterwards member of the board), were representatives in a committee at European level and regularly communicated ideas back and forth (like in the travel metaphor of Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111). Metaphorical and interlingual translations could thus happen within Saarlor and between Saarlor and the outside society. Both kinds of translation depended on each other.

Interdependency of interlingual and metaphorical translation

When the director of Saarbergwerke changed in 1969, new members entered the Saarlor board. They had not experienced the genesis of its habits and challenged the way meetings were held (minutes of 21 April and 1 July 1971 in 923CAITM16). Moreover, they pressed for more concise, shorter minutes, while the president kept arguing for the habitual explicit version. Apparently, the minutes were quite short and cryptic in the times of Unichar, the French-only predecessor of Saarlor. It was only when two languages were to be dealt with that it seemed helpful to "better represent the discussions and leave no doubts as to the decisions taken" (Weill in the memo of 1 September 1976 in 1812CAITM52, p. 8; translated by me). When the question was brought up in the board meetings, the president reminded of misunderstandings and translation errors occurring when two different lan-

guages were being used and stated that more verbose minutes had proved to be a remedy. The co-operative translation process embedded in day-to-day work and practiced by the company's staff thus served as controlling mechanism for the bilingualism of the firm.

It might be that the desire for more concise minutes is reflected in the German versions. The comparative analysis of the minutes of the 54th meeting on 22 November 1972 in Paris shows that several German renderings are condensed compared to the French text, leaving out details which can be inferred from the whole sentence or section. The following sentence from page 2 may serve as an example, where the part in italics in the French version is lacking in the German one (English translation: "in conformity with the different tendencies that became manifest"). The discussion in which the tendencies became manifest is included in the minutes, though. Moreover, "the presentation of the market situation" (in boldface) is abstracted to "reporting system". The third highlighted passage (underlined) is more problematic: In French, it is "the presidency" (president and vice-president) who decides, but in German it is the "president" alone:

(1) a. Le Conseil marque en conclusion son accord pour qu'une décision relative à la **présentation de la Revue des marchés**, *conforme aux différentes tendances qui se sont manifestées*, soit prise au sein de la Présidence, en liaison avec la Direction. (923CAITM13, p. 2)

b. Der Rat ist schliesslich [sic] damit einverstanden, dass eine Entscheidung zur Frage des **Berichtswesens** vom Präsidenten in Verbindung mit der Direktion getroffen werden soll. (923CAITM17, p. 2)

This is an example of interlingual and metaphorical translation being closely interdependent in that the different personal and cultural conventions and desires concerning a certain text type and related practice are negotiated and the result is reflected in the texts in different forms for the two language versions.

Conclusions

The chapter gives some insights into a commercial organization straddling two nations and languages and uncovers the role of paraprofessional translation and boundary-spanning. The study uses the translation ecosystem approach as a theoretical framework with an ethnographic view on the (textual) translation culture/regime AND its actors AND the processes AND the interactions/emergence AND metaphorical translation effects. The figure of boundary spanner is exemplified mainly in putting forward Jean Weill and his role in the institutionalization of translation processes within the sales company Saarlor. The manager serves as

the nexus around which interwoven threads are followed in the analysis while it is not possible to follow all threads present. The situatedness of boundary spanners strongly determines their activity and agency as well as the effects of their action (Westney et al., 2022, p. 3). Translation practices within Saarlor were thus affected by the situatedness of the translating actors, and analysing the practice or agency is only possible against that background. While it was impossible to present all processes, products and actors, the chapter discussed in more detail some of these virtual and material elements to shed light on actual practices of paraprofessional translators in their metaphorical and interlingual translations.

The case study opens up a wide continuum of translating individuals acting within a closely interwoven ecosystem. From early times on, Saarlor institutionalized its paraprofessional translation processes. Rather complex procedures had been established to manage, perform and revise all necessary translations in what can be considered a translatorial space.

From an exclusively mediating mono-professional interpreter to bilingual staff acting on their own account in institutionalized translation, to paraprofessional translators with and without agency and varying degrees of interlingual mediation — a great diversity of staff in all hierarchical positions guaranteed interlingual and metaphorical translation within and towards the outside of the corporation. Their translatorial activity is quite invisible, as are the translator personalities, while the same staff members are very present in other domains of activity.

Thus, they are less invisible than external professional translators but often possessed less agency than postulated for paraprofessional translators because of complicated drafting and revision processes and the parallel use of French and German documents, which subjected the translations to criticism — and served quality assurance since internal revision processes were integrated in document elaboration.

Based on the case study presented, the following dimensions can tentatively be named to map paraprofessional translation: mediation/agency, translatoriality, training, organizational adherence, institutionalization of translation, linguistic skills, cultural skills, experience, mono-/multi-professionalism.

All prototypes of translation constellations mixing interlingual and metaphorical translation in varying proportions (Piekkari et al., 2020) are present in Saarlor. Some employees practiced agentic translation (type 4), i.e., a high degree of metaphorical translation and a high degree of interlingual translation. However, there were also staff members who performed parallel multilingual practice (type 3; low degree of interlingual and of metaphorical translation) or automated translation (type 1; high degree of interlingual, low degree of metaphorical translation). There was also borrowing present (type 2; low degree of interlingual but high

degree of metaphorical translation), e.g., in the above materialization processes, in the statutes, and in developing practices within and outside the corporation.

The case study is a laboratory well-suited for the analysis of translation spaces (Cronin, 2006) or translatorial spaces (Koskinen, 2020) or translation ecosystems (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017; Westney et al., 2022) whereby all concepts cover the whole of the two branches and the presidency of Saarlor including monolingual members, though with differing degrees of operationalization. The ecosystem approach offers a toolbox that makes it possible to grasp many aspects and ramifications in a systematic analysis. It reaches out into the owner corporations of Saarlor, i.e., HBL and Saarbergwerke, which remain institutionally monolingual. Thinking in ecosystems caters for the need to contextualize and situate translatorial action that "highlights the choices and constraints translators confront in producing translations that are accessible and acceptable both to local receivers and to the initiators/commissioners of the translation." (Westney et al., 2022, p. 6). Unlike in international business research, receivers and initiators often are in the case of Saarlor the same group of people, i.e., the mixed-language and mixed-national-cultural presidency and board. According to the results of the analyses presented in this chapter, Saarlor can be considered a boundary object enabling the cooperation of two distinct groups in establishing tools and mechanisms that make understanding and collaboration possible across boundaries (Star & Griesemer, 1989).

Selecting a historical case offers possibilities and shows constraints compared to a contemporary study. Due to the incomplete preservation of documents, some answers cannot be given, and there is no possibility to ask specific questions. On the other hand, it yields insights into internal mechanisms and information that cannot be obtained in an operational company. Hindsight gives a more complete view of the macro-context and the outcomes of activities in a case known to be important in Franco-German relations and European integration. Moreover, the longitudinal observation of persons and processes unfolds dynamics and processes and therefore insights that are not visible in a synchronic study.

Work on the Saarlor case is far from finished. Further work will include a more detailed qualitative and quantitative study of bilingual texts, which is underway for the minutes. Sighting more archival documents probably can uncover precious details about people and procedures as well as the paper trail of complete writing processes from idea through drafts and corrections to final versions. Analysing many translations from a systematic and holistic viewpoint enables the researcher to gather information on sedimentation effects and the chain of translations.

To conclude, let me state that the Franco-German sales company Saarlor is a fascinating object of study to gain insights into paraprofessional translation and

boundary work. It can serve the interests of several research fields from international business and organization studies to border studies, via translation studies. Cooperation across disciplinary boundaries yields more complete and more reliable knowledge about the phenomenon to be analysed. In this sense, the chapter and its author are a boundary object and boundary spanner themselves.

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CHAPTER 9

Synergistic and strategic translation work

Navigating translatorial spaces in multinational corporations

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In this study we explore the notion of translatorial space and the work of paraprofessional translators employed by multinational corporations. To date, there are only a handful of empirical studies in both translation studies and international business studies that have elaborated on the situated and specific contexts in which paraprofessional translation is grounded. Therefore, drawing on a case study of the Innovation unit within a Nordic engineering multinational, we identify four translatorial spaces where linguistic, cultural, organizational, and knowledge-based boundaries were crossed. Furthermore, our case study sheds light on the key communicative acts of paraprofessional translators. They include translation decisions ranging from mundane yet synergistic tasks to more complex and strategic activities. We join the emerging conversation on paraprofessional translation and offer an empirically driven understanding of their work in translatorial spaces from the perspective of multinational corporations.

Keywords: paraprofessional translators, multinational corporations, translatorial spaces, translation decisions

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the work of paraprofessional translators who are employed by a multinational corporation. These employees have not been hired as professional translators; yet, they end up engaging in various translation tasks in connection with their everyday work (Koskela et al., 2017; Koskinen, 2025; Tyulenev, 2014). Their tasks are often fragmented and multifaceted, differing from full-text translation assignments undertaken by professional translators. This work of paraprofessional translators constitutes a significant but unrecognized capability for multinational corporations (Westney et al., 2022; in this volume). It makes cross-border business and learning possible, enables external and

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internal communication, facilitates knowledge sharing, and fosters a sense of engagement among staff and other stakeholders. Given the deep embeddedness of paraprofessional translation in organizational activities, we argue that the strategies, practices, and values of multilingual organizations are translated into being.

However, the work of paraprofessional translators in organizations is still an emerging area of research in translation studies where only a handful of empirical studies exist (Koskela et al., 2017; Muñoz Gómez 2020). The same applies to the disciplinary field of international business (Gutierrez-Huerter et al., 2020; Piekkari et al., 2013). Although translation is a necessary form of language work in multinational corporations, the activity of crossing internal and external, organizational, functional, and knowledge-based boundaries has largely remained invisible and unrecognized in international business research to date (Westney et al., 2022).

In this chapter, we provide empirical insights into the work of paraprofessional translators by integrating the perspective of individual translators with that of a multinational corporation. We employ the term "translatorial" here to denote "all kinds of parallel movement from one language to another, whether they are labelled as translation by the actors themselves or not" (Koskinen, 2020, p. 61). Through a case study of the Innovation unit within a Nordic engineering multinational, we identify four types of translatorial spaces where linguistic, cultural, knowledge-based, and/or organizational boundaries are crossed: global-local; external-to- internal; intra-functional; and inter-functional translatorial spaces. In the global-local translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators engaged in translation decisions to navigate the gap between global and local R&D work; in the external-to-internal translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators aimed to integrate external ideas into their organization; in the intra-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators collaborated across different knowledge domains to get R&D work done; in the inter-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators collaborated across different functions to drive innovation.

Our findings shed light on the key communicative acts of paraprofessional translators as well as the conflicts and tensions that they need to navigate in their seemingly mundane work. These insights illuminate the fluidity and multidirectionality of paraprofessional translation work and provide a deep contextualized and situated understanding of such work. Our understanding of translation is not limited to the reverbalization of meaning in another language; it also encompasses navigating linguistic, cultural, organizational, and knowledge-based boundaries within and across translatorial spaces. Thus, we join the recent conversation that has expanded the understanding of translation (Marais, 2022) and translatorial spaces in the organizational context of the multinational corporation (Muñoz Gómez, 2020).

Paraprofessional translators and translatoriality

Our interest in the work of paraprofessional translators stems from the disciplinary field of international business, which has developed a language-sensitive approach to the exploration of multilingual phenomena. This sub-field has enriched international business knowledge through contributions about the constitutive power of languages in multilingual work (Tietze & Piekkari, 2020; Tietze & Piekkari, this volume; Lecomte et al., 2023).

Empirical studies play an important role in this sub-field and oftentimes adopt an epistemological position that focuses on languages-in-use in multilingual contexts. This position treats languages as constitutive of human actions, not abstracted away from them. While this is not the only epistemological orientation within this field (Piekkari et al., 2022), it does align well with the emerging understanding of the nature of paraprofessional translation work (Piekkari et al., 2020). These translators are seen as situated language agents, who bring their language competence, their vested interests and understanding to their translation work. Contemporary thought within this sub-field proposes that multinational corporations are living, connected and evolving translation ecosystems where paraprofessional translators are located (Westney et al., 2022). They can be found at important, yet often invisible, interstices between bodies of knowledge, languages and external and internal organizational groups.

The above line of thinking resonates with the understanding developed within translation studies. Paraprofessional translators is a term recently introduced by translation scholars to describe a group of individuals who perform various translatorial tasks alongside their primary occupational responsibilities (Koskela et al., 2017; Koskinen, 2025). They are defined by Tyulenev (2014, p.75) as "people whose jobs are not directly translation- or interpreting-related who do translate or interpret". Unlike professional and non-professional translators, they are hired employees whose translatorial practices are not bound by the professional norms of translation and their goals may vary.

The goals of paraprofessional translators are manifold, including getting (or not) the message across, as well as advancing both organizational and personal objectives (Koskinen, 2025). Therefore, paraprofessional translators often employ creative strategies to translation work. These include selective and strategic translation practiced by senior leadership to drive their own agenda (Logemann & Piekkari, 2015), as well as flexible use of textual strategies such as gisting and summarizing (Muñoz Gómez, 2020).

Consistent with this line of thinking, we also employ the concept of *translatoriality* in this chapter. Emergent research on paraprofessional translation has begun to explore who these paraprofessional translators are and what they do (see

this book volume). They can be employees at different organizational levels, ranging from low-ranking junior staff to senior leadership (Ciuk et al., 2019; Piekkari et al., 2013), and to external consultants (Tietze et al., 2017). Ciuk et al. (this volume), through an exploratory, interview-based study, differentiate between two main forms of paraprofessional translation: small-t translation and big-T translation. While small-t translation is characterized as "a set of everyday, typically small ad hoc translation and interpretation activities, carried out as part of performing other professional tasks and using other core competences", big-T translation is denoted as "a standalone activity". As mentioned above, these translators often exert a higher degree of agency in their translatorial work compared to professional translators.

Multinational corporations as a research object

Previous research on paraprofessional translation has often been conducted in multilingual workplaces such as multinational corporations (e.g., Muñoz Gómez, 2020; Jakkula, 2024). These multilingual workplaces have been conceptualized as *translatorial spaces*: i.e., as "a space where translation needs to happen for mutual comprehensibility and where multilingual repertoires meet and mix" (Cronin, 2006, p. 68; Koskinen, 2020). While prior research has investigated for example, bilingual meetings (Koskela et al., 2017) and translation sessions (Ciuk and James, 2015; Ciuk et al., 2019) as translatorial spaces, the focus has been on the linguistic and cultural boundaries to be crossed rather than the knowledge-based and organizational boundaries which are equally salient in the organizational context of multinational corporations (Westney et al., 2022).

The knowledge-based boundary was developed in the innovation studies to delineate the challenges of collaborating and translating across specialized knowledge domains (see Carlile, 2002; 2004). Carlile emphasizes that each knowledge domain develops its own specialized language, and thus the establishment of shared meanings at the interface is required to facilitate knowledge transfer and collaboration across these knowledge domains. The notion of organizational boundary is closely associated with the Scandinavian institutionalist approach to translation (Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008). This approach aims to uncover how management ideas originating from one institutional context are adopted and implemented in organizations situated in another institutional context. The organizational boundary does not only exist between organizations but also within them, separating organizational units belong to the same multinational corporations from each other.

A multinational corporation is traditionally conceptualized as "a group of geographically dispersed and goal-disparate organizations that include corporate headquarters and its foreign subsidiaries in different national settings" (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1990, p. 603). Figure 1 illustrates internal organizational boundaries between units, functions and countries of a multinational corporation.

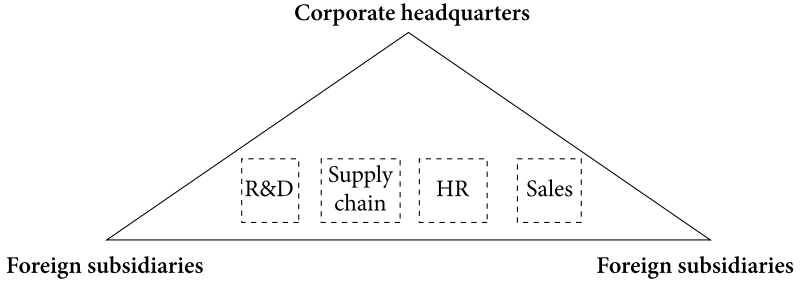


Figure 1. The basic organization structure of a multinational corporation

In this chapter, we treat the multinational corporation as a research object, not just as a research site (Piekkari et al., 2022). Such an approach allows us to recognize that the multinationality of the organization will influence the work of paraprofessional translators. In this way, we can do justice to the concept of paraprofessional translation and further broaden its boundaries.

A case study in context

To gain insight into translatorial spaces in multinational corporations, we conducted a longitudinal case study of the Innovation unit of TLcorp.[1] TLcorp is a Finnish service-oriented manufacturer that has been ranked several times by Forbes as one of the 100 most innovative companies in the world. It began to internationalize in the late 1960s and has since become a global industry leader. Nowadays, it operates in over 60 countries with more than 100 nationalities and with more than two third of the sales volume generated from outside Finland.

The Innovation unit was set up in 2015, bringing together the R&D and IT functions to leverage the opportunities arising from digitalisation. Originally positioned as a "global" organization, the Innovation unit has since gone through several restructurings to accommodate both TLcorp's global and local demands. The integration of R&D and IT, the collaborative nature of innovation, and the

1. TLcorp is a pseudonym for our case company.

frequent global-local interactions make TLcorp's Innovation unit a highly suitable research context to study translatorial spaces.

The data collection for this study is part of a larger research project on TLcorp, with the goal of exploring how technical professionals in India and China can be attracted, developed, and retained. The first author conducted two rounds of data collection in 2021 and 2023, including corporate materials, interviews, observational data, and previous research on TLcorp. For the purposes of the present study, a smaller dataset consisting of 8 interviews was chosen. Among these, 7 interviewees were from China and 1 was from India, representing 5 managers and 3 employees.

As a native speaker of Chinese, the first author conducted interviews with the Chinese technical professionals in Chinese. Using a shared native tongue in emerging markets like China enhances the authenticity and quality of data and facilitates rapport building with interviewees (Outila et al., 2019). The first author also served as a translator within the research team of this paper, as her co-authors did not understand Chinese. Her native Chinese proficiency combined with extensive education in Western countries equipped her with strong translatorial competences. Nevertheless, translating Chinese into English was at times challenging due to linguistic and cultural differences (e.g., Xian, 2008). Extra care was therefore taken to convey the correct meaning, although some nuances were inevitably lost in translation. The Chinese quotes were translated into English in a manner that aimed to make their meaning as clear as possible. The translation was tailored with the target audience in mind — primarily academics who are more likely to speak English than Chinese.

To analyse the data, we first identified situations where the interviewees needed to navigate multiple national languages and cultures. However, during the analysis process, it became clear that paraprofessional translation goes far beyond national languages and cultures; it is also performed across organizational and knowledge-based boundaries, thus challenging the narrow definition of paraprofessional translation as an interlingual activity alone (e.g., Koskinen, 2025).

We then turned to identifying different translatorial spaces within our case company. For each translatorial space, we systematically coded the required translation work and identified the type of boundary that had to be crossed in translation work based on the categorisation by Westney et al. (2022). This allowed us to expand the notion of paraprofessional translation and translatorial spaces in the particular context of a multinational corporation.

Translatorial spaces within the case company

In this section, we will present our findings regarding four types of translatorial spaces that we identified in TLcorp.

Global-local translatorial spaces

In global-local translatorial spaces paraprofessional translators navigate the gap between global and local R&D work. They navigate two or more national languages, cultures, knowledge domains, and organizational units whose members may have their own agendas and interests.

In the past decade, TLcorp underwent considerable organizational changes, transitioning its R&D centers into a globally integrated organization. As a result, decisions and control over R&D work were largely concentrated at the global level, primarily managed by professionals based in Finland, TLcorp's home country. Under such an organizational structure, the global-local interactions took place primarily at two levels: operational and strategic.

At the operational level, R&D professionals across different locations needed to engage in frequent communication to coordinate daily activities and transfer the technical knowledge required for developing new products and solutions or updating existing ones. At the strategic level, different R&D centers within TLcorp were constantly negotiating budget allocations for each location and their scope of responsibility, often competing for global roles assigned to individual R&D centers. To facilitate successful global-local interactions, these paraprofessional translators had to navigate organizational, knowledge-based, linguistic, and cultural boundaries effectively.

The following quotation is from a typical R&D professional in the leadership team of one of the China R&D centers. He regularly engaged with the R&D professionals at the global level who were based at corporate headquarters in Finland. As the quotation below shows, his translatorial work aimed to facilitate effective global-local interaction and knowledge transfer:

> The biggest challenge I am currently facing is the communication with the **global**[2] [headquarters]. First of all, language is a barrier for me. My English is fine…you know that when you communicate with the **global** [headquarters], sometimes you need to express it in an artistic way (你需要表达得有艺术). In other words, the way of communication is very important so that they [the global headquarters] understand your ideas. To be more specific, you cannot say things

2. The words in bold are the original English words employed by our informants in the interviews.

> in too simple or straightforward way, they [the global headquarters] may not **get** your point, or your arguments are not strong enough for them to **buy in.** This is one of my challenges. In the communication with the **global**, how can I be more sensible and persuasive? Or how can I make them recognize my values or appreciate my thoughts? This is a major challenge for me. — Head of Engineering, Digital R&D, China

Here the English word "*global*" is frequently used by the participants to refer to the corporate headquarters in TLcorp's home country. Technically, the R&D centers in TLcorp were transformed into one global organization. However, the differentiation between global vs. local made by our participants indicates the existence of strong organizational boundaries between R&D centers located in different countries. It is essential to recognize that the knowledge-based boundary is intertwined with the headquarter-subsidiary boundary; subsidiaries often possess unique and specialized knowledge, such as local market expertise, along with their own perspectives on the multinational corporation itself (Westney et al., 2022).

To navigate the global-local translatorial spaces, the interviewee had to translate his message into English and articulate it in an accessible way, which he perceived as "*a barrier*". On top of that, he felt a need to adjust his communication style to be more "*artistic*" ("有艺术") so that the "*global*" would get his point and buy in his ideas.

The expression "*artistic*" refers to a widely shared belief in China that communication needs to be meticulously crafted akin to art so that the receiver would feel comfortable and supportive towards the speaker both in personal and professional realms. Here the interviewee wanted to emphasise that the communication style had to fit the national and organizational culture of the "*global*". Essentially, he found himself in an intercultural space (Pym, 2000) where he needed to mediate between the "*global*" culture and the Chinese culture. Furthermore, he considered the translation work not only as a means to connect the global and local organization, but also as an avenue through which he could earn recognition from the corporate headquarters. In this regard, he translated himself into the company speak of the global headquarters to make sure that his values would be understood and recognized (see Cronin, 2006, p. 69).

The more recent organizational changes within TLcorp involved moving some of the global R&D roles from Finland to R&D centers located abroad. For example, there were several professionals who were physically located in China but held global roles. Compared to the aforementioned manager representing only the local R&D organization, professionals in these newly assigned roles were expected to behave in the interests of both the global and local R&D organizations. In other words, they tended to act as intermediaries representing both

global and local organizations, navigating between the perspectives and needs of these organizational units and mediating the conflicts between them.

The following example vividly captures the challenges that a paraprofessional translator in such a role may encounter. The interviewee described himself as "*the sandwich layer between two walls*", suggesting a feeling of being positioned between two distinct cultural and organizational spheres. The reference to "*Chinese voices*" and "*global voices*" reveals the diverse perspectives and influences at play. "*Global*" here refers to the R&D organization in TLcorp's home country, Finland. As described by the interviewee, the global and the local R&D units did not attempt to reach an agreement but expected him to act as a mediator, translating and accommodating their divergent needs:

> We are more like the sandwich layer between two walls. China has Chinese voices and **global** has **global** voices. When these voices align, we will have a clearer direction. However, when they don't align, I think we have a very difficult dilemma. We are physically located in China, but the tasks need the inputs from the **global**. It is very challenging to move things forward. This is one of the biggest pain points…The upper management levels from both global and local organizations pretend that everything is in harmony; yet they convey divergent thoughts and voices to me, expecting me to accommodate the needs from both sides.
>
> Manager, Equipment R&D, China

While this interviewee had to navigate organizational, linguistic, cultural, and knowledge-based boundaries, it was the organizational boundary that appeared to pose the most significant challenges, creating a difficult dilemma. Nonetheless, paraprofessional translators do not adhere to the same strict professional codes as professional translators (Koskinen, 2025), allowing them to handle such situations in more flexible and creative ways.

External-to-internal translatorial spaces

In the external-to-internal translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators enable the integration of external ideas into the organization by translating across organizational boundaries and knowledge domains.

TLcorp has been undergoing a digital transformation since 2015 which is new both for the company itself as well as for the entire industry. The company has expanded its R&D operations by creating a new global center — digital R&D — specifically geared towards the development of innovative solutions utilizing digital technologies for its service business. In the 2020 Capital Markets Day presentation, TLcorp envisioned itself both as a physical and digital organization.

The following quotation is from a senior leader in TLcorp's Innovation unit in India who highlights the challenges of applying a digitalization strategy to a company with a strong heritage in physical products:

> So it [the digitalisation strategy] is a very big subject…TLcorp's core products do not demand digital kind of understanding, right? But to what extent does the organization want to implement digitalisation?...What is the subset of your existing workforce you want to target? So you should not go and bother a person who is a core product guy, poking him "digital", "digital"; he is the least bothered or not interested. It [digitalisation] is going to add no value whatsoever to his life or to his skills. So people should be very clear about what we are talking and to whom we are talking…. Senior Leader, Innovation unit, India

This leader expresses caution about the extent to which digitalization can be implemented and raises questions about the specific employee group that should be equipped with new digital competencies. He also considers potential resistance from those colleagues who are deeply rooted in traditional product-oriented roles. This quotation does not only underscore the presence of a horizontal organizational boundary, but also the existence of a knowledge-based boundary when integrating new external ideas into the organization. In addition, communication of the digitalization strategy to employees presents challenges, as it also involves crossing the vertical organizational boundary between leadership and employees. The interviewee emphasizes the difficulty of ensuring that all employees would appreciate the relevance of digitalization to them. In short, senior leadership faces the challenges of crossing both horizontal and vertical organizational boundaries, as well as knowledge-based boundaries, when developing strategies for integrating external ideas into the organization.

Meanwhile, the newly hired digital R&D professionals are key for implementing digitalization strategy within TLcorp on the ground. Their work involves translating external, digital knowledge to foster a shared understanding within the organization about what digitalization entails and its relevance for TLcorp. This requires that they skilfully navigate the organizational boundaries and the boundaries of knowledge domains, effectively performing translatorial roles across external-to-internal translatorial spaces.

However, many of our interviewees from the digital R&D center in China mentioned the resistance they encountered when moving their work forward within TLcorp, as illustrated by the following quotation. The challenges posed by "*traditional forces of inertia*" when translating across organizational and knowledge-based boundaries have been repeatedly highlighted by different digital professionals.

> In the process of digital transformation, [we] have undoubtedly encountered resistance from traditional forces of inertia no matter whether they are visible or invisible. It is difficult for us to move our work forward…
>
> Digital R&D Professional, China

Here, paraprofessional translators played a crucial role in creating a shared understanding and fostering synergy despite entrenched inertia existing within the organization.

Intra-functional translatorial spaces

In intra-functional translatorial spaces, the paraprofessional translators collaborate with other professionals within the R&D organization to finish the product design by navigating boundaries of two or more knowledge domains.

The R&D function typically consists of departments such as engineering, design, documentation, and quality. At TLcorp, the engineering department was widely perceived as the "*core*" of the R&D function and therefore, it enjoyed a higher status than other departments. It was taken for granted that non-engineering departments should inherently understand and appreciate the work of the engineering department. Consequently, in spite of the shared goal of the R&D function to finish product design, the translation of knowledge from the non-engineering departments to the engineering department proved to be challenging.

The following examples are representative of the non-engineering professionals' experiences. They struggled to foster a common understanding among engineers, resulting in ineffective collaboration. In the first example, the designers were not able to carry out their roles because the engineers did not fully understand the designers' responsibilities. Thus, many times designers felt like being treated as "*subcontractors*" or mere "*tools*" to serve the engineers rather than as integral members of the R&D team:

> When I joined [TLcorp], I was the first UX designer. Therefore, nobody understood what's going on here. We felt that [TLcorp] has a strong engineering culture, so [engineers from] the R&D side were not used to collaborating with designers for a very long time. Many times, they would just treat designers as their subcontractors. They [the engineers] thought everything should go as they expected, and designers only need to help them with beautification. In other words, designers were viewed as merely the tools to serve their needs.
>
> Senior UX/UI Designer, China

A similar example comes from the documentation manager, who emphasizes the "*supportive*" nature of her role. The engineers tended to further diminish and de-

prioritize her contributions. This detrimental dynamic led to poor collaboration and "*psychological stress*":

> Probably due to misunderstanding towards one another, the collaboration has not always been smooth. For example, as a supportive group, to be honest, engineers may not find our work important, which causes us psychological stress… generally speaking, in the R&D units, the most important thing is to do technical design or whatever with the products. However, the documentation team will only be seen as a supportive department or **common service** department, and engineers will not prioritize our requests or [they will] devalue our work….
>
> Documentation Manager, Equipment R&D, China

Both examples reveal the challenges that non-engineering professionals encountered when translating their work across knowledge domains. They aimed to enhance mutual comprehensibility with engineers, but the examples underline the power dynamics at play in translatorial work (Røvik, 2023, p.84–85). Given the status differentials between professional groups within the R&D function, non-engineering professionals had to engage in a form of self-translation, similar to the concept of the Caliban translating themselves for the master (Cronin, 2006, p. 40, 105).

Inter-functional translatorial spaces

In inter-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators of the R&D function collaborate with colleagues from other functions to prepare the product for mass production. In these spaces, paraprofessional translators undertake translatorial work across knowledge-based and organizational boundaries.

TLcorp specialises in heavy machinery. Before a technical design can be finalized or a change in an existing design can be approved for mass production at TLcorp, multiple functions, such as manufacturing and supply chain operations, need to collaborate. R&D engineers are responsible for overseeing the entire process and ensuring that the final design is aligned with the requirements and standards of all relevant parties. Nevertheless, unlike above, where the non-engineering professionals and engineers had shared goals and interests, in inter-functional translatorial spaces, professionals often have divergent purposes and interests. This requires R&D engineers to undertake translatorial work across both knowledge-based and organizational boundaries, which presents additional challenges to move their work forward. The following quotation presents a typical dilemma for engineers to acquire approval from other functions:

> **Interviewee (Engineer, Equipment R&D, China):** "I don't know about R&D [for product 1]. R&D [for product 2] doesn't have a say and we have to follow the instructions by others."
>
> **Interviewer:** "Who are the others?"
>
> **Interviewee:** "The factory for example. But even the factory has different departments such as quality, technology, and production."
>
> **Interviewer:** "So do you have to check this with each department?"
>
> **Interviewee:** "They all have **comments.** For example, when I make some changes to the product design, they all have **comments**. I am not saying that they have bad **comments** but we have to take all comments into consideration. However, they will not make any compromise. If I don't make the changes as they wish, then they will not let me pass [to the next stage of the change request process]."
>
> **Interviewer:** "Why is that?"
>
> **Interviewee:** "They probably only consider the benefits from their side, but we have to consider all stakeholders. They will not think from our perspective. Doing R&D in [TLcorp] requires engineers to satisfy the needs of different functions, including their own. Therefore, in the end we couldn't reach any conclusion in many meetings."

As described, the engineers, as overseers, must navigate a complex and demanding process to acquire approval from all relevant stakeholders in order to finalize the technical design for mass production. This is not a straightforward process, as conflicts arise between engineers and professionals from other functions, making it difficult to "*reach any conclusion*". In this role, engineers are responsible for translating and mediating the needs and interests of various stakeholders, managing conflicts, and ensuring a satisfactory resolution for all parties. In essence, engineers hold the responsibility for translating the diverse demands or inputs into the product. However, they are not seen as overlords who have the ultimate say as in the above example.

Summary

In the global-local translatorial spaces of TLCorp, paraprofessional translators crossed the linguistic, cultural, knowledge-based and organizational boundaries to navigate the gap between global and local R&D work. Nevertheless, translatorial work varied depending on the organizational roles that the individual translators held in the multinational corporation. We uncovered that managers representing the local organization often engaged in two types of translatorial work: mundane, everyday tasks such as coordination, as well as strategic activities

such as negotiating the scope of responsibility. They encountered challenges stemming from language barriers, unfamiliar cultural norms, and power dynamics between the global and local organizations of the multinational. Meanwhile, managers representing both global and local organizations were found to be mainly involved in mundane yet synergistic activities, that is, forge connections between global and local units. Differing organizational needs and interests seemed to pose the most difficulties for their translatorial work.

In external-to-internal translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators crossed organizational boundaries and knowledge domains to enable the integration of external ideas into the organization. To facilitate such integration, two types of paraprofessional translators were involved: senior leaders and newly hired professionals. The translatorial work of senior leaders was primarily strategic, encompassing the design and communication of strategies that concerned the application of external ideas within the organization. Their main challenge lied in the unique organizational context and different knowledge domains they needed to consider when undertaking translatorial work. The newly hired professionals, in turn, were responsible for translating external knowledge into the daily operations of the organization so as to create a shared understanding. Their translatorial work was typically more operational in nature; yet, it played a key role in fostering synergy. Nonetheless, the new hires felt that traditional forces of inertia within the multinational corporation presented a challenge for their translatorial efforts.

In intra-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators crossed knowledge-based boundaries and collaborated within the function (such as the R&D center) to finish the technical product design. They were required to translate across various knowledge domains such as engineering and design to foster a shared understanding. However, this work became more difficult due to power dynamics between the engineering and non-engineering departments.

In inter-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators crossed organizational and knowledge-based boundaries to collaborate with professionals from other functions to accomplish their work. Similar to those in the intra-functional translatorial spaces, paraprofessional translators in this space undertook translatorial work relating to mundane yet synergistic activities. However, their work was further complicated by the need to cope with different organizational units that had their own interests, which hindered the progress of their efforts.

Table 1 below provides an overview of paraprofessional translators' work across four translatorial spaces based on a case study of a Finnish service-oriented manufacturer operating globally.

Table 1. An overview of paraprofessional translators' work across four translatorial spaces of a multinational corporation

	Paraprofessional translator	**Translatorial work**	**Boundaries**	**Difficulties**
Global-local translatorial spaces	Individuals who bridge the gap between global and local R&D work (e.g., local managers representing the local organization)	**Mundane yet synergistic tasks:** – Coordinate daily activities – Transfer knowledge **Strategic activities:** – Negotiate the budget allocation and responsibility scope – Compete for global roles	Linguistic (national languages), cultural, knowledge-based, and organizational	Different languages, different cultures, and unequal relationship between global and local organizations
	Individuals who bridge the gap between global and local R&D work (e.g., local managers representing both local and global organizations)	**Mundane yet synergistic activities:** – Navigate between the perspectives and needs of global and local organizations and bridge the gap between them	Linguistic (national languages), cultural, and organizational	Different organizations have different needs and interests
external-to-internal translatorial spaces	Individuals who enable the integration of external ideas into organizations (e.g., senior leadership)	**Strategic activities:** – Make strategies that concern the application of external ideas within organizations – Communicate and translate corporate strategies to employees	Organizational and knowledge domains	Different organizational contexts

Table 1. *(continued)*

	Paraprofessional translator	**Translatorial work**	**Boundaries**	**Difficulties**
	Individuals who enable the integration of external ideas into organizations (e.g., newly hired professionals)	**Mundane yet synergistic activities:** – Translate external knowledge into the organization to create shared understanding	Organizational and knowledge domains	Traditional forces of inertia resulting from the "old" organizational structure
Intra-functional translatorial spaces	Individuals who need to collaborate within R&D centers to get the work done	**Mundane yet synergistic activities:** – Translate different knowledge domains to foster common understanding	Knowledge domains	Power dynamics among different departments
Inter-functional translatorial spaces	Individuals who need to collaborate with professionals from other functions to accomplish the work	**Mundane yet synergistic activities:** – Translate and coordinate interests of different functions – Foster mutual understandings among stakeholders	Organizational and knowledge domains	Different organizations have different interests

Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, we have focused on the work of paraprofessional translators employed by multinational corporations — an organizational context that has been overlooked and undertheorized in the field of translation studies. While there has been an increasing focus on who these paraprofessional translators are and what they do within organizational settings (e.g., this volume, Muñoz Gómez, 2020; Piekkari et al., 2013), there are only a few empirical studies that have delved into the situated and specific contexts in which paraprofessional translation takes

place to date. Drawing on a case study of corporate R&D centers within a Finnish engineering multinational, we have identified four translatorial spaces where linguistic, cultural, organizational, or knowledge-based boundaries were crossed: *global-local, external-to-internal, intra-functional*, and *inter-functional translatorial spaces*. Meanwhile, we have also elaborated on the role and translatorial work of these paraprofessional translators within different spaces, examining the boundaries they navigated and the challenges they frequently encountered.

Building upon a broad understanding of translation, we aim to move beyond the linguistic and cultural boundaries addressed in current studies on paraprofessional translation and embrace the knowledge-domain and organizational boundaries that are particularly salient in multinational corporations (Westney et al., 2022). This has enabled us to observe a spectrum of communicative acts by paraprofessional translators, which include translation decisions relating to both strategic activities and mundane yet synergistic tasks.

We classify strategic translation work as the process of developing, influencing, and negotiating corporate strategies. Within the global-local translatorial spaces, strategic translation work becomes essential for communicating corporate strategies and achieving buy-in from local stakeholders. Similarly, within the external-to-internal translatorial spaces, strategic translation work is crucial. It serves as the conduit through which the leadership team translates external ideas and opportunities into internal strategies that resonate with the organization's unique ethos and ambitions. We have observed that the leadership team was at the forefront of undertaking strategic translation work, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping and driving the organization's strategic direction.

Meanwhile, it is imperative to acknowledge another indispensable form of translatorial effort — namely the mundane yet synergistic one — that permeates all four translatorial spaces. This translation work, albeit considered mundane, is the glue that holds the organizational fabric together. It encompasses a multitude of everyday tasks that are integral in navigating differences, fostering understanding, and forging synergies across the diverse spectrum of the organizational units. Based on our findings, it is evident that the crossing of organizational boundaries constitutes a central part of translatorial work in translatorial spaces within multinational corporations. These boundaries create significant challenges, particularly when it comes to reconciling the diverse needs and interests of various organizational units of the multinational, as seen in the global-local and inter-functional translatorial spaces. Navigating these differing perspectives can pose some of the most complex hurdles for paraprofessional translators.

By shedding light on the nature of translatorial work, we have also aimed to bring to the forefront the individuals — the paraprofessional translators themselves — who are instrumental in carrying out such work. Drawing insights from

our case study, we define paraprofessional translators as individuals who navigate the boundaries of translatorial spaces in an organization. We argue that these boundaries are not line-like but instead spacious and porous; they are expansive, dynamic and multidirectional, demonstrating fluidity and flexibility. They can exist in a monolingual space, such as the divide between engineering and design knowledge domains, but more commonly, they encompass multiple dimensions and are inherently multilingual in nature, as shown in our findings. Navigating these boundaries involves a continuous and iterative movement between and across translatorial spaces.

Finally, we argue that paraprofessional translators serve as grounded strategists whose purposive and deliberate translation acts drive the strategic direction of the multinational corporation. These individuals are key agents in cultivating a collective mindset within the organization, fostering the continuity and coherence essential for achieving strategic alignment and unity within the multinational corporation. Many of them hold work-related positions and roles that lead them to express a sense of being in-between "organizational boundaries" and interests (Söderlund & Borg, 2018, p. 888; see, this volume). Such positions can be regarded as liminal, requiring specific practices and competences for coping with ambiguity and complexity. Future research could shed more light on the liminal position of paraprofessional translators in multinational corporations which tend to be targets of frequent organizational change and transformation.

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CHAPTER 10

Translation and translating in a multilingual IT customer service unit

Estefanía Muñoz Gómez

Translation in global businesses remains an under-explored phenomenon due partly to the limited recognition of translingual practices in such settings as "translation". Through the combination of detailed textual analysis with ethnographic data from unstructured interviews and field observations, this chapter shows how translation features as part of the daily work of a B2B customer service unit within an Irish subsidiary of an IT multinational corporation. Explicit and unrecognized translation practices give rise to different conceptualizations of translation according to perceived normative criteria and goal-oriented communication behaviours, but linguistic choices reveal the prevalence of strategic language use in routine exchanges and highlight how staff deploy inter- and intralingual transfer skills across multiple audiences and channels not just to improve and facilitate communication, but to manage and control it. By bringing to the fore the translational nature of multilingual communication, this chapter calls for reclaiming the label of "translation" as a broad cognitive phenomenon of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic decision-making with many varied manifestations with a view to providing legitimacy to the sometimes intangible and unacknowledged practices encountered in today's global businesses.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, unrecognized translation, natural translation, multilingual teams, international business communication

The workplaces of professional translators are increasingly receiving attention from translation studies scholars, but the discipline has not yet concerned itself extensively with the broader translation work carried out in business organizations by paraprofessional translators or those working in multilingual environments "who are not trained or paid for their translation or interpreting services" but nevertheless take them on as part of their job (Koskela et al., 2017, p. 466). Although the complex environment in which multinational companies are embedded places translation at the core of the international dimension of busi-

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ness operations, translation in business contexts remains an under-explored phenomenon due in no small part to the limited acknowledgement of translingual practices in such settings as "translation", and of those who perform them as "translators".

The aim of this chapter is to examine translation as part of the communication practices that make up the daily work of staff at a B2B customer service unit within an Irish subsidiary of a US multinational corporation in the IT sector. Expanding on previously published findings (Muñoz Gómez, 2020), the analysis integrates data from observations, interviews, and text samples to highlight the prevalence of translating in how staff achieve the unit's objectives and reveal the beliefs that underpin their practice and understanding of translation.

Accounting for the hidden translatorial nature of many workplace activities requires considering "translations (as entities)" as well as "translating (as a kind of text-generating activity)" (Toury, 1995, p. 135) beyond that which is "executed by professional translators, for complete and final documents, labelled as translations and ordered from the in-house translation department or translation agencies" (Koskinen, 2020, p. 60). The view of translation adopted here is therefore akin to the notion of "translatoriality" (Koskela et al., 2017; Koskinen, 2020; Koskinen and Kinnunen, 2022), which is meant "to capture not only instances of reverbalising full texts and complete utterances in a new language, but also the more fragmentary reiteration of the already said or written in a new way, either by the same person (i.e. self-translation) or someone else" (Koskinen and Kinnunen, 2022, p. 8), "whether they are labelled as translation by the actors themselves or not" (Koskinen, 2020, p. 61).

Translatoriality is intended to "account for the muddy everyday life of dealing with multilingualism amidst organizational practices" (Koskinen, 2025) in a way that the concept of "translation" may sometimes seem unable to. However, by distinguishing translatoriality from translation, the unintended consequence may be reinforcing the narrower view of translation which led to the search for a new term in the first place. If translatoriality is *more* than translation, then translation remains limited to instances of prototypical "translation proper" (Jakobson, 1959). Harris' (2010) notion of "unrecognized translation" is therefore preferred in this case to refer to the translating and interpreting that goes undetected "because it's given another name or it constitutes just one part, whether explicit or implicit, of another job or function". Like translatoriality, unrecognized translation avoids preconceptions regarding expected behaviour or quality definitions and accounts for flexible processes, functions, and outcomes. Nevertheless, it does so by still labelling them "translation" as a wide operational framework for inter- and intralingual transfer processes.

This chapter starts with an overview of the data collection and analysis methods, followed by a detailed description of the fieldwork setting and participants' work practices. Supported by examples from translated texts, it then shows how staff deal with explicit translation tasks, i.e., those which are acknowledged as such, in response to various communicative purposes. The final section discusses how explicit and unrecognized practices give rise to different conceptualizations of translation and translation competence.

Working in an IT B2B customer service unit

This chapter reports on a subset of data collected in December 2017 for a larger grounded theory study on the use of language and translation as mechanisms for the negotiation of linguistic, cultural, and professional identity in an Irish-based administrative unit within a multinational firm offering data management and storage solutions (Muñoz Gómez, 2025). The analysis of translation shifts in samples of business correspondence is combined with an inductive process of constant comparison of incidents in qualitative data from unstructured interviews and naturalistic observations to identify and conceptualize patterns of behaviour. Participants included three managers (MNs), three shift leads (SLs), and fourteen team members (TMs) working across five regional teams with fifteen different languages (English, German, Turkish, Arabic, Polish, Russian, Czech, Dutch, Norwegian, Finnish, Danish, Spanish, Italian, French, and Hebrew). As both the corporate and the main national language, English was the language of data collection, while being the second (or third) language for both the researcher and most staff members, with the exception of MNs, an SL, and a TM. Participants have been anonymized using an abbreviation of their role, a number, and the two-letter ISO code corresponding to the main language in the market they serve (e.g., MN1-EN is Manager #1, an English speaker; SL2-DE is Shift Lead #2, a German speaker; TM3-PL is Team Member #3, a Polish speaker).

Staff's main responsibility is to schedule software upgrades for the company servers deployed at the premises of institutional and corporate clients in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA). Resolving a case requires three key steps: requesting up-to-date customer information, booking a remote engineer for an initial technical consultation, and making final arrangements for the upgrade operation. Nevertheless, the process often entails multiple follow-ups with customers, queries with engineers, case notes to keep colleagues informed, and escalation notes to share with managers when their intervention is required. Some customers can also request an onsite upgrade, which requires a separate process of negotiation with local project managers and technicians. The company does not

accept liability for issues arising from missed upgrades, so it is in the customers' best interest to engage with the process. However, TMs also need customers to respond in order to reach performance goals by scheduling the required number of upgrades within the set time frames. So while all parties have a shared objective, they want to accomplish it on their own best terms. Conflicting priorities may therefore affect the complexity of the process and the number of exchanges and people involved.

TMs' work reflects an intricate network of interactions which necessitates negotiating audiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, both internal and external, local and remote, through different registers and channels. Effective strategic communication within and between languages is therefore at the heart of their role. Table 1 presents a typology of the various practices associated with TMs' tasks, classified according to processes of language learning and translation. Following Pym (2008), language learning is used in a broad sense to refer to alternatives to translation in the absence of a shared first language, i.e., adopting the language of the other party, using a lingua franca, acquiring passive competence, or code-switching.[1] Translation is distinguished between explicit translation and implicit translating or "unrecognized translation" (Harris, 2010).

What is referred to here as explicit and unrecognized translation should not be confused with the concepts of overt and covert translation (House, 1981). An overt translation reveals itself as a translation for the target culture, in contrast to a covert translation, which functions as an original text. Both, however, are recognized as translations within the source context. Explicit translations are similarly acknowledged as translations at the production stage ("source culture"), whether the readers ("target culture") do the same (overt) or not (covert). Unrecognized translations, in turn, are typically seen as means of "linguistic transfer" other than translations (Komissarov, 1996, p. 369). In this sense, while the notions of overt and covert translation focus on the *status of a translation*, the distinction between explicit and unrecognized translation has to do with its *status as a translation*. Unrecognized translation therefore refers here to the multitude of inter- and intralingual operations that staff engage in but are not identified and labelled as "translations", even if some TMs may on occasion still casually rely on the verb "translate" to describe them.

The main manifestation of language learning is the adoption of English, either as the other's language when dealing with L1-English users, or as a lingua franca with L1 users of another language or "local language" (LL). Nevertheless, English

1. Code-switching is employed here to signify the alternation of languages at the word or sentence level rather than to refer to situations when L2 users revert to their first language to communicate amongst themselves, as it is often understood in the international business literature.

Table 1. Multilingual communication practices

Mode	Output	Audience	Process
WRITTEN	Email correspondence	Customers	Lingua franca Unrecognized translation Passive competence
		Engineers	Other's language Lingua franca
		Field PMs/ technicians	Lingua franca Unrecognized translation
	Instant messaging	TMs, SLs, MNs, other internal staff	Other's language Lingua franca Code-switching Unrecognized translation
	Case notes	TMs, SLs, MNs	Other's language Lingua franca Unrecognized translation
	Escalation notes	SLs, MNs	Other's language Lingua franca Unrecognized translation
	Email templates	Customers	Explicit translation
ORAL	Face-to-face interactions	TMs, SLs, MNs	Other's language Lingua franca Passive competence Unrecognized translation
	Phone calls	Customers	Unrecognized translation
	Video calls	Customers and engineers	Lingua franca Unrecognized translation

is not the only lingua franca (e.g., Russian, Arabic), and there are alternative practices such as code-switching and the development of passive competence through the mutual intelligibility of related languages (e.g., TM1-CS and TM3-PL speaking Czech and Polish to each other respectively, or TM1-CS writing in Czech to Slovakian customers).

The translation of email templates for routine and critical upgrades is the main example discussed explicitly as *translation* but *translating* happens implicitly in other instances. For example, TMs may be invited to join a video call to relay an engineer's instructions or a customer's queries during a technical consultation, moving between English and the LL as ad-hoc interpreters (Traverso, 2012, p.149–150). TMs may also intervene to assist colleagues who do not have com-

petence in the language of a particular market ("I am supporting Middle East as well, so I usually do it in English. But I have a few colleagues who are speaking Arabian [sic], so they could help me to translate some things", TM2-RU). And similarly, staff in other units may ask TMs to help resolve a customer issue through the LL ("When the customers ring themselves, it goes to Support Services. But if it's a Danish call, I can take it", TM11-DA).

As observed in the unit and confirmed by participants' responses, more frequently staff rely on gisting, summarising, amplifying, and rephrasing messages between two languages, either orally or in writing, to produce "derived texts", which have various degrees of dependency to the source (Sager, 1994). Case and escalation notes, for example, are always written in English as they need to be accessible to colleagues and managers, but they necessitate a summary of previous oral and written interactions in the LL ("I just give them in a sentence what is important", TM8-DE). Email correspondence with customers and field staff may take place first in the LL, but then move to English and back, depending on the parties involved, and this often entails relaying information from one language into the other. Even when only two L1-LL users are part of the interaction, as in a phone conversation between a TM and a customer, unrecognized translation takes place with TMs explaining and clarifying orally in the LL information first produced in written form in English. This is often followed by an email in English which serves as a record of the conversation and requires another gisting operation, from the oral LL message into written English. In addition to these cases of interlingual (explicit and unrecognized) translation, many of TMs' tasks are examples of intralingual translation, in English or the LL, as they seek or offer clarifications, pass on queries and relay information with different degrees of detail and formality based on their audience and the requirements of the medium.

Outside of following common procedural steps, staff enjoy a high degree of flexibility in their work. They take ownership of cases as they arrive and decide whether and when to reach out by phone or email without following a fixed script or call frame. The path TMs follow varies depending on how they perceive their role and their priorities for each interaction, highlighting different normative expectations. Some see the customer and their experience as key to their objectives ("The customer comes first, so [the] customer has to be happy", TM2-RU; "Service is key. 'We have scheduled this, full stop' and not being able to provide any other help — that is not customer service", TM10-HE). For others, however, the customer can become a hurdle ("You need to work around it by being clever in how you communicate. If you give loads of options, you will see they choose the one they shouldn't", TM12-NO). From this perspective, results are the drivers of behaviour:

> This company expects goals and metrics. […] I just want to know: 'Ok, what do you want? What needs to be sorted?' […] Because you get one request and under that one request you could end up with ten different requests on one case number (TM8-DE)

Both approaches involve strategic communication with one common aim, i.e., resolving the diverse communication situations encountered in their daily work, not only to achieve concrete organizational objectives, but also to maintain their own personal goals for each exchange. Variation in the resolution of this concern is then manifested through purposeful language and translation choices, whether in explicit or unrecognized practices.

Explicit translation

Explicit translation tasks (i.e., activities openly defined as translation for which TMs have a clear start text and an instruction to render it in their LL) typically involve email templates for upgrade processes. These are examples of formal business correspondence intended to introduce the TM as the customer's primary contact, request key customer information, and explain the scheduling process.

Two English templates and their translations into French, Spanish, and German are used in this analysis. TEMPLATE 1 is for a routine upgrade on the back of a customer's service request, while TEMPLATE 2 is used to notify all customers of the need to undertake a critical upgrade. Each English template, however, has multiple versions. The start text (ST) for the Spanish and French translations of TEMPLATE 1 is an older instance of the text, while the German translated text (TT) is based on an updated version showing changes in the company's process.[2] An alternative document was then shared by TM6-FR with their own personal edits to the primary text. In the case of TEMPLATE 2, there is an ST used for the Spanish and French translations, and an edited version created by TM6-FR. As outlined in Table 2 and Table 3, a total of ten texts are considered in combination with the interview and observation data.

2. Following Pym (2013), the terms "start text" (ST) and "translated text" (TT) are used here deliberately instead of the more conventional "source text" and "target text" to highlight the continuous updates, chunking of content, and text reuse strategies that characterize many modern multilingual text production processes.

Table 2. STs and TTs for Template 1

TEMPLATE 1 (routine upgrade)			
Start text (ST)	**ST producer**	**Translated text (TT)**	**TT producer**
EN ST1 V1 (primary)	Unknown	FR TT1	TM6-FR
		ES TT1	ES TEAM
EN ST1 V2 (edited)	TM6-FR	N/A	N/A
EN ST1 V3 (updated)	Unknown	DE TT1	SL2-DE

Table 3. STs and TTs for Template 2

TEMPLATE 2 (critical upgrade)			
Start text (ST)	**ST producer**	**Translated text (TT)**	**TT producer**
EN ST2 V1 (primary)	Unknown	FR TT2	TM6-FR
		ES TT2	ES TEAM
EN ST2 V2 (edited)	TM6-FR	N/A	N/A

The translation process

Tracking translation inputs and outputs is not straightforward. It is unclear which department authors the STs and, as gleaned from participants' reports and observations, once MNs distribute the templates amongst the teams, inconsistencies in the ownership of translation processes and text production patterns muddle the journey of a single "original text" to the various markets or customers. As such, the samples discussed should be understood as a snapshot of a particular moment in the lifecycle of the texts, which appear to have originated from the reuse and update of previous materials and could still go on to be edited and modified before reaching their final audience.

According to MNs, translation is a collaborative activity ("So we never kind of give [the texts] to one person. We give them to the group so that they can argue and agree what's the right way", MN3-EN). However, with no defined workflow or feedback chain, not all teams operate in the same manner. In small language groups, TMs typically work together and share their translated templates. Where there is only one TM for a particular language, translation work is individual but may be supported by field staff ("I use the engineers. I just ask: 'Look, you know, what do you think? Is this the right idea?'", TM1-CS). In bigger single-language teams, SLs take the responsibility for themselves or delegate the task while keeping oversight. Whether one person is in charge or whether the translated texts are

the result of a collaborative (or consultative) process, nevertheless, the samples demonstrate that there is no guarantee that the final emails will be standardized.

The unit's characteristic flexibility helps explain the existence of multiple STs and TTs, but it is not the only determining factor. Content and knowledge management to support the creation, maintenance, storage, and review of relevant materials in the unit happens at the individual level for personal use, rather than being shared and integrated. TMs collect their translations and sample emails as well as any terminology and process notes in their own hard-drives, paper notebooks, or draft emails. The lack of version control means that TMs work with different instances of a text, and updates are easily missed ("They've changed this again! [...] This was not in the other [ST], otherwise I would have translated it!", SL2-DE). The final emails are therefore the result of these workflow inconsistencies as well as a combination of input from different agents and individual choices. Although the fundamental purpose of the translations remains prompting the customer to provide the required details, the way texts are produced leads to variations in how customers may engage with the scheduling process. For example, in their edited ST versions, TM6-FR opts for the removal or condensing of contextual details so the resulting texts are more succinct and succeed in both increasing coherence and bringing the action items to the fore, which makes the final message a more direct call for action than in the original.

EN ST2 V1	EN ST2 V2
Our database indicates that you are not running the latest code for your [PRODUCT] with SN: Serial | Current code | Target code | | | We would like to offer our assistance to bring the code to the target version.	I am contacting your company as our database shows that your [PRODUCT] with SN [NUMBER] is running an old version of the microcode. Hence [COMPANY] recommends that you upgrade it.
As this box is covered by a Premium contract, this activity will be free of charge. We strongly suggest you upgrade to the latest code, as it contains all the latest bug fixes and offers the most stable operating environment. The activity can be completed remotely.	This can be done with our Remote Upgrade Engineer team, this service is included in your Premium support contract. I have included below information about the upgrade, and tables that you would need to fill in order to schedule this upgrade.

Translation shifts

In TMs' descriptions of their work, translation is presented, at its core, as transferring a message in a different language:

> I just read it first, try to digest what is it [sic]. What is its meaning? Then I... After that, I start writing down [sic], and after that I also ask [colleague] to... His opinion, if we need to add on anything. And then after that, you know, then I send it back to the person who is asking... That's it (TM5-TR)

However, the process is often seen as a complex and time-consuming task ("I was thinking 'wow, how tough it is to translate something IT-related into my own language!'. Even after two years working here, it really took me a while", TM1-CS). TMs are conscious of the fact that translation is not a direct word replacement operation. It establishes a dependency from the original message, but it is defined by changes, since maintaining the message requires sacrificing the form:

> Sometimes it's challenging because you can't translate directly the way it is in English to Polish. You have to rephrase a small bit, just to not lie [sic] the content... If somebody would then try [sic] to translate from Polish to English, it could be really something different. But I know always the meaning of the letter that is created will remain... understandable, and there will be no lying or discrepancy in them (TM3-PL)

Some formal modifications amount to obligatory shifts at the lexical and syntactic level to match the structural requirements of the LL. A lack of metalanguage, nevertheless, does not preclude TMs from showing awareness of the need for adjustments not only in word order and sentence structure, but also in terms of pragmatics and textual conventions. Indeed, TMs' discussions provide examples of personal theorization around what texts should look like given the audience and purpose of communication:

> I received past templates that were half in French, half in English, but I did not like it, so I redid it myself. I did not think it made sense to have the two languages like that (TM6-FR)

> If I had to reach out to the customers in Czech, I would leave out most of the stuff which the English emails are saying because they are not interested in it. They want to know what's the issue, how to resolve it, and that's it. […] I kind of adjust it for what I think they want (TM1-CS)

> I would write this completely different [sic]. […] I mean, the fact alone that there is not one line in between, it's just all flow, flow, flow, flow. It's in one big block; in no language that is correct. That's just not how you write a letter (SL2-DE)

Other aspects listed as relevant for translation quality include clarity and tone, as well as correctness (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, grammatical cases) and meaning transfer ("Do you lose the meaning? Or do you manage to bring it over into German, and do you know that you kind of have to rephrase for it to make sense?", SL2-DE).

Ultimately, staff show an intuitive attempt to balance meaning and form, accuracy and fluency ("The key is how well meaning is conveyed and how well it reads", SL1-FR). Natural expression is important ("It's the style, the way you speak [...] what way I would like to hear it in my language", TM3-PL), but there are limits imposed by the ST:

> When translating templates, I look to be faithful to the original text, to stick to it as close as possible, and to get proofread by somebody to make sure it is natural language, rather than get the flow first [...] We can preface the text, but it is not our role to shorten an approved text. We can clarify the context, but not change the text (SL1-FR)

While translation implies change, the question is the degree to which it is considered appropriate. Indeed, the types and extent of interventions observed in the sample translations differ considerably, with some providing close renditions of the ST while others show notable additions and omissions. In some cases, paragraphs are removed, reordered or abridged to improve the logical flow of the text.

EN ST1 V1	FR TT1
In order to expedite, please help us by completing or verifying the following information:	Je vous prie de bien vouloir remplir les tableaux ci-dessous avec les informations dont j'ai besoin pour planifier ces activités.
1. I retrieved certain system and contact details from the service request. Is the information below still accurate, or do any changes need to be made?	[*Please fill the tables below with the information I need to plan these activities*]

Changes may go as far as eliminating information that allows customers to initiate the upgrade independently, making them dependent on the TMs to complete the scheduling ("The links are very straight forward, but [customers] sometimes prefer that we do [the scheduling]. There's a paragraph missing because we just tell them to do it, but through us", TM14-ES). This act of taking ownership on the part of TMs is also reflected in the preference for the first-person singular subject pronoun in the TTs over the predominant plural form in the STs. Other shifts seen in the template translations include a tendency towards greater formality in open-

ing and closing formulas and forms of address, as well as employing formatting to highlight attachments or instructions, and reinforcing cohesion through internal references and clarifications.

EN ST2 V1	FR TT2
If you wish to proceed, just follow the link(s): [LINK]	Si vous souhaitez planifier cette mise à jour, merci de bien vouloir ouvrir une SR en cliquant sur le lien suivant : [LINK] *If you wish to schedule this update, please open an SR [service request] by clicking on the following link*

(Non-)translation and belonging

TMs' approach to translation does not only differ in the extent of the departures from the ST, but also in their use of English. Translation decisions described by participants and observed in their outputs therefore vary from full, to partial to non-translation. In some instances, the text is rendered solely in the LL. Full translation is typically the preferred approach where TMs see customers as unwilling or unable to be members of the global English interculture, whether due to cultural preferences ("French customers' expectation is that contact is done in French", SL1-FR) or to reliance on staff's guidance and reassurance ("[Spanish customers] get quite nervous if they think that there's going to be a disruption", TM9-ES).

Nevertheless, a few terms may still appear in English with an LL explanation, which points to the overall environment surrounding the interaction. In this regard, both French TTs include an additional note to inform the customer that checks and upgrades will take place in English with no guarantee of a French-speaking engineer. While sending the emails in the LL may facilitate reaching some customers, it may also create expectations of LL provision that cannot be met and need to be addressed by preparing the customer for further communications. This is also manifest in the German TT, where terms deemed technical or company-specific are borrowed from English, this time without an LL equivalent:

> I would not translate 'Preparation Guide' because the attachment is called 'Preparation Guide'. […] Otherwise, I would have to say 'please, look at the attached document named Preparation Guide, which is your Vorbereitungshandbuch' or something, you know? I would have to make up a German name for it. […] I could have completely translated it, but then there would be a risk of them going in, not finding the German word, and just not knowing 'where do I have to look?' (SL2-DE)

In this way, the TT remains strongly anchored in the English-speaking context of production. Although in a more implicit way than in the French TTs, customers are still purposely prepared for and instructed into the company language.

At the other extreme, some TMs avoid translation altogether and simply use the English ST ("In Belgium the original template in English tends to work fine", TM9-ES) or produce a translation for the record which is never delivered and therefore not part of an actual communication situation ("I had to translate [the template], obviously, I was asked to, but I don't think I will use it in practical life", TM1-CS). In these cases, texts are seen as fulfilling their function without the LL, which is only brought in as last resource ("I don't have the official templates translated. I would normally send the email in English, and then only use Dutch to follow up", TM13-NL). The decision to avoid translation goes beyond the idea of equipping the customer for further contact in English to directly acknowledge this as the language of the global business culture that customers need to be able to operate in.

More often, TMs opt for a gist translation that acts as a preface followed by the non-translated text, or a version that renders sections of the text in the LL and leaves others in English. Translation is used sparingly as way to regulate access by building trust through linguistic and cultural affiliation, rather than for the purpose of overcoming language barriers:

> I just write a few lines on top of my email in Finnish and the rest of the template is in English. Finnish people are good in English, so the language is not really a problem. But it is still effective to use Finnish to get a better response (SL3-FI)

Rather than cushioning the introduction to English, partial translation appears as a hint towards the existence of a potential lifeline. ("I can try at least to put some sentences in Czech so they know. So I give them kind of a choice", TM1-CS). Customers are not being prepared for English, they are addressed as members of the corporate interculture but implicitly alerted to the presence of LL-users who they could resort to. Translation enables trust while non-translation equips customers for the English-speaking reality of the service, paving the way for language learning alternatives as solutions for future cross-linguistic contact:

> There are words that we use in the English documents that [customers] have to deal with as well. […] I just prefer to, if we reuse that word a lot, to not translate it. Or to put the German word in brackets once to kind of like tell them 'this is what it is in German, from now on we'll call it that'. Just so that, when they read it in English, that they recognize that it is *that thing* (SL2-DE)

Balancing audiences and self-validation

Partial translation decisions are nevertheless not just about negotiating customer expectations, but also about balancing TMs' responsibility between the customer and the company. For example, when a data table that the customer must complete is left in English because it is "more clear [sic] and it avoids misunderstandings" (TM7-IT), this clarity may not be so much for the benefit of the customer, who is assumed to be comfortable with "business-related things" (TM1-CS), as much as it may aid the TM who must then record and forward this information for the technical consultation. Along with this convenience factor, market size also comes into play. The smaller the market (and, with it, the fewer the resources available in the LL), the lesser the tendency towards full translation:

> I would probably send the email in English anyway and maybe just add the first lines in Czech. Because then if I'm out of office and there's nobody else speaking Czech, they'll switch to English anyway. So I think it's much easier for my colleagues (TM1-CS)

This accentuates the fact that TMs deal with various audiences, not just customers, and shows how their behaviour aims at striking a balance amongst them, as well as their own objectives, which are shaped by how they understand their role (whether they perceive the customer as key or a hurdle) and how they see themselves as multilingual professionals. Indeed, in addition to addressing customer needs, ensuring visibility, and facilitating internal communication, staff's choices are also linked to self-validation behaviours in the face of their own competence limitations, particularly with regards to terminology, the most prominent translation challenge highlighted by TMs.

Common resources to deal with terminological issues include free online bilingual dictionaries, grammar websites, spell-checkers, and machine translation, despite its potential pitfalls ("I actually tried to put this in Google and it was disastrous! Even how they build the sentences, it was just so different", TM1-CS). In addition, TMs may request help from field staff who are familiar with the LL terminology or able to provide an explanation that can then be relayed further to the customer:

> [The LL engineers] are very helpful, they always jump in and they advise or say 'oh, you can call me, I can explain this to you'. And he explains it then in Czech and I am like 'wow, that's so cool!' It makes much more sense (TM1-CS)

In many cases, the preferred solution remains non-translation, so terms which are considered specialized or company-specific are often left in English. This choice, although audience-driven, also shows how TMs seek self-validation by redirecting

the responsibility of translation towards the customer and reinforcing the centrality of English as the language of business and technology. While TM's assumptions of English proficiency vary from market to market ("If Germans know what it is, I would use it", SL2-DE), customers are still expected to be the IT experts and therefore comfortable with domain-specific English terminology ("There's technical terms and I could not translate even in my own language [...] Some terms are just in English!", TM2-RU). However, it is not always the case that there are no LL equivalents available for specialized terminology:

> Sometimes I also ask [the LL engineers] to write what they said and I save it for myself, just in case I need to explain to the customer, I know what words to use, you know? [...] [The LL engineers] have got the training in English as well, but because they work in Prague, they know both the English and Czech words
> (TM1-CS)

This suggests that challenging terms are not necessarily untranslatable, or that customers might not always be unable to recognize "internal sayings" (SL2-DE), but rather that, in some instances, TMs may simply lack familiarity with the domain-specific language in their LL.

Finding adequate LL equivalents can also be challenging because of the weight of the ST, which limits the freedom that other forms of communication grant ("If I would free flow [sic] the email to the customer, [...] I would never use the word 'expedited' [for a system health check]. I would say 'we can do a quicker one'", SL2-DE). The sample TTs reveal how the influence of the ST can also lead to capitalisation, punctuation, spelling, and typographical errors, as well as interferences from the English lexical and grammatical structures which result in register inconsistencies, unidiomatic expressions, unnecessary calques, and mistranslations.

EN ST2 V1	ES TT2
Tick the box "Check this box if this is a new product operating software upgrade"	Marque la casilla 'comprobar si la cabina es un producto nuevo que opera una actualización del software' [*Tick the box "verify whether the device is a new product which operates a software upgrade"*]

Overall, the template translations demonstrate that, while TMs show awareness of some of the challenges posed by the specific language use of the STs, solutions are not always effectively implemented. Some interventions manage to enhance the TT by eliminating redundancies and increasing coherence, but others reflect issues with both ST comprehension and LL production, particularly with regards to genre conventions and domain-specific terminology. Successful or not, how-

ever, TMs' (non-)translation decisions are fundamentally driven by audience considerations. Based on their assumptions of customers' competence and expectations, TMs recognize or reject national groups as part of the global English business culture, and these perceived degrees of legitimacy regulate the extent to which TMs trust or exercise control over customers. This behaviour is nevertheless balanced by TMs' self-validation mechanisms in response to their underlying understanding of translation. TTs are therefore a factor of TMs' perceptions of their audience, their own competence in the face of the ST's influence, their views on what translation involves, and the assumed limits of their role. As paraprofessional translators, TMs "develop their own norms as best they can, making inferences from existing translations and drawing on any pertinent critical or theoretical formulations they may encounter" (Porter, 2014, p. 445). Whether staff's interpretations of specialized language use and assumptions about customers' competence are fully justified or not, these considerations guide translation choices and show awareness of the complexities of cross-linguistic textual operations, recognising the importance of audience and purpose, and presenting translation as a specialized activity with its own particular requirements.

Unrecognized translation

TMs perform occasional *translations*, but they *translate* regularly. Messages produced in one language are often conveyed in another language in ways that aim to preserve the perceived intended meaning even if the channel is different (from phone calls, virtual meetings, face-to-face conversations to emails or instant messaging applications, and vice versa), and the goal of the transfer deviates from that of the original communication. Despite the absence of a clearly defined ST, much of what falls under "free-flow communication" (SL2-DE) or "normal conversation" (MN3-EN) in this context is a demonstration of interlingual mediation skills ("I need to first read what is the issue in English, and then try to translate it in my head: What am I going to say to the customer?", TM1-CS). These exchanges are purposeful cross-linguistic operations; a meaning transfer exercise which requires capturing a message and relaying it from or into English, often with an additional function (e.g., simplifying, clarifying, providing visibility).

The relegation of these practices to the category of unrecognized translation appears contingent on four main factors: (1) the immediacy of the exchange, (2) the intermediary nature of the task, (3) the instability of the ST, and (4) the high degree of formal independence from the ST. Rather than an assumed whole cultural group (customers in a local market), the audience is typically identified personally (a specific customer or member of staff), and the communication in

question is only one part of the larger task which is resolving a case, as opposed to an individualised request for translation. Moreover, the ST is often fleeting and perishable, generated by the exchange participants themselves (i.a., a phone conversation summarized in an email, an in-person chat formalized into a written explanation, an email thread compiled into a case log).

Explicit translation, on the other hand, starts with a pre-established formal written text which has its own distinctive features endowed by the author, i.e., symbolically, the company. It connotes for participants a form of scripted language use, resulting in a "dependent text" that preserves both content and intention (Sager, 1994, p. 110), whether this dependency is later acknowledged or not. It is a formal linguistic task which is constrained by the ST and always comes with a loss ("It is not the same to translate an email to English than reading it directly in Spanish", TM14-ES). Although some degree of change is always expected, this is limited by the existing ST, to which the TT is bound in a way that the "derived texts" (Sager, 1994, p. 113) resulting from unrecognized translation practices are not. The less prototypical the task, the less hindered practices are by preconceived notions of translation. And conversely, the greater the weight of the ST, the more the practice will tend to be conceptualized as "translation".

Translation is seen as a complex task which requires time, effort and specialized knowledge, both domain knowledge and transfer ability ("You can't just, like, Google translate it. […] It takes you a while to actually put the things together and make it look... presentable, or understandable", TM4-AR). It is, however, not exclusively a matter of expertise, but of professional responsibility and accountability. Particularly when it comes to financial information, technical documentation or customer contracts, translation is conceived as a specialist activity which needs to be officially sanctioned or be left to dedicated providers. In such cases, TMs choose to protect themselves by rejecting the role of "translators" ("If you do [sic] mistakes or… it could be lost in translation and you could be in trouble, basically. You'd rather cover yourself instead of going ahead and doing it", TM2-RU). Translators are considered professionals prepared to deal with norm-bound, complex documents that must conform to clear expectations of accuracy, completion, and precise expression. In the work of translators as they are conceived, there is little room for textual modifications, paraphrasing and generalizations. And while staff often handle specialist content and are influenced by the ST too, they approach the task without the same perceived constraints. TMs enjoy a greater degree of agency than translators and interpreters who are "institutionalized" into the translation profession, which "enhances their sense of initiative, authority and agency in reformulating the material as part of a clear project that they share with the audience" (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva, 2012, p. 158). Although explaining and explicating are also common strategies for professional translators,

the degree to which participants condense, comment and even omit necessitates "a status of authorship" (Koskela et al., 2017, p. 480) which is not typically afforded to working language professionals. Indeed, TMs don't only enable communication between two distinct groups or individuals but are simultaneously mediators and authors. Being deeply embedded in the organization (Piekkari et al., 2020, p. 5), TMs take ownership of the message as a form of self-translation: although they represent the company, it is the TMs who speak to the customer.

As editors of sorts then, TMs "need not view the source text as a sacred and inviolable object" (Porter, 2014, p. 445), reshaping it as they see fit. Indeed, instances of unrecognized translation labelled as "free flow communication" are seen as natural and spontaneous, confined only by the limits of "good customer service" ("I am actually there to tell the [customer]: 'you don't have a choice, you have to upgrade!', but in a nicer way, of course", TM8-DE). Without a fixed ST, TMs place greater focus on the goal of the communication and are freer to make more personal and deliberate decisions on how to adjust the message according to what they perceive is most relevant in order to maximise the outcome:

> I'm trying to keep everything as short as possible. […] Because I know that I'm not dealing with- with English lectors [sic]. They're IT people that they [sic] just want help, you know, short and straight (TM3-PL)

TMs are constantly dealing with translation situations that require them not only to identify and transfer a message for a specific purpose and audience, but also to synthesize, amplify or adapt information for different channels and uses. This is, however, not a neutral process. Choices are driven by individual theorizing with a view to fulfilling their job tasks but doing so in keeping with their own motivations and priorities. The solutions reached are the product of a balance of perceptions of themselves and their audiences, informed by norms, values, and beliefs, such as assumptions on different cultural groups, the centrality of the English language, and TMs' role orientation, as well as their understanding of translation.

When approaching "a translation", TMs typically rely on bilingual reference works for problems identified primarily at word level, and renditions that are both lexically and structurally close to the ST often lead to interferences. This echoes findings from process research on trainee translators, who usually focus on smaller translation units and proceed in a more ST-oriented and linear fashion than their professional counterparts, who are more likely to take wider textual considerations, have greater awareness of problems, and employ more monolingual resources (Göpferich and Jääskeläinen, 2009, p. 174–175). As paraprofessional translators, TMs face some of the same challenges as ad-hoc or amateur interpreters, such as limited resources to transfer unknown concepts or a lack of equivalent terms in the LL. They also use similar strategies dealing with special-

ist language, like omissions, simplifications and paraphrases (Pöllabauer, 2017), even if sometimes they lead to erroneous translations (cf. Valero-Garcés, 2005), and often rely on English borrowings and loan translations (cf. Wright, 2011).

Where TMs differ from other groups that carry out translation as an untrained ability, like language learners, is in the type of communication situations they operate in. Although TMs do not accept the responsibility associated with the role of "translators", translating in their context is not a mere linguistic transposition activity. As customer service experts, they understand that their translations need to function in a particular way, i.e. they need to fulfil their intended purpose of leading customers to engage in the upgrade process by first gaining their trust and then persuading them to provide the required information, whether it is by providing a clear and convincing explanation of the process and its relevance, or simply by giving enough reassurance of the benefits of the process and the availability of support. Having a clear goal in an authentic communication situation for which they are responsible leads to greater awareness of the texts as tools with an important communicative function (which sometimes may result in avoiding translation). It is this communicative drive guiding interlingual practices which can be seen unconsciously contributing to a view of translation closer to that of purposeful interaction than the direct replacement notion commonly associated to untrained bilinguals and gives credence to Harris' (1977) natural translation hypothesis. Spurred by real communication needs, "natural translators", i.e., bilinguals who perform translations in everyday circumstances without any special training (Harris, 1977, p. 96), may develop into "native translators" who, like TMs, "have picked up [translation] skills by observation and experience, and acquired its socially accepted norms" (Harris, 2009). This is reflective of a developmental view of translation as a "quasi-universal human ability" (Harris, 2017, p. 32), an innate predisposition that can be refined from an untrained ability into complex skill, professional competence and expert performance, given the necessary "favourable external circumstances (i.e. the need for translation services) and internal conditions (i.e. the translator's conscious effort to develop)" (Whyatt, 2017, p. 50).

From a cognitive perspective, this suggests there is a common fundamental ability deployed in any operation between two languages:

> Any person conversant in two languages can act as a mediator and might provide an essential communicative link in a wide spectrum of social situations, with each requiring a different level of specificity and/or accuracy (Whyatt, 2017, p. 46)

The question of quality has to do with "the stage which a translating individual occupies on the developmental continuum of translation as a human skill" (Whyatt, 2017, p. 56). The expert translator that has undergone specialist training

and possesses advanced knowledge of a specific field which allows them to work professionally by providing quality translations for publication represents only a fraction of the scope of *translation* in the current global reality, leaving out much of the *translating* that takes place in the wider social and professional spheres. As seen in this chapter, paraprofessional translators' intuitive ability to translate can contribute to further our understanding of translation in all its manifestations, underscoring the translational nature of multilingual communication and the impact of the spontaneous translingual activities of bilinguals in the construction of organizational reality.

Conclusions

Through the investigation of paraprofessional translation practices within a B2B customer service unit in an Irish-based multinational corporation, this chapter brings to the fore the translational nature of multilingual practices in organizations and the role of translation in the configuration of business communication. The inductive process of constant comparison of incidents in the data from interviews and observations, combined with the analysis of translation shifts in text samples, shows how translation features both in explicit and unrecognized forms in the daily work at the unit, and provides insights into staff's linguistic choices and their understanding of translation. When dealing with explicit translation tasks, team members follow various production patterns (individual, consultative, and collaborative translation) as well as diverse approaches (full, partial, and non-translation), and despite limitations in knowledge management and domain-specific terminology, they demonstrate a clear awareness of audience and purpose, and acknowledge the complexity of the practice. Instances of unrecognized translation, in turn, reveal the prevalence of strategic language use in routine activities and exchanges, highlighting how staff negotiate meaning by deploying inter- and intralingual transfer skills across multiple channels. Overall, translation decisions reflect an overarching communicative goal that goes beyond the overcoming of linguistic barriers to the managing of interactions in keeping with individual team members' role orientation and perceptions of self and others. Translation emerges then as one of the ways individuals strategically mobilize their linguistic resources, not just to improve and facilitate communication, but to manage and control it.

The boundary spanning work of paraprofessional translators is unconstrained by professional translation norms or definitions of competence, but leaves "a paper trail of values, attitudes and ideologies of cultural mediation, documented in their translations" (Koskinen, 2020, p. 75), which makes shedding light

into this fluid and often invisible translatorial behaviour highly relevant to understand multilingualism in business organizations. Translation studies can make a valuable contribution to the investigation of multilingual business settings and the institutional management of linguistic diversity by highlighting the activities and skills of paraprofessional translators and the part they play in shaping international communication practices. Likewise, the discipline can benefit from revisiting the notion of natural translation as it manifests itself in paraprofessional contexts to further our theoretical understanding of the heterogeneous ways individuals move across their linguistic repertoires. In the face of increasingly restricted industry and social conceptualizations of translation which see it as an unproblematic process of transcoding, the study of paraprofessional translation can offer a path to reclaiming the label of "translation" as a broad cognitive phenomenon of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic decision-making with many varied manifestations, providing legitimacy to the sometimes intangible and unacknowledged practices encountered in today's global businesses.

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CHAPTER 11

Beliefs and practices in paraprofessional translators' work

Towards a conceptual framework

Sylwia Ciuk, Martyna Śliwa & Kaisa Koskinen

This chapter makes an empirically grounded contribution to the evolving understanding of paraprofessional translation work. First, drawing on forty-four semi-structured interviews with a broad range of employees and managers working in five organizations in different sectors, we identify six distinctive approaches to paraprofessional translation: each underpinned by a different set of beliefs and practices. We then illustrate how they are influenced not only by management policies but also by three major factors: (a) the characteristics of the paraprofessional translator, namely their identity, organizational role, seniority and language skills, (b) organizational context, and (c) the translation type — small-t and big-T translation — a novel analytical distinction which we propose for the paraprofessional context.

Keywords: paraprofessional translators, small-t and big-T translation, translation practices, translation beliefs, interviews, subsidiaries of multinationals

Introduction

Recently, various modes of translation work beyond professional contexts — most notably in non-professional, volunteer settings — have generated increased interest in translation studies (i.a. Antonini et al., 2017; Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva, 2012). However, there exists a third type of translation work, which has been referred to as *para*professional translation (Koskela, Koskinen and Pilke, 2017; Pym, 2011; Tyulenev, 2014). This is translation undertaken in work settings by non-language professionals (i.a. managers, administrators, engineers, IT specialists) as part of their professional work. The underpinning element of employment, the embeddedness of translation in other organizational activities, and the blending of translation norms with other professional codes make paraprofessional translation distinctive from both professional translation and translating in

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volunteer or activist settings. This conceptual granulation allows us to investigate and theorize translation with increased contextual precision.

This underexplored 'middle ground' between professional and non-professional interlingual translation has so far been largely considered in theoretical papers, or based on single case studies. We contribute to this emerging body of literature by drawing on an exploratory, interview-based study conducted in five organizations operating across four sectors. We have adopted an open-ended exploratory approach focused on both written and spoken paraprofessional translation. We ask: (1) How do paraprofessional translators approach translation work in subsidiaries of multinational enterprises? and (2) What factors influence these approaches? We address these questions from the perspective of *narrated practices*, recounted by those engaged in paraprofessional translation, in interview data.

Our chapter makes several contributions to the literature. First, based on our analysis of paraprofessional translators' beliefs and practices associated with paraprofessional translation, we identify six distinctive ways of approaching this type of translation. Second, we contextualize these varied approaches and show how they are influenced not only by management policies but also by three major factors: (a) the characteristics of a paraprofessional translator, namely their identity, role, seniority and language skills, (b) organizational context and (c) the translation type — small-t and big-T translation — a novel analytical distinction which we propose for the paraprofessional context.

Below, through a focused overview of the relevant literature in both translation studies and language-sensitive international business, we discuss different conceptualizations of paraprofessional translation. We then explain our methodology and present the findings. We conclude by outlining our theoretical contribution and future research directions.

Paraprofessional translation as a middle ground between professional and non-professional translation

Translation studies has traditionally given primacy to professional translation and professional translators and interpreters as its object of study (Dam and Koskinen, 2016). Recently, however, scholars have begun to explore non-professional contexts and activities such as activist translation, fan-subtitling and crowdsourcing (i.a. Antonini et al., 2017). This has led to a recognition that it is also beneficial to differentiate these voluntary-based activities from translation tasks performed in a professional capacity and within employment but not by professional translators or interpreters. This middle ground has been labelled paraprofessional translation. Anthony Pym (2011) describes paraprofessional translators/ interpreters as:

> … people who engage in translation activities without having specialized training or for whom translation is not the main source of income… Many such translators have expert skills in fields associated with particular translation projects.
> (p. 87)

This definition is not explicitly linked to workplaces, but the expert skills often relate to a professional role. Sergey Tyulenev's definition, by contrast, is more restrictive and therefore more useful for our purposes. He refers to "paratranslators" whom he defines as "people whose jobs are not directly translation- or interpreting-related who do translate or interpret" (Tyulenev 2014, p. 75). Tyulenev mentions journalists as a prime example, and recent research into "journalation" (the convergence of translator and journalist roles) and international news production has generated valuable insights into this context (i.a. Davier and Conway, 2019). Another group mentioned by Tyulenev (2014, p. 76) are "those who work in multilingual environments" and who "interpret/translate because otherwise they cannot fulfil their main professional duties". This last description captures the everyday reality at many contemporary workplaces.

Empirical studies have revealed many creative strategies of approaching such translation. Data from bilingual meetings (Koskela et al., 2017), for example, indicate that people can be communicatively resourceful when they are not expected to translate everything verbatim. Similarly, Muñoz Gómez (2020), focusing on paraprofessional translation in an IT company, discusses a range of implicit translation practices; the flexible use of textual strategies such as gisting, summarizing and rephrasing; and using translation to manage social relations. While these studies provide valuable insights into translation strategies, they do not explicitly focus on how these translation practices are intertwined with translation beliefs, and with the context of translation.

Paraprofessional translation, and in particular the politics of translation (Wilmot and Tietze, 2023), has also started to generate interest in IB and MOS where the kinds of actors we choose to label paraprofessional translators are often referred to as boundary-spanners (i.a. Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014), intermediaries (i.a. Zølner, 2019) or knowledge brokers (i.a. Tietze, Tansley and Helienek, 2017). Evidence shows that translations are undertaken by both entry level (Blazejewski, 2006) and more senior staff (Ciuk, James and Śliwa, 2019), including general managers (Logemann and Piekkari, 2015; Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2012). Paraprofessional translations span many organizational functions which go beyond communication (Michalski and Śliwa, 2021; Sanden, 2020; Zølner, 2019), marketing (Ristolainen, Outila, and Piekkari, 2023) and customer-facing roles (Piekkari et al., 2013), and are also undertaken by human resource professionals

(Zølner, 2019), engineers (Sanden and Lønsmann, 2018), technicians and production staff (Langinier and Ehrhart, 2020).

Studies in IB tend to address the translation of key documents, such as a company value statements (Blazejewski, 2006; Ciuk and James, 2015; Ciuk et al., 2019; Zølner, 2019) and strategy documentation (Logemann and Piekkari, 2015). They highlight local actors' agency when editing and adjusting the target text culturally and politically. While these studies have generated important insights, they very rarely discuss paraprofessional translators' approaches to the seemingly more mundane everyday translation. We see this as a significant oversight as paraprofessional translation is part of bottom-up responses to linguistic diversity (Sanden and Lønsmann, 2018) which are fundamental to organization's functioning (Piekkari et al., 2013).

Methodology

The empirical material comes from a larger interview-based research project focused on corporate language policies and interlingual communication in subsidiaries of multinational organizations. In this paper, we draw on forty-four semi-structured interviews in five Polish subsidiaries operating in four different sectors (see Table 1). The chosen research design allows us to explore a wide range of translation practices and to consider them in different contexts. Conducting multiple interviews in each organization helps paint a richer picture of the prevailing approaches to paraprofessional translation. Sampling organizations from different sectors offers the additional benefit of approaching each organization as a distinctive "linguistic ecology" (Spolsky 2007, p. 2), although, because of space considerations, we only point to key contextual factors that emerged in our analysis.

We selected a combination of companies from the same and different sectors to explore the role of context in participants' language practices. We also used theoretical and maximum variation sampling when recruiting participants.

We selected participants from a cross-section of organizational functions (e.g. HR, finance, IT, client-facing roles, marketing, analytics), hierarchical levels (from general manager to entry positions), management responsibility (extensive to none) and length of service (from over ten years to a few months) and foreign language proficiency (from basic to high). Our sample was also balanced in relation to gender. Most of our participants were under forty; many, specifically in the media and hospitality industries, were in their twenties and thirties, which reflected the companies' staff profiles. Interviews lasted between forty minutes and over two hours, with the majority lasting over an hour. Interviews were carried out in Polish and were fully transcribed.

Table 1. Sample composition

	Headquarters	Sector	Completed interviews
1	USA	Media	15
2	USA	Media	6
3	France	Market research	8
4	USA	Healthcare	8
5	USA	Hospitality	7
Total			**44**

Interviews addressed participants' language profile, foreign language use at work and organizational language practices and policies. We also asked participants about any translation work they undertake as part of their role and their views on it. In addition, we probed for their understanding and perceptions of their company's translation policy. We use the term "translation" as an umbrella term to cover both oral and written modes, as well as multimodal or intermodal practices as in paraprofessional contexts they are interwoven to such an extent "that the distinction between these two aspects becomes blurred" (Piekkari et al. 2013, p. 772).

The first stage of analysis was accomplished in Polish using the Nvivo (12) software. Data were open coded and grouped thematically into clusters of codes summarizing references to formal language policies, statements about who can, should and does translation work and evaluative statements about translation. Subsequently, one of the authors translated the quotes into English to enable reflexive whole team discussions. The translation was reviewed by the first author of the paper who has formal translation qualifications. At this stage, the three authors turned to a more interpretative mode of analysis. We began to differentiate between various emergent forms of translation work leading to six proposed approaches to paraprofessional translation. The final step of analysis entailed recontextualizing the data in order to make sense of the differences in approaches to paraprofessional translation. This step revealed that the beliefs and practices varied depending on: (a) the organizational context, (b) professional identities, role and seniority of paraprofessional translators and their foreign language skills and finally (c) the type of paraprofessional translation which, for analytical purposes, we differentiate as small-t and big-T translation. While we provide a more detailed overview of the distinction between these two translation types in the discussion section, we offer a short working definition here to set the scene for our findings. Small-t translation emerged as different forms of small ad-hoc, highly pragmatic translation and interpretation activities that are not usually assessed for

their linguistic quality and often entail high degrees of editing autonomy which can result in important deviations from the source text. Big-T translation, by contrast, entails more formal translatorial tasks of larger texts, spoken or written, the accomplishment of which is associated with more limited translatorial freedom and where the concern is with the linguistic quality of the translation that is likely to be scrutinized.

Approaches to paraprofessional translation, and the concomitant beliefs, and practices

The majority of participants admitted to performing some form of translation work as part of their work, although, with some exceptions, it was not carried out on a regular basis. Below, we highlight six approaches to paraprofessional translation (comprising beliefs and practices) which emerged from our data and their influencing factors. We start by reviewing approaches to small-t translation before focusing on big-T translation (for a summary, see Table 2).

Table 2. Small-t and big-T translation

	Small-t translation	**Big-T translation**
Paraprofessional translation as	(1) care work (2) knowedge-brokering and management (3) information sourcing (4) play	(5) enactment of one's subject expertise (6) a distinctive linguistic task

Small-t translation

Paraprofessional translation as care work

Paraprofessional translation was rarely questioned and was rather believed to be a necessity when it was part of work aimed at helping and looking after customers. We identified this approach to paraprofessional translation among staff in customer facing roles, such as the reception desk, in the hospitality sector where strong industry and profession customer care norms applied to beliefs regarding paraprofessional translation and interpretation. As an experienced receptionist, acting as a supervisor, explains:

> 'We can't abandon[1] a guest who simply doesn't understand anything. There are guests from China who can't understand that the card activates the lift… Then there is Google Translate because, really, no one speaks Chinese. I show them [things on the phone] and ask if they understand… The guests also come to us with their telephone to show something in Google Translate. (Julia, Hospitality)

The "immediacy of the customer pressure", as noted also by Piekkari et al. (2013, p.779) in their study of translation behavior in a Nordic bank, the framing as 'guests' rather than 'customers', as well as the time-sensitive nature of the encounter appear to play an important role. Refusing to engage in paraprofessional interpretation and translation would be in conflict with the professional identities of hospitality industry workers and would violate professional norms and obligations in this sector. Here, mediation between languages, often by drawing on any linguistic resources available, individual and team, is considered integral to one's work, necessary to perform one's duties and thus part of one's professional competence.

When performed as care work, paraprofessional translation and, especially, interpretation, take the form of pragmatic, ad hoc mediation, accomplished by both individuals and teams. It mainly takes the form of paraprofessional interpretation but it also extends to translation of client messages and reviews. In our sample only staff with more advanced language skills were delegated to handle (written) translation. Paraprofessional translation as care work is concerned with the achievement of the communicative purpose, be it with the help of gisting, Google Translate or embodied and multimodal means, such as drawing, gestures, the usage of technology and team effort. The norms of customer care enable team members to call on each other, even when colleagues are off work. The availability to engage in unpaid 'care work' outside one's normal working hours might be part of the professional identities of staff in the hospitality industry: it demonstrates care towards both customers and colleagues. The conceptualization of translation as care work is reminiscent of a previous study of volunteer church interpreting conceptualized as service (Hokkanen, 2012) and is linked to the ethics of linguistic hospitality (Pokorn and Koskinen, 2020).

Paraprofessional translation as knowledge brokering and management

A common way of approaching written and sometimes also oral paraprofessional translation, in all of our settings was knowledge brokering. It was typically performed by staff in managerial roles who were the recipients of corporate docu-

1. The original phrase used was 'zostawić' which typically translates into leave'.

ments, training materials or announcements sent by the headquarters or another division of the multinational. As part of their role, managers engaged in selective translation and gisting to convey, usually, to lower level staff, or their immediate team, the key points of the received texts. This type of mediation is seen as a pragmatic solution which can address information and knowledge needs as they arise, and its enactment is linked to assuming responsibility for staff and colleagues rather than customers.

The need for mediation arises because a lot of resources tend to be provided in the corporate language, regardless of the fact that staff in some departments (e.g. the salesforce, accounting or in low skills jobs) are not necessarily sufficiently fluent in the corporate language to engage with such resources. As a long-serving manager overseeing a large housekeeping department from the hospitality sector explains:

> With a [staff training] film, we obviously tell [our cleaning staff] what it's about, right? Perhaps not exactly interpreting each dialogue word for word, but more or less, what it was about, what the intention was. (Grażyna, Hospitality)

Here, again, the concern is not with the comprehensiveness or the form of translation, but its potential to serve as a means of knowledge and information sharing and, importantly, also highlighting its core message, as seen by the paraprofessional translator. This type of mediation is viewed as a pragmatic solution which can address information and knowledge needs as they arise. As indicated earlier, translation as knowledge brokering is not confined to managers:

> There are[2] also [Ukrainian] girls[3] = **who are bilingual**, who have been here for a long time, and they can understand Polish and they interpret [what I am saying] for the newcomers [into Ukrainian]. (Grażyna, Hospitality)

Similar findings have been reported by other studies (Koskela et al., 2017; Langinier and Ehrhardt, 2020; Tietze et al., 2017) suggesting that a wide range of staff might engage in paraprofessional translation as knowledge brokering. Translation as knowledge brokering is typically viewed as part of one's job — and tied to the professional identities of senior employees in multinational companies as those who are capable of and entrusted with knowledge brokering. Here, again, the concern is not with the comprehensiveness or the form of translation, but its potential to serve as a means of knowledge and information sharing.

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2. The original phrase used is 'Mam' meaning 'I have'.

3. This is a direct translation. The word is used to denote cleaners who are mature women.

At times, paraprofessional translation as knowledge brokering becomes a platform for managing staff, setting priorities and giving direction. Managers and staff in senior leadership roles (such as managing directors in Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2012; Ciuk and James, 2015) who receive important correspondence, especially from the company headquarters, can engage in selective, highly agentic paraprofessional translation where the concern is predominantly with the performative role of the source and target texts. Even when staff are deemed to possess the required language skills to be able to comprehend the source text in its original form, paraprofessional translation offers an opportunity for transforming messages. Staff in senior leadership roles translate these texts selectively and strategically, typically adding further layers of interpretative work, providing additional instructions and key take away points that they wish to highlight. Acting as local intermediaries (Zølner, 2019) or boundary-spanners (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014), they tend to leave out what they see as redundant parts of the communication and adjust the text to the target audience. One IT director with very high English language proficiency explains:

> I know that it'll be easier for me to convey the message in Polish [and] … to adapt the content, the language to the recipient… For key communication, involving all employees, I try to have[4] it in Polish. It'll simply be easier for these people to do what I ask them to do, i.e. to change something, do something independently.
>
> (Antek, Healthcare)

This approach to paraprofessional translation was also discussed by participants working in specialist roles from other sectors and in different organizational functions. The ability to take autonomous decisions regarding the content of the translated text was crucial to the professional identities of managers as agents and decision-makers. The entanglement of paraprofessional translation with management and leadership has been reported in earlier studies (e.g. Logemann and Piekkari, 2015; Ciuk et al., 2019). A vivid illustration of this phenomenon comes from Zølner (2019) with one of her participants making a distinction between literal translation and what they see as the 'real' translation of the 'spirit' of a core corporate text.

Engaging in paraprofessional translation as an intermediary enables managers to derive a sense of pride in their work and enact their professional identity. This pattern of association of paraprofessional translation as knowledge-brokering and/or management with professional identity was repeated in other professionals acting as language intermediaries in Zølner's (2019) study, such as Human Resource practitioners. This kind of agentic translation is atypical in com-

4. In original, the verb 'być' meaning 'be' was used.

mercial professional translation where translators do not often have their own agenda to drive, but has been widely studied in literary and activist translation.

Paraprofessional translation as information sourcing

In some contexts, for example the healthcare setting, we found a tendency among managers to prompt others to undertake their own translation; to 'force people to make an effort and read, find out… self-translate the incoming communication', as observed by a manager from the healthcare sector who himself for a long time was the beneficiary of company sponsored individual language training (Kacper). Translation was here seen by some as an inherent aspect of work in a multinational organization and thus something every employee should be able to undertake.

According to the implicit norm, everybody does and should undertake some translation for their own information sourcing purposes. This demonstrates belonging to the organization and ability to participate in HQ-subsidiary communication. These expectations are often expressed in companies that contribute to employees' language training (i.a. two media companies from our sample).

This approach, however, can pose challenges for staff who do not have adequate linguistic resources to undertake translation in particular in terms of synchronous interactions:

> It is not that we only employ people with advanced English language skills… Recently, two women from the HQ ran some workshops for us … It was clear that not everybody was able to cope. There was no option, like at a conference: here are the headphones or here is the consecutive interpretation (*tłumaczenie*).… I feel sorry for these people who don't understand. Nobody has ever dared to say that they don't understand. (Teresa, Media)

The act of hiding one's linguistic shortcomings in English indicates that being a person who is capable of sourcing information for oneself, without asking for help, through translation in work-related contexts, is part of the expected and desired identity of an employee of an MNC subsidiary. The lack of such skills is likely to be seen as undermining an employee's professional competence.

Paraprofessional translation as play

The final type of small-t paraprofessional translation that emerged from our study is linked to its perception as play. Small-scale paraprofessional translation activities are sometimes perceived as a welcome distraction from one's core tasks by

staff who have the required language skills to enjoy the task. As two young, newly hired entry level employees working in shared offices in the media sector explain:

> Sometimes we do [the translation] together to have a laugh. (Ilona, Media)

> …, there is healthy competition in that someone can come up with a nicer word, and there is a moment of de-stressing, 'taking off' some of the concentration [5] (*ściągnięcia z siebie tej koncentracji*) which is allocated to working.
> (Kamila, Media)

Translation is perceived here as a pleasant, often shared, activity that can give joy. Paraprofessional translation as play was most visible in the media sector, where employees are occasionally expected to engage in translation, but it is not core to their daily work. Unlike in the hospitality industry where corporate practices (e.g. a lack of recognition of the need to translate corporate training materials) resulted in high demands for translation imposed on some line managers, short, 'low-risk', 'low visibility' translation activities can be valued. The tasks mentioned in the quotes above are small enough to be seen as a pleasant pastime rather than a burdensome chore, especially in an organizational context where staff are young graduates, at times having recently come back from study programs abroad. They are new to the sector and the world of employment, work in close physical proximity to each other, and see paraprofessional translation as a low stakes activity that provides them with some intellectual stimulation while enhancing their identities as fun-loving, bright and collaborative knowledge workers. This resonates with earlier work by Piekkari et al. (2013) who have illustrated that paraprofessional translation can be a source of pleasure as it provides a variety of tasks. These perceptions change with the volume and complexity of the translation task, as we discuss in the next section focused on the big-T paraprofessional translation.

The big-T paraprofessional translation

Paraprofessional translation as enactment of one's subject expertise

In many instances translation is a more distinctive, bigger task, as linked to its volume/ length and complexity of the source text and the expected standards of quality. Our material suggests that both staff and managers prefer to avoid translation when it entails duplicating work. However, in some cases, such as when a transla-

5. This is a direct translation from an unusual word choice by the participant in Polish.

tion task is closely entangled with an employees' professional knowledge, such as HRM, marketing or law, and in particular when it is also associated with a given product or account an employee is responsible for, then paraprofessional translation tends to be approached as enactment of one's subject expertise. When presentations or reports for international clients are required in a foreign language, preparing texts in the local language in order for them to be translated later was seen by our participants as an unnecessary step. Nevertheless, when external local service providers deliver key documents in the local language and these documents need to be seen by international clients or expatriate managers, they tend to be translated by the person responsible for a given project, client or brand. Undertaking such paraprofessional translation is perceived as an extension of one's professional expertise, as its accomplishment requires specialized vocabulary, and industry and subject expertise. Here, a high degree of correspondence with the source text, as well as appropriateness in the target language, are crucial. A marketing specialist explains:

> .. an advertorial[6] is in Polish, because it is going to be published in a Polish newspaper, but it has to be approved by a Brand Manager who is anglophone. And then the Account Manager [responsible for that particular client] has to translate it… Translating a page long document such as an advert is quite bothersome (*uciążliwe*). (Zosia, Media)

Expectations to engage in paraprofessional translation are linked to responsibilities for one's client. These translated documents are intended for internal communication, albeit for important stakeholders, they are relatively short and translation is often time-sensitive. The underpinning belief about this approach to paraprofessional translation is that it is burdensome but, in a multinational company, it needs to be accomplished by a subject expert responsible for a client. This becomes challenging in contexts when 'staff turnover is quite high and one cannot always match the required competences with regards to English' (Zosia, media).

In Translation Studies, these considerations evoke a longstanding discussion, particularly in non-fiction publishing, as to whether to enlist a subject matter expert who may struggle with translation competence or a professional translator who may struggle with subject matter competence, or both in collaboration (Eskola and Kivinen 1990). As Buzelin's (2014) comparative case study of a marketing text book translation indicates, a paraprofessional subject matter expert may be willing and able to exercise much more agency than a professional translator.

6. English word used in the original.

Paraprofessional translation as a distinctive linguistic task

When the translated texts are of a substantial length, require a close correspondence with the source text, and when the translator's agency is limited to linguistic and stylistic choices, translation turns into a distinctive standalone linguistic task. In such cases, translation is viewed as a time-consuming activity which requires expert language skills but not necessarily subject expertise. Interestingly, language competence is typically considered sufficient to undertake paraprofessional translation. Translating, with the exception of simultaneous interpretation, tends not to be seen as a competence in itself. This tendency to associate the ability to perform paraprofessional translation with "requisite language skills" has been noted in earlier work (see i.a. Piekkari et al. 2013, 776) and is in stark contrast to a longstanding work on translation competences and expertise in translation studies (see i.a. Hurtado Albir ed. 2017). Our interviewees reported that translation as a distinctive standalone linguistic task is typically passed on to others. If it was seen as requiring specific industry knowledge and vocabulary, it tended to be delegated to employees who were seen as 'linguistically skilled' (often language graduates or those who had worked or studied abroad). If it was a complex task that relied on sophisticated language skills but not necessarily subject-expertise, it tended to be outsourced to professional translators. When the complexity was more limited, this type of translation often fell within the remit of entry level staff with perceived high foreign language competence. We will now discuss each of these practices.

In the organizations we researched there were often a few dedicated staff, who were seen as particularly suited to performing more complex paraprofessional translation as a linguistic activity. In contrast to small-t translation discussed in the earlier section, the focus here was on linguistic accuracy and industry specific/appropriate language:

> We have one senior person who is an English language graduate and, indeed, we always give her various things to translate, if we get stuck. (Wiola, Marketing)

In some organizations staff can be asked to volunteer, or be incentivized to perform translation:

> We have a girl [woman] who is an English language graduate, and she sometimes also translates presentations. We pay her extra for this. (Ola, Media)

In some contexts, especially for staff in relatively low-level positions, engagement in paraprofessional translation, in particular when it is a one-off project, can be seen as an opportunity to showcase their skills. One such example is provided by Fedir, a young receptionist working in the hospitality sector:

> We had to do a 'Hotel Accessibility'[7] project [in English]. A colleague... came to me for help... She said: You have a degree in English, you can do it. … I was surprised. It worked out really nicely. I really enjoyed it. I was proud of myself.
>
> (Fedir, Hospitality)

As the quote indicates, paraprofessional translation can also be a source of pride for staff, especially when working on a relatively high-profile document. Such engagement in paraprofessional translation as a 'special task' can contribute to establishing a person's identity as a linguistically skilled and thus a 'special' person who can perform tasks that others would struggle with.

In some contexts, most notably a leading market research organization, there was a strong norm of outsourcing translation, such as research project reports, and simultaneous interpretation of focus group discussions, to external trusted language professionals. Translation, and in particular simultaneous interpretation, was considered a valued competence but one which did not fall into the scope of duties of professional researchers who were instead expected to utilize their time exercising their subject expertise and core competences (such as designing, undertaking and managing research projects). The company was among the leading companies, and its clients had adequate resources to have translation costed as a separate activity in their market research projects. Experienced researchers were, by contrast, relatively hard to recruit. Their job-related skills therefore carried considerably more premium than translation which was framed as a separate competence. Among the companies in our data, the market research agency provides an extreme case where the boundaries between 'one's actual/ real' work and translation work are very clearly demarcated (see also Muñoz Gómez, 2020). Here, demonstrating 'core' research skills, and refusing to undertake work, such as translation, which is seen as less central for the organization and thus less valuable, is part of one's professional identity and a sign that one is a sought-after researcher. While researchers at times write reports in English, they tend to refuse to translate documents and to undertake interpretation. As one highly experienced research manager observes:

> Some clients suggest that the researcher could do the interview and simultaneous interpretation [*tłumaczyć*], but we absolutely never agree to do this. Even if the client wants to interpret [the interview] to their colleagues, we advise against it… The quality of translation by our simultaneous interpreters cannot be replicated.
>
> (Martyna, Market Research)

7. English phrase used in the source text.

Martyna's words signal the high regard the researchers had for the quality of professional simultaneous interpreting. Where written translation work is carried out by professional translators, it is a common practice among the case companies for staff to proofread translations, and they are not always happy with the results:

> We had policies to translate, and this was translated by an external firm… They translated it in the wrong way or not precisely (enough) in relation to the English policy… [*jakoś nie specyficznie do konkretnego odniesienia do polityki angielskiej*] … I was the person responsible for liaising with the translation firm and for verifying the correctness of the documents. (Dominika, Healthcare)

As the quote above indicates, in the healthcare context, where, presumably, policy documents are seen as important documents that cover industry-specific content and vocabulary, an employee is often assigned the responsibility for assessing the correctness of professional translation. Interestingly, this employee can be an entry-level staff member. This finding resonates with the practices reported by Langinier and Ehrhart (2020) who found in their study of a car manufacturing plant in a cross-border area of France that it was the technicians who often verified translated texts. Other studies, by contrast (i.a.. Ristolainen et al., 2023) provide examples of paraprofessional translations being verified by language professionals. This was, however, only accomplished in relation to strategic markets and key client facing documents.

Finally, in our dataset translation as a standalone linguistic activity was also commonly approached as an assistant's job, especially where whole texts which do not typically require familiarity with industry-specific vocabulary need rerendering in a foreign or the local language and, when there is no room for creative reinterpretation and filtering. This approach was most pronounced in the market research agency but was also visible in media and healthcare organizations. Our participants often admitted to having done more translation in entry level roles. At times, staff were recruited because of their English language competence, which subsequently created expectations regarding the tasks they were required to accomplish. Due to the association of translation work with low-level roles, many participants, especially those in the market research sector, were reluctant to undertake translation work. As Alicja, an experienced researcher, with long tenure in her company and the industry more broadly, explains:

> I have a feeling that translation is very much an assistant's job which sometimes, simply, I haven't got the time for. And maybe that's why I approach it more negatively. When there's too much on, one would like to pass on exactly such things like translations to an assistant, if they are not going to a translator.
>
> (Alicja, Market Research)

Although, here, the ability to carry out translation is considered a norm, the expectation to engage in it is placed upon lower-grade staff, as translation tasks are perceived to be 'basic'. Where paraprofessional translation is believed to be an assistant's task, non-engagement in it becomes part of a person's identity as a more 'senior' staff member.

Discussion and conclusions

We have focused on paraprofessional translation, an underexplored and undertheorized 'middle ground' between professional and non-professional translation. While the ubiquity of translation activities in organizational contexts has previously been acknowledged (Outila et al., 2021; Piekkari et al., 2013), studies of paraprofessional translation to date have largely come from single case studies (Ciuk and James, 2015; Ciuk et al., 2019; Logemann and Piekkari, 2015; Piekkari et al. 2013; Zølner, 2019). By contrast, we adopted a multi-site approach comprising different industry contexts, hierarchical levels and professions. At the outset of the chapter, we asked: (1) How do paraprofessional translators approach translation work in subsidiaries of multinational enterprises? and (2) What factors influence these approaches? Our study has allowed us to identify six distinctive approaches to paraprofessional translation, characterized by unique combinations of underlying beliefs, and translation practices, and to consider them in context. We have discussed paraprofessional translation as: (1) care work, (2) knowledge brokering and management, (3) information sourcing, (4) play, (5) enactment of one's subject expertise, and (6) a distinctive linguistic task.

We have demonstrated that translation practices are influenced by (a) the identity, role, seniority and language skills of paraprofessional translators, (b) organizational context (i.a. staff's language skills, language training provision, cost, time pressure, immediacy of customers, being part of a MNE) as well as (c) the translation type (see Figure 1).

Although some of the factors identified in our study as affecting approaches to paraprofessional translation have been considered by others within and outside of translation studies (Muñoz Gómez 2020; Piekkari et al. 2013), a systematic consideration of these factors and their link to different approaches to paraprofessional translation has been missing.

We propose a framework that distinguishes between two main forms of paraprofessional translation, which we refer to as small-t translation and big-T translation, and which we find across both the written and oral mediation mode. The framework helps explain patterns in beliefs and practices of paraprofessional translation. We find this conceptual differentiation — which also resonates with

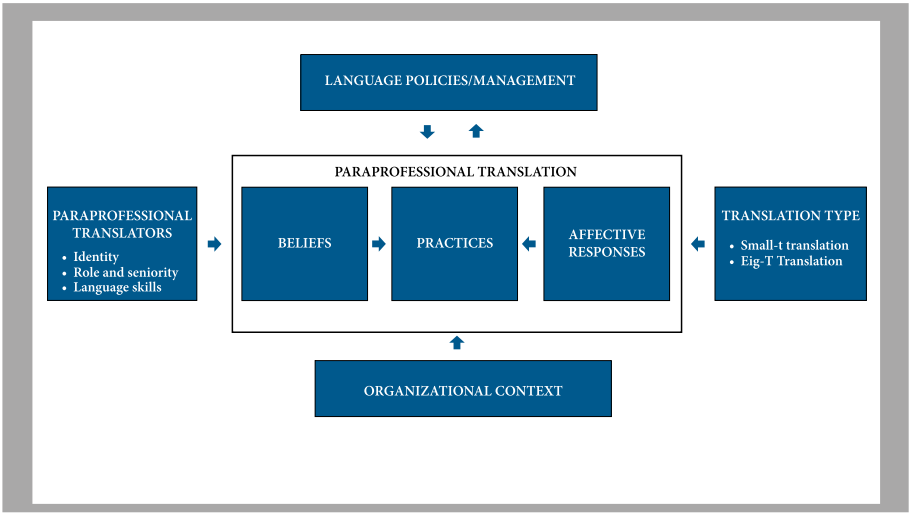


Figure 1. Factors influencing paraprofessional translation practices

the distinction between explicit translations versus implicit translating as conceptualized by Muñoz Gómez (2020) — helpful for analytical purposes, although we must also stress that the difference between 't' and 'T' translation is not always clear-cut.

We define small-t translation as a set of everyday, typically small ad hoc translation and interpretation activities, carried out as part of performing other professional tasks and using other core competencies, such as customer service or managing staff. Small-t translation usually involves gisting and a high degree of tanslatorial agency which can entail editing out parts of the source texts and adding new information. This type of paraprofessional translation is accomplished with a pragmatic orientation and a concern for the communicative function of translation. In highlighting this type of translation we aim to add to its visibility. Because it tends to be embedded within other activities, it may easily go unrecognized by the practitioners themselves as well as their managers (Muñoz Gómez, 2020), who may underestimate its role and, by extension, the value of the translatorial competences of key employees, for organizational functioning.

Big-T translation, by contrast, denotes translation as a standalone activity. It usually entails more textual work as the source texts tend to be longer. Here, the value of the translation is assessed in terms of its linguistic standard. Big-T paraprofessional translation blends with professional translation. Many participants seem to be aware of this, as they signal the importance of giving the task to somebody else, be it esteemed professionals (when they value translatorial competences) or a lower-level assistant (when they do not). In some cases, it may

also be that a paraprofessional translator who is repeatedly given these tasks and develops translatorial competence in time becomes more akin to a professional translator. The proposed conceptual differentiation has substantial explanatory potential in paraprofessional contexts and can thus help advance this emerging strand of work. It can also create bridges between translation studies and other disciplines, notably organization studies and international business and encourage cross-fertilization of ideas.

The participants' narratives in relation to the practices of 't' translation — which we classified as belonging to one of four types, translation as: care work, knowledge brokering and management, information sourcing and play — reflected their beliefs about their own role and place in the organization, and the values attached to their professional and organizational identities. For example, in the hospitality industry, the expectation that employees would engage in ad hoc translation was considered legitimate when translation tasks were seen as part of looking after hotel guests — a 'core' task of hotel workers and managers. However, they were also perceived as a burden when they were required to facilitate communication with colleagues who were unable to interact with others in the language of everyday communication in the organization.

Similarly, the narratives which we see as relating to 'T' translation — labelled as: enactment of one's subject expertise and a distinctive linguistic task — give insights into both the organizational policy regarding translation, and the beliefs and values in relation to it, as well as one's role and place in the organization, in different industry contexts. 'T' translation was considered crucial in industries which deliver a product whose quality is assessed on the basis of its linguistic content, as in the case of media and market research companies. Put differently: whilst 't' translation could be observed in all organizations in our study, there were some organizations where translation competences were a required 'core' competence — hence 'T' translation — necessary in the process of product/service delivery. At the same time, a 'T' translation perspective was also found in organizations where staff perceived engagement in 'T' translation as endangering their professional identity and, as such, were outsourced.

We conclude with suggestions for future research. Firstly, we encourage scholars to empirically study the connections and disconnections between translation practices, everyday beliefs about translation, organizational context and translation type. It would be useful to further consider these in relation to organizational language and translation policies. Our analytical categorization into big-T and small-t translation applied to all of the examined cases, but contexts vary in how much relevance each has. In hospitality industry, for example, small-t practices are predominant, but its uses are manifold, ranging from going to great lengths to keep customers happy to providing basic guidelines to workers with immi-

grant background. The market research company was the only one among these to focus predominantly on big-T Translation — or big-I Interpreting if you like — and at the same time the only one where interviewees insisted on employing professional simultaneous interpreters.

Secondly, we call for research into paraprofessional translation in different industry and organizational settings, using a combination of interviews, documentary analysis and observational methodologies, to further examine our conceptualization of small-t and big-T translation and explore in more detail further contextual influences on paraprofessional translation belief and practices. A full picture of a local translation policy will require observational fieldwork methods to also fully capture paraprofessional practices. Translation studies is currently expanding its disciplinary boundaries, spreading its analytical efforts into new areas on interlingual and other kinds of translation (see i.a. Marais 2019). We believe that it is also beneficial to work on new conceptualizations of the more traditional terrain. The distinction between big-T and small-t translation may well become useful in creating workable differentiations within an area that has also been called translatorial (i.a. Koskela et al. 2017) as it gives more visibility to the translation elements of everyday routine multilinguality.

Thirdly, we see substantial potential for future studies of the affective dimension of translation activity. While big-T and small-t contexts, and the interplay of these two modes can shed important light onto translation beliefs, more research is needed on internal contextual differences and affective stances, and their potential relationship. A related element worthy of future study is interpersonal relations and collaboration. Organizations are hierarchical by nature, and this affects the agency of paraprofessional translators, and hence their beliefs. We already know that this agency can sometimes be significantly higher than that of professional translators (e.g. Logmann and Piekkari, 2015; Ciuk and James, 2015; Ciuk et al., 2019), and comparative and collaborative studies might help us better understand agency and habitus in translation studies and bring new knowledge into the study of translation ecosystems (Westney et al., 2022) in IB and OS. Another interpersonal feature is collaboration. Collaborative translation has been studied in translation studies, and how it plays out in an organizational context, and the joys or agonies of it, merits further discussion.

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Appendix. Interview guide

1. Can you tell us a bit about your educational and employment background?
2. Can you tell us a bit about history with the current company?
3. Can you tell me something about your immediate team? Who do you co-operate most closely with?
4. To what extent is foreign language proficiency important at your company?
5. Does your company have an official corporate language? If so, what are the official rules regarding the corporate language?
6. To what extent are the rules formalized?
7. To what extent are they implemented?
8. In which contexts are foreign languages used in your company?
9. Are employees encouraged to improve their foreign language proficiency? If so, how is this done?
10. Can you tell me a bit about your experience with foreign language learning?
11. Some suggest that foreign language proficiency is composed of a set of different skills. How would you describe your English language proficiency?
    a. What are your strengths?
    b. How about weaknesses?
12. How does, in your view, your foreign language proficiency impact your work?
13. How would you describe the foreign language proficiency in your team?
14. Are there any particular situations that require the usage of a foreign language that you find more challenging? If so, can you give me an example of such a situation?
15. How do you cope with similar situations?
16. Has your approach to using a foreign language at work changed over time? If so, what did this change look like?
17. To what extent do differences in foreign language proficiency in your team impact the work and cooperation in your team?
18. What strategies of coping with challenges of foreign language use have you observed?
19. To what extent is foreign language proficiency managed on the team level? *[How does this look like? Can you give some examples to illustrate this?]*
20. Can you tell me about the recruitment process in your company? To what extent is language part of your considerations?
21. To what extent is language a topic that can be raised in performance reviews?
22. To what extent is the career progress at your company linked to foreign language proficiency? Can you recall a situation when somebody's promotion or lack thereof was linked to their foreign language proficiency? What happened?
23. Do you happen to do some translation work as part of your work? Can you give examples?
24. How about your other team members? What kind of translation work are they involved in?
25. How do you feel about these tasks?
26. What approach to translation have you observed in others? [How could you explain this approach]
27. Does your organization use professional translators? If so, in which situations?
28. How is this translation reviewed?
29. Could your organization engage in other activities/ adapt their procedures/ process to better manage the company's language capacity?
30. Is there something else that we should know but have not asked about in order for us to understand the impact of foreign language on the functioning of subsidiaries of MNEs?

CHAPTER 12

The implicit corporate translation policy

Maria Annukka Jakkula

This chapter examines the largely implicit translation policy of a sports equipment company, pseudonymized as ActiveLife. It addresses three Spolskyan interconnected research questions on beliefs, practices, and management of translation and interpreting — both paraprofessional and professional. The data consist of interviews, a field journal, translatorial documents, and spontaneous employee reflections. They are subjected to an interpretive analysis based on frameworks from Spolsky (2019, 2023), González Núñez (2016) and Tesseur (2017), and Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017). The findings reveal an unmanaged yet functional policy relying on *bricolage* (Lavric 2012) i.e. employees' experience and intuition. Further growth will likely require a more explicit policy. This study contributes to empirical research on translation policy, called for by Meylaerts (2011).

Keywords: translation policy, paraprofessional translation, bricolage, workplace studies, international business, ethnography

Introduction

The "multilingual reality" (Angouri, 2013, p. 564) of modern business life comes as no surprise. Staff in international business has been found agile in operating across boundaries set by languages and cultures (e.g. Piekkari et al., 2013, Westney et al., 2022). This study explores the largely implicit translation policy of ActiveLife (pseudonym), a family-owned sports equipment company, with focus on discerning the unwritten policy. The policy contains a small explicit dimension implicitly relevant to translation: two pages of the ActiveLife Brand Book discuss the desired corporate tone of voice.

Different forms of "paraprofessional" (Koskinen, 2025; Pym, 2011, p. 87) translation and interpreting are frequent at ActiveLife, while formal documents such as product catalogues are professionally translated. Thus, ActiveLife leans on both paraprofessional and professional translation in its multilingual processes, making translation in a "flexible" (Angouri, 2013, pp. 564, 577) way enmeshed with daily tasks.

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Not a new phenomenon, people at ActiveLife seem to have become habituated to the presence of paraprofessional translation to such an extent that it is simply perceived as the way work is done, since it works (Jakkula, forthcoming). This Angourian (2013, pp. 564, 572) "what works" principle is undoubtedly fruitful in implementing organizational tasks and changes i.e. in metaphorical translation (Piekkari et al., 2020), as it is flexible. Such flexibility may be the reason for why translation policies remain unwritten. The downside is that implicit knowledge about translation practices, beliefs or ideologies, and management (González Núñez, 2016, Tesseur, 2017, Spolsky, 2023), i.e. the corporate translation policy (Lesk, Lavric and Stegu, 2017), remain tacit, as the intellectual capital of key individuals only. This makes the unwritten corporate translation policy fragile.

In this study, I intend to translate into being and visualize the largely implicit translation policy of ActiveLife by making the *translation practices, beliefs or ideologies*, and *management* (Spolsky, 2023) discernible. The aforementioned three components together form the translation policy, each component addressing a dedicated research question (RQ):

- RQ1: What kinds of translation beliefs or ideologies can be distinguished?
- RQ2: What translation practices are used in which contexts?
- RQ3: How is translation managed within the company?

I will draw on the language policy theoretizations of the aforementioned linguist Bernard Spolsky (2023), translation policy research by González Núñez (2016) and Tesseur (2017), and business communication scholars Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017). The latter is focused on the corporate context and was therefore selected to add to the theoretical framework.

The data for analysis comes from interviews, a reflexive field journal produced in the daily life of the company headquarters, translatorial documents donated by the company, and audio-recorded spontaneous reflections by paraprofessional translators. These are analyzed interpretatively with the aim of bringing forth an "organized" (Janssens et al. 2004, p. 415) translation policy.

ActiveLife in translation

The sports equipment company ActiveLife (pseudonym) was established in 1970, evolving from small-scale operations into a medium-sized company with about 400 employees globally, a quarter of whom are in Finland. Its subsidiaries are in China, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the USA, and its network of distributor companies spans worldwide. Since 2011 it has become general knowledge in the headquarters and subsidiaries that English is the corporate

language. In 2014, the company established a One ActiveLife policy with the aim of unifying the subsidiaries under a shared corporate identity.

The company employs many multilingual white-collar workers, who routinely bridge lingua-cultural gaps through paraprofessional translation, viewing it as a necessary part of their roles and an enriching aspect of their work. Typically, they do not hesitate to mediate information across lingua-cultural boundaries by translating or interpreting (Jakkula 2024, p. 73). Thus paraprofessional translation is seamlessly integrated into daily work (Jakkula 2024), following the "'what works' principle" (Angouri, 2013, pp. 564, 572), where employees decide what, how, and to what extent translation or interpreting is done. This flexibility, aimed at maintaining smooth business operations and satisfying stakeholders, leads to agentic translation (Piekkari et al., 2020, pp. 2, 6), where an employee balances between her official role and paraprofessional translation duties, driving productivity (pp. 2–3) and business flow.

The ActiveLife tone of voice

The ActiveLife Brand Book contains two pages of guidelines on communications and the corporate tone of voice, inherently relevant for any translation act, be they professional or paraprofessional. The introductory phrase in the Brand Book states: "The role of this document is to serve as your overall guide — or Brand Book — in successfully communicating the ActiveLife[1] brand in all its touchpoints."

The Brand Book condenses the corporate tone of voice into four key concepts: *clear, informative, fun*, and *inclusive*. Then it is elaborated on as follows:

> We are genuinely enthusiastic about the services and products we create that bring joy and wellbeing to countless people across the globe. We communicate clearly, we educate our audiences about the various benefits of our products, and we remember the importance of inclusiveness and fun in our communication, as well.

While not directly about translation, the desired tone of voice offers a very brief, fragmentary policy relevant for translation. After all, the tone of voice is enacted through translation.

In this study, I view the core concept 'translation' broadly (Koskinen, 2020), including various forms of translatoriality[2] (Koskinen, 2025) such as condensing,

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1. The quote is verbatim from the Brand Book, except for the pseudonymized company name.

2. The concept 'translatoriality' in this study refers to communication across lingua-cultural boundaries, aiming to convey information. The adjective form is 'translatorial'. Then again, the adjective 'translational', derived from 'translationality', in this study refers to implementation of an organizational process or change.

explaining, adding information, or offering a metaphor that helps open up the information across lingua-cultural boundaries. They are all considered translatoriality and therefore an interest of this study. I expect that conveying the tone of voice is both a translatorial[2] and translational[2] process.

The dynamic language and translation policy

Since translation and consequently translation policy "is bound up in language" (González Núñez 2016, p. 89), it makes sense to define the related concept of language policy first, which Spolsky (2019, 2023) builds on three core parts: language practices, language beliefs or ideologies, and language management. This three-part model will be presented first. Secondly, Spolsky's model is enhanced for the business communication context with support from research by Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017). Thirdly, we will enter the translation context, guided by the works of González Núñez (2016) and Tesseur (2017).

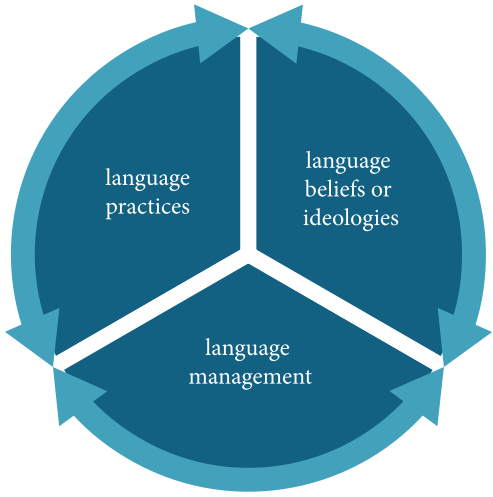
Language policy

Spolsky (2019, p. 326, 2023, pp. 127–129) defines a language policy as consisting of three components: language practices (actual usage), language beliefs or ideologies (perceptions of how language should be used), and language management (efforts to influence language use). He (2019, p. 323; 2023, pp. 127–128) distinguishes between language managers who have authority over the community and advocates who lack authority and thus need to "rely on persuasion" (Spolsky, 2023, p. 127).

Language practices refer to real-world language usage, while beliefs reflect users' and user groups' perceptions of how languages should be used. Language management involves actions to influence language use, such as corporate guidelines or societal regulations. These three components are "independent but interconnected" (Spolsky, 2019, p. 323), and they must align for the policy to be effective. Graph 1 illustrates this three-component entity.

The three components in Graph 1[3] represent the language policy components according to Spolsky (2019, p. 326; 2023, pp. 127–129), who underlines (2023, p. 198) that language management may prove to be challenging, as it occurs at multiple levels from the individual, community, organizational and institutional, all the way up to the national level. The three components are interrelated, and one could even say interdependent. Practices influence beliefs or ideologies, and

3. Heartfelt thanks to Paula Kassinen for her expertise in drawing Graphs 1, 2 and 3.



Graph 1. Spolskyan three interrelated components of a language policy

vice versa. Ideally, management aligns with both practices and ideologies to support the policy's values and goals, such as the corporate identity or international impact.

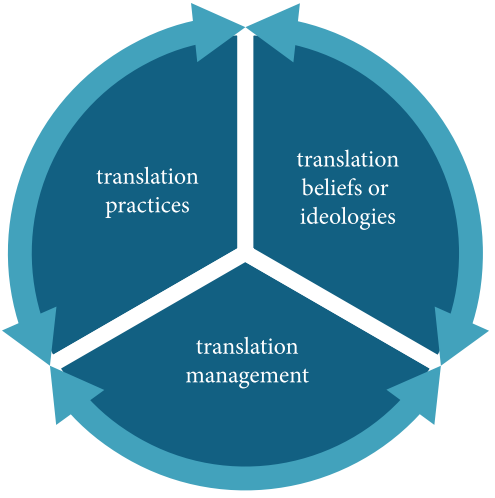
On the explicitness and implicitness of a language policy in a business setting

Moving now to the business communication setting, Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017, pp. 286–289) define a corporate language policy as regulating the use of languages within a company, consequently influencing power dynamics between languages and their speakers. Such a policy shapes the corporate language behaviour through both direct and indirect measures. They emphasize the interconnection of language practices, beliefs, and management, noting that what happens in practice influences the other components and vice versa. They also underline their choice of using consciously the term 'language policy' instead of 'language management', as it includes the individual employee's aspect as well, instead of remaining at the managerial level (p. 288).

A corporate language policy can range from explicit measures directly affecting language use to more implicit, employee-driven approaches. Features of both ends can co-exist. The latter, referred to as *bricolage*, a term originating from Lavric (2012), relies on employees' experience and intuition to address language challenges. Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017, p. 284) continue that while it may be wise of small or medium-sized companies "not to frustrate *bricolage* practices", larger multinationals often require a more structured, planned policy to meet current and future needs.

Translation policy

In consistency with Graph 1, a similar visualization of a translation policy is provided in Graph 2. Building on Spolsky (2019, 2023), it is enhanced to the translation context based on González Núnez (2016) and also on Tesseur (2017, p. 632).



Graph 2. González Núñezian translation policy based on Spolsky's work

González Núñez (2016, p. 88) links language policy and translation policy, as made visual in Graph 2, moulded to cover translation policy "encompassing translation management, translation practice, and translation beliefs" (ibid. p. 92). To respect Spolsky's work (2019, pp. 323, 326, 335), I have included the term 'ideologies' along with 'beliefs' in Graph 2.

Translation management means the intentional efforts made to influence how or by whom translation is conducted — or whether conducted at all (González Núñez, 2016, p. 92). Here the description begs the question of inaction vis-à-vis *bricolage* (Lavric 2012): if no intentional translation management takes place, the floor is open to benefit from *bricolage*. Here it seems necessary to point out that inaction or non-management may also sometimes be a conscious choice of leadership.

Translation practices include decisions of what texts get translated or what speech acts get interpreted, how the work is conducted, and what the target languages are (González Núñez, 2016, p. 92). Practices could also include prioritization of certain translation tasks over others.

Translation beliefs and ideologies "often remain unspoken" (González Núñez 2016, p. 92) and must therefore be "distilled from practice" (Koskinen, in this vol-

ume). Here, a mechanistic translation concept or perhaps non-management of translation at the corporate level could point out to unawareness of translation (Escudero, Kuusi and Kinnunen (eds.), forthcoming).

The interrelationship between the three components is undoubtedly in constant movement, and a shift in, for example, the *beliefs or ideologies* may generate far-reaching ripple-effects on *practices*, and consequently *management* ought to take such developments into account. González Núñez (2016, p. 92) points out that such ripple-effects are hard to measure, however; a dilemma perhaps typical of humanistic research that rarely fits very well into the measurement systems common in natural sciences, for example.

Why does discerning a translation policy matter

The value of discerning an "organized" (Janssens et al. 2004, p. 415) translation policy is soundly justifiable, as it helps organizations see how they work for authentic equality, inclusion and non-discrimination in allowing access to information (González Núñez 2016, pp. 88, 103, Tesseur 2017, p. 630). In the context of globalization, access to information is crucial for building inclusive knowledge societies (UN, 2015), and it is duly recognized as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948):

> **Article 19**
> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that receiving information belongs to the fundamental human rights. Here, both professional and paraprofessional translation, although they tend to be overlooked (Jakkula 2024, p. 73, Tesseur 2017, p. 630), play a central role in ensuring that the right is *de facto* applied in practice. As González Núñez (2016, p. 101) put it, here "translation is a tool for integration". While this is true, Tesseur (2017, p. 646) has aptly pointed out that translation "as a communicative activity is often taken for granted", despite its obvious influence on the organization's effectiveness, public image, and daily organizational life.

In an organizational context, one could postulate that access to information can foster employee participation, contributing to the feeling of belongingness and psychological safety which have been found of particular interest in the field of language-sensitive international business (Back 2024, Nurmi and Koroma 2020). In Finnish workplaces the language barrier seems quite steep, and nation-

ally in Finland, measures have been taken through the *Kielibuusti* project to foster integration of international employees (see i.a. Heinzmann 2022).

Both Tesseur (2017, p. 646) and González Núñez (2016, pp. 91, 104) touch upon power relations, inequalities and consequent tensions that exist behind translation, making the valid point that discerning translation policies is helpful for organizations to address any gaps in equal access to information or possibilities for inclusion (UN, 2015) and integration in a globalized, diverse and consequently multilingual business domain.

Ethnographic research design

To make the largely implicit translation policy of ActiveLife discernible, I explore three interconnected RQs:

- RQ1: What kinds of translation beliefs or ideologies can be distinguished?
- RQ2: What translation practices are used in which contexts?
- RQ3: How is translation managed within the company?

To find answers to the RQs, a set of ethnographic data is analyzed through an interpretive, qualitative approach. See Table 1.

For RQ1, the interviews, spontaneous reflections, and the field journal are most relevant sources. For RQ2, all the data are of relevance. For RQ3, the interviews, spontaneous reflections, the field journal, and the parts concerning the corporate communications and tone of voice in the Brand Book are relevant sources.

To distinguish a temporal process in the field, a translation process witnessed in the accounting unit of Active Life will be analyzed from the perspectives of RQs 1–3. To thicken the ethnographic analysis, more data from other units will be analyzed for each RQ. The interview, reflexion and fieldwork data were coded and thematized into RQ-based categories. The coded data were then extracted into a new file that combines all coded data, organized based on the RQs. In addition, a designated column was added for my notions that may arise in the data handling process and later in its interpretive analysis.

In the interpretive analysis, each RQ-based set of coded data was interpreted to discover explicit and implicit answers to the RQs. Here the additional column was helpful for making notes whenever I noticed an implicit pattern responding to an RQ or when I could connect a particular part of data to theory or societal trends. This interpretative analysis was time-consuming and, based on advice from Professor Risku (21 June 2023) in the DOTTSS summer school, I conducted the analysis twice, with a fortnight in between. Overall, the analysis spanned from

Table 1. Types of ethnographic data and their purpose

Type of data	Time frame of collection	Amount of data
Semi-structured interviews	17 January 2023 – 12 April 2024.	Eight interviews, circa one hour each.
Ethnographic observation in the field, observations integrated into the reflexive field journal	Pre-field reflexivity 15 November 2022 – 16 January 2023. Peri-field reflexivity 1 December 2023 – 3 October 2024. Post-field reflexivity 4–22 October 2024.	164 pages.
Spontaneous reflections by paraprofessional translators	22 March – 3 October 2024.	Eigth spontaneous reflections.
Translatorial documents provided by the company (source text and target text, or a text with translational information e g. brand book)	18 December 2023 – 3 October 2024.	Six original texts with their complete or partial translations into English (all six), Swedish (three), Estonian (two), French (two) and (German (two). Brand book (53 pages) and its introduction slides (41 slides).

August to October 2024. The data excerpts selected for this study were all originally in Finnish. I translated them into English.

Results

Next, I will report and reflect on the discovered translation beliefs or ideologies (RQ1), translation practices in their settings (RQ2), and translation management (RQ3). I will present a paraprofessional translation process witnessed in the accounting unit, shedding light on all the RQs through a temporal process. A section on translatorial prowess in the communications team follows. Thereafter, I will continue by presenting and reflecting on the results. Finally, I will present the current translation policy at ActiveLife, putting it in context with corporate translation policies at large. I reflect on translating the corporate tone of voice into being throughout.

The accounting team in translation

In December 2023, I spent three weeks observing ActiveLife's accounting team, which manages the company's financial flow. During this time, the team had just updated the invoicing guidelines, which needed to be communicated clearly and promptly to suppliers to ensure accurate invoicing and smooth business-to-business (B2B) relations. This translation process provided valuable research material, initiated by accounting manager Aino.

Aino has had a career in ActiveLife for 12 years, advancing to her current position over time. She leads a multilingual and multicultural team of 12 accounting experts. Some are based either at the headquarters or the company's other office in Finland, while some work in the subsidiaries outside Finland. Therefore, weekly team meetings — called Team Huddles — typically include participants both at the headquarters and online. The corporate language, English, is spoken in the Team Huddles.

In a Team Huddle on 7 December 2023, Aino established that updated invoicing instructions to suppliers needed translating. There were four Finns, including Aino, onsite at the headquarters, while online there were six Finns from around the country, one Estonian from Estonia, and a Swede based in Sweden; thus a total of 12 experts. The team decided to translate the instructions into five languages, completing the task in eight working days between 7 and 18 December 2023; weekends excluded.

Aino translated the English version. The French translation was overseen by Aino in collaboration with a colleague in the French subsidiary; thus, a native speaker was included. The procedure for the German translation remains unclear. The company has multiple German-speaking employees; it is likely that one has been consulted.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, for all translations the key content on preferred electronic invoices and their handling process accurately correspond to the original content, structure and tone of voice in Finnish. The tone of voice is *businesslike, clear*, and *informative*. The original text and the translations follow the same matrix from the heading to the subheading, to the list of bullet points, and to the ending: the Finnish 'Laskutusohje' has been translated as 'Invoicing guidelines' in English, as 'Juhend arve saatmiseks' in Estonian, as 'Recommendations pur la facturation' in French, as 'Leitlinien für die Rechnungsstellung' in German, and as 'Fakturerings instruktioner' in Swedish. Throughout these translations, such almost verbatim approach characterizes them. Such treatment is equal towards suppliers based in a variety of countries where these languages are used.

The main aim of these translations is to convey information, and these translations *precisely* explain the procedure of sending an invoice to ActiveLife; such pre-

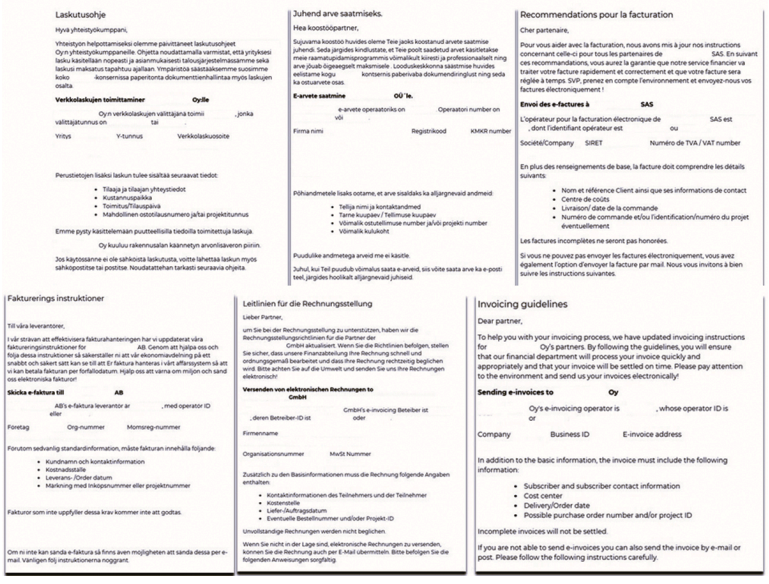


Figure 1. Translated invoicing guidelines and the original text in Finnish

ciseness fits the nature of accounting work. Conversely, we can find preciseness in the translation process in the form of an omission. The only piece of information omitted in the translations is a special reference to value-added taxation (VAT) practices in the original Finnish text: "kuuluu rakennusalan käännetyn arvonlisäveron piiriin". This Finnish-scope notion does not exist in the translations. How VAT practices are dealt with in cross-border business is its own special-field. It may indeed be no straightforward task to put such information in translations that span multiple countries with one language: for example, depending on the supplier's preferred language, the German translation may cover suppliers in at least Austria, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, the French version Belgium, Canada, France, and Switzerland, while the English version can be used beyond its native contexts of Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, or the USA, for example. Certainly it was the sensible solution to drop country-specific taxation content.

In addition to the invoicing guidelines (Figure 1), the team translated accompanying message drafts to suppliers. See Figure 2 (all direct identifiers removed).

As we can see in Figure 2, the original Finnish version begins — after a neutral greeting "Hei" — by explaining the premise of the email: "olemme päivittäneet [...] laskutusohjeet ja uudet ohjeet löytyvät tämän sähköpostin liitteenä." This to-the-point approach is present in all translations with some variation. The English version takes a neutral, passive-form approach: "Hello [...] invoicing instructions have been updated and you can find the new instructions attached." The begin-

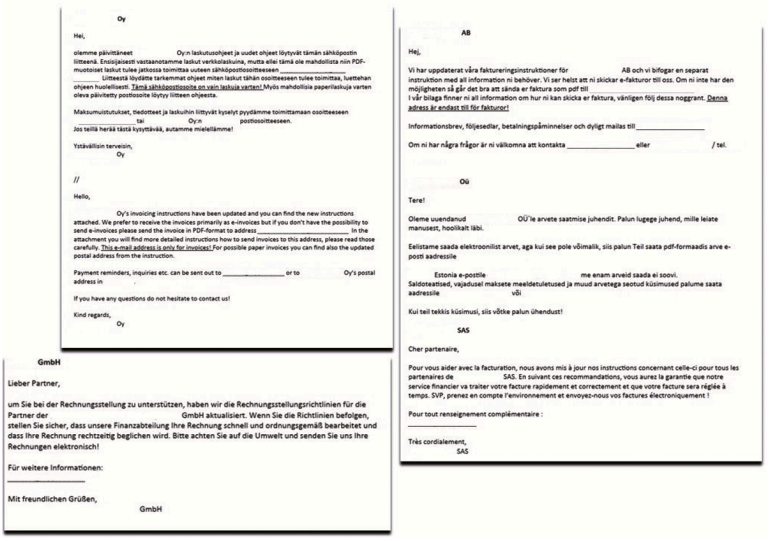


Figure 2. Message drafts to suppliers receiving the invoicing guidelines

ning of the Estonian version is direct, promptly suggesting the supplier to read the instructions carefully "Tere! Oleme uuendanud [...] arvete saatmise juhendit. Palun lugege juhend, mille leiate manusest, hoolikalt läbi.". The Swedish version begins in a neutral way but it takes a supplier-oriented note "med all information ni behöver": "Hej, Vi har uppdaterad våra faktureringsinstruktioner för [...] och vi bifogar en separat instruktion med all information ni behöver." The French and German versions are more clearly written to the supplier, expressed as a form of B2B partnership: Cher partenaire, Pour vous aider avec la facturation, nous avons mis à jour nos instructions concernant celle-ci pour tous les partenaires [...] and "Lieber Partner, um Sie bei der Rechnungsstellung zu unterstützen, haben wir die Rechnungsstellungsrichtlinien für die Partner der [...] aktualisiert". These examples scratch the surface of the nuanced implications that translation bears on business relations: it matters how these seemingly mundane guidelines are translated to the suppliers, who are also referred to as partners — "partenaire" and "Partner" — in the French and German versions, suggesting that in these business cultures it is particularly necessary to express appreciation towards collaborators.

Moreover, the French and German versions justify electronic invoices as an eco-friendly procedure as follows: "SVP, prenez en compte l'environnement et envoyez-nous vos factures électroniquement!" and "Bitte achten Sie auf die Umwelt und senden Sie uns Ihre Rechnungen elektronisch!". The accounting professionals responsible for the French and German translations have intuitively found this eco-friendly notion a culturally fitting one, based on their life experi-

ences in these cultural contexts. Their translation decision deviates from the original Finnish text, and the English, Estonian and Swedish translations, making their context-specific knowledge discernible while also painting a nuanced picture of their translation concept: the translation needs to fit the contexts and resonate with cultural values and business culture norms. It takes time to learn such sensitivity, and consulting native speakers is wise when one is not sure of the context herself. Translation is beyond the level of rendering linguistic coding: it is about building a connection, and above ActiveLife is using translation in such a way, based on its employees' intuition and experience.

The style in different languages is *businesslike, clear, informative* — and unsurprisingly for an email draft aiming for collaboration — the tone is also *cordial*. Again, the translation process involving all relevant languages maintains an *inclusive approach*. Fun is the only brand quality seemingly missing. It could indeed seem unprofessional to spread joy through invoicing guidelines. However, the tone in the texts shown in Figure 2 is quite *energetic* and *enthusiastic*, conveying a tone of voice relevant to the desired quality of fun.

Paraprofessional translatorial prowess in the communications team

The other team with most focus in this study is communications. The team is considerably compact, as it is housed by communications manager Raija and ½ person-year of Julia who is a specialist in administration and communications. I visited the communications team on days separately agreed on, for a total of three weeks in summer and autumn 2024.

Raija has a long career behind her, of which some 15 years at ActiveLife. She is Finnish who has lived previously in Sweden for over a decade, both working and studying there. Thus, she is very fluent in Sweden Swedish and feels at home in the Swedish culture. This expertise has been beneficial in her work as communications manager, and it is certainly valuable intellectual capital for ActiveLife. Her team is strengthened by a younger colleague, Julia, whose days are divided between administration and communications.

RQ1 results: What kinds of translation beliefs or ideologies can be distinguished?

The translation process in the accounting team was based on a practical need, and the attitude Aino and her team took in the Team Huddle seemed *unproblematising, solution-oriented, practice-oriented*, and *efficiency-oriented*. The team maintained a *collaborative* approach by practically deciding on who translates into which language, and who in the company could proofread the translations.

Here nativity seemed important, suggesting a belief of *valuing native speakers* in translation.

The aim of the translation was to successfully and precisely, and based on the translations also cordially, *transfer the meaning of the original* Finnish text. *Preciseness* was highlighted by Aino already in her interview earlier in January 2023, when she said that maintaining due diligence in her team is important, because mistakes from their side would result in new problems on the other side of the monetary chain. This reflects the nature of the accounting team's work, which is discernible as a belief or ideology of preciseness in their paraprofessional translation work.

Aino wrote the original in Finnish, and she also did the translation into English. Her team took care of the other languages. There are native speakers for both Estonian and Swedish. The English, French and German versions were proofread with support from the subsidiaries' language reserve; this suggests that collegial relations are strong.

To compare, the notion of preciseness was not mentioned by Raija nor Julia in the communications team. Rather, Raija said in an interview on 23 January 2023 that she "will try to do it [translation] idiomatically in the language concerned", meaning that according to her ideology *translation ought to be natural language that works in its target cultural setting*.

It is noteworthy to mention that paraprofessional translation can be perceived as an act of leadership. Without Aino's understanding of her team members' translatorial and translational capital and her ability to put it into good use, the translation process might have been completely different, such as certain languages could have been left out and translation into could have been thought of only when problems of comprehension would have emerged. The role of leadership is also in my field notes; see Excerpt (1) written on 18 December 2023.

(1) The key translatorial agent in the accounting team is Aino. She is the one who brings her people together and keeps them up-to-date on everything, whatever the language. In addition, she makes great use of her team's pool of skills, with an Estonian team member doing the Estonian translation and a Swedish-speaker doing the Swedish translation, for example. A previously largely unrecognized, innovative and efficient way of working.

Joining forces for the benefit of ActiveLife comes naturally to Aino and her team. For them, paraprofessional translation is simply one means to achieving the end of doing business in a smart way.

Raija expressed a critical voice about valuation of lingua-cultural competence. See Excerpt (2) from an interview with her on 23 January 2023.

(2) Learning languages is not, after all, a simple or easy way of building up competence. It requires both work and interest in a language. Well, I would say that acquiring good language skills, both functional written and oral language skills, is at least, perhaps I'd say, the result of ten years of work. Also requiring then that one would live in a country where the language is spoken.

We can distinguish a belief by Raija that the *valuation of language skills and consequent paraprofessional translational competence* would deserve an upgrade. Here, she might indeed be the voice of many peer paraprofessional translators. Perhaps it is also the task of academia to better bring forth the value of such intellectual capital, although putting a euros-and-cents price tag on such complex competence that is present in every communicative situation is most likely very challenging. One might even argue whether the two are compatible at all.

RQ2 results: What translation practices are used in which contexts?

In the accounting team, translating the guidelines were a practical problem that needed a "what works" (Angouri 2013, pp.564, 572) solution. Because of the solution-oriented attitude, Aino's team did not problematize the translation task but rather saw it as a practical hurdle that can be overcome together as a team. Aino saw to *proofreading of the translations by consulting native speakers* of French and German in the subsidiaries, while her team took care of the rest.

It could be understood that the aim of the translation was to successfully and precisely, and based on the translations also cordially, *transfer the meaning of the original* Finnish text. Aino wrote the Finnish version and translated it into English. She did not report using machine translation (MT) nor did her team members.

Therefore, it can be postulated that the accounting team is skilled at doing *teamwork* with a shared aim and they are *efficient* in their use of time. They are also familiar with each other's strengths and see them as a benefit for the whole team. Here, the role of leadership must play a crucial role in having built a functional team with competencies that together form a coherent and functional entity. See Excerpt (3) for Raija's spontaneously given description of the typical paraprofessional translation process, recorded on 22 March 2024.

(3) When we produce different documents, catalogues or financial reports or any kind of website material, the texts are either translated in a translation agency if they comprise a larger mass, or then they're translated by ourselves or translated using, for example, deepl.com. And then they're always proofread in the subsidiaries: sometimes there may be a lot of comments, sometimes not much, depending on how successful the translation has been. And then they're edited and tidied up before becoming published in a catalogue or on our website. It's our [translation] process.

Raija's experience at ActiveLife shows when she spontaneously and effortlessly reported their typical paraprofessional translation process chiselled to its present form over the years. I later created a visualization of the process which Raija approved. See Figure 3.

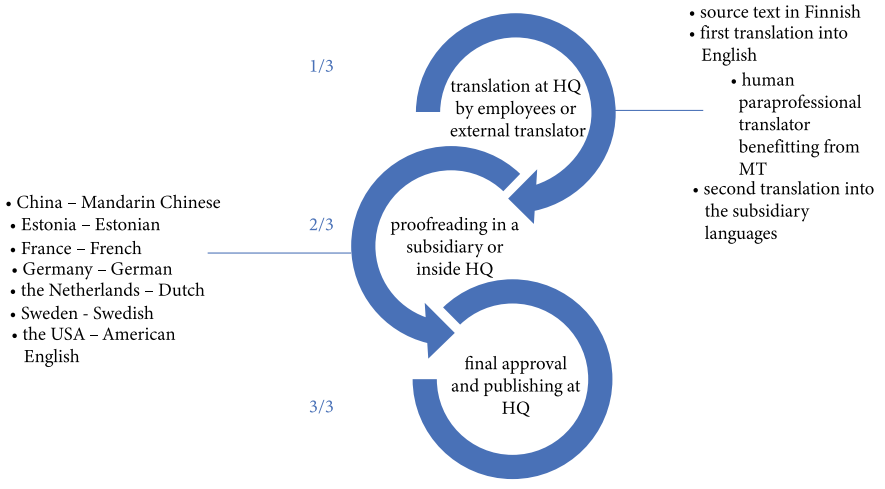


Figure 3. Visualization of a typical paraprofessional translation process in the communications team at ActiveLife

As depicted in Figure 3, the first translation is typically produced from Finnish into English in the headquarters (HQ) using *MT as a supportive tool*. Raija reported using DeepL. Then ActiveLife's *vast linguistic resources are harnessed for proofreading translations* in the subsidiary languages. Figure 3 does not do justice to the cultural and political ideologies that exist at the background, giving a rather *mechanical* (Janssens et al. 2004, pp. 418–420) view on translation. Here, at least the desired corporate tone of voice could have been made visible. However, leaving it out is a realistic depiction, as its implementation is managed to a very limited extent; see the next section.

RQ3 results: How is translation managed within the company?

The collaborative and agile translation process in the accounting team suggests of thriving relations. The timeframe seems quite agile for a company without an explicit translation policy, however the agility may indeed be due to the lack of an explicit policy, leaving space for *bricolage* (Lavric, 2012) and for "*what works*" (Angouri, 2013, pp. 564, 572) solutions. Such solutions tend to be created by responsible employees based on their experience and intuition, further sug-

gesting of a culture of trust and collaborative collegial relations. *In the context of paraprofessional translation, having good relations with colleagues is worth mentioning*, as the translations are carried out in a team and at least proofread if not also translated by a native speaker. The translation process initiated and coordinated by accounting manager Aino demonstrated her team leadership skills.

Communications manager Raija seems to be the embodiment of experience and intuition in her field. She effortlessly describes meta-level processes regarding translation and reflects on gaps in lingua-cultural competence valuation. In her hands, translation processes of company communications — and it is likely that other teams have benefited from her expertise — have been chiselled to their current form, likely making the most of available translation competence. Having observed her work for three weeks, it needs to be said that her presence is typically joyful, bringing a core element of the company's ideology to any interaction. She is also clear, informative, and inclusive in her presence, much like the tone of voice calls for. Raija does much of the work herself, with a ½ person-year as her support. Therefore, with Raija's self-leadership and time-management, *bricolage* indeed works. However, in such settings may lie a risk of overworking particularly skilled employees, leading to inequal distribution of tasks. From this viewpoint, her wish for an upgrade of the valuation of lingua-cultural competence is quite understandable.

Overall, as the only pre-existing, guiding documentation is two pages of the Brand Book, it is fair to say that *very little management regarding translation takes place*. It is unlikely that this would be a conscious leadership decision, because it seems that translation processes have been paid little attention to overall. Throughout the nine-week field period my research topic received reactions that showed positive and surprised interest, with many commenting that the topic resonates with their daily life. See Excerpts (4)–(6) from the field: Excerpt (4) presents Aino's words in an interview on 17 January 2023, Excerpt (5) is from my field journal, and Excerpt (6) quotes Vilhelm in an interview on 12 April 2024.

(4) Interesting research topic you've got there, for me it's my constant daily life.

(5) Soile asked me about my research topic, and she seemed to be impressed in some way, at least she didn't think it would be insignificant. The facial expressions and exchanged glances of both [Soile and her supervisor] seemed genuinely interested, as if the topic resonated with their everyday reality.

(6) Yes, it's a topic that interests me a lot and that's partly why I was interested in this opportunity to discuss with you, because it's not always easy to share your own experience of these things. In a way sometimes one wants to help the team members succeed. So understanding these things and working accordingly is quite central in negotiations and so on.

Aino (4) has shown positive interest in the research topic consistently, and she opened the doors for a field visit of three weeks in her team in December 2023. Soile (5) works in international sales, and she was on a coffee break with her supervisor on 11 December 2023, when I serendipitously joined them for a cup of coffee. The casual coffee chat doubled as an opportunity to talk about the research topic. The coffee break with Soile and her boss led to a research visit in their team later. Vilhelm (6) is a member of the executive committee, and he leads the global corporate procurement. He was interested in contributing to the research, as he seems to experience that lingua-cultural competence, and consequently paraprofessional translational competence, bear value to him and the company at large.

In one interaction, namely a discussion following a factory tour given by the head of concept management, Mika, I was left with another kind of impression. See Excerpt (7) from the field journal on 17 January 2024.

(7) On our return from the factory tour, I thanked Mika for the opportunity to participate, as it was a meaningful experience in terms of understanding the working environment. He asked me about the topic of my dissertation and I told him. He said 'oh yeah' ('ai jaa' in Finnish), smiled and turned away. As I was left wondering the meaning of his response, I understood that there is a controversy and a clear difficulty for translation scientists to put a monetary price tag on competence such as the ability to comprehend and work with ease with different languages and cultures, and consequently the field would benefit from making the value of paraprofessional translatorial and translational competence more visible.

I had an opportunity to participate in a factory tour organized for a collaborating company from the Middle East. The one-hour tour was given in English by Mika whereby the participants got to see how the products are made, to learn about the materials, and to try new products in a designated testing room, where Mika gave a presentation on future foresight in their field.

ActiveLife is actively involved in research co-operation with the academic sector, however the topics have been from outside translation studies and mine was the first research that included ethnographic field observation. Remembering that the purpose of work at ActiveLife is to make profitable business and to keep future plans running, puts Mika's reaction in an understandable light.

The above surprised and positively interested comments, and the final, a bit enigmatic reaction, however, would all seem to confirm that translation is indeed *rarely thought of in the mishmash of daily business, and consequently hardly managed at all*. Here the Brand Book's two pages discussing the corporate tone of voice are a small reminder at ActiveLife that human communication bears monetary value.

It is important to highlight that the above is not to criticize ActiveLife; quite the opposite. At this point of its growth journey, ActiveLife's translation processes, and the largely implicit policy, seem functional as the translations reach their goals of meaning transfer, with an unmanaged and consequently sometimes undulating corporate tone of voice. The fact that paraprofessional translation works is largely thanks to the employees and recruitment: the workforce is responsible, multilingual, multicultural, consistently aiming for the common good which is fruitful business deals and a well-managed corporate reputation. The corporate atmosphere was reflected on by Raija on 3 October 2024; see Excerpt (8).

(8) ActiveLife certainly has a quite exceptional, positive, humane corporate culture, which certainly goes back to the very early days, when [the founder] founded the company and told the production employees, for example, to start their families and to build their houses, promising that he and [the founding family] would make sure that there was enough bread on the table.
And yes, it continues to this day in a certain way, at least, that the second generation, takes everyone into account, all employees and well, there is something of an empathic — thank you — empathic culture where people are taken into account, which I think is quite exceptional.

I paid attention to the empathic and collaborative atmosphere, a quality that was striking in both the accounting team (three weeks in December 2023) and the communications team (three weeks in summer and autumn 2024). The field notes include a quote from a Finnish employee Perttu (pseudonym) on 14 December 2023 when the accounting team had its weekly Team Huddle, and a new employee had just finished talking about learning the tasks and emotions linked to them. Perttu said in English: "Just remember that it's not a burden for us if you ask for help." This empathic notion by him to a newcomer certainly strengthens psychological safety amongst the team. Fear of embarrassment if asking for a colleague's advice was made non-existent.

Current translation policy at ActiveLife

The current translation policy of ActiveLife is written into being in this section, using visualization as support. First, Figure 4 puts different translation policies at companies of different sizes on a continuum, sparked by Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017, p. 295) who verbally describe the explicitness and implicitness of corporate language policies this way. Figure 4 puts their idea into a visual format in the context of translation, and discussion on the situation at ActiveLife ensues. Then I will continue by explicating the beliefs and ideologies, practices, and management i.e. the three-component translation policy of ActiveLife, also using visualization (Graph 3).

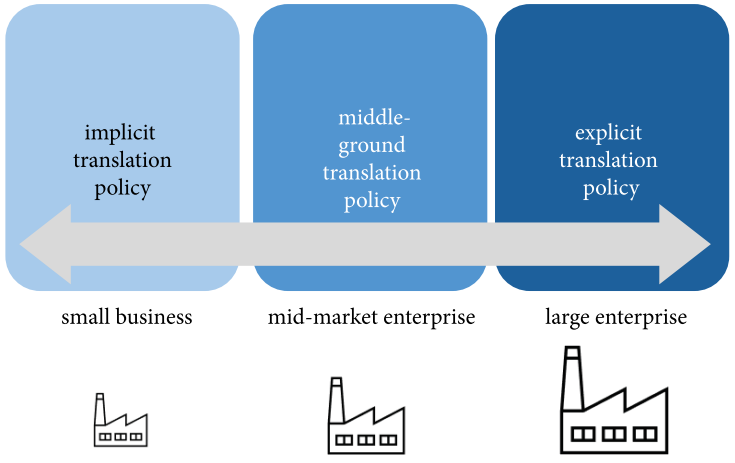
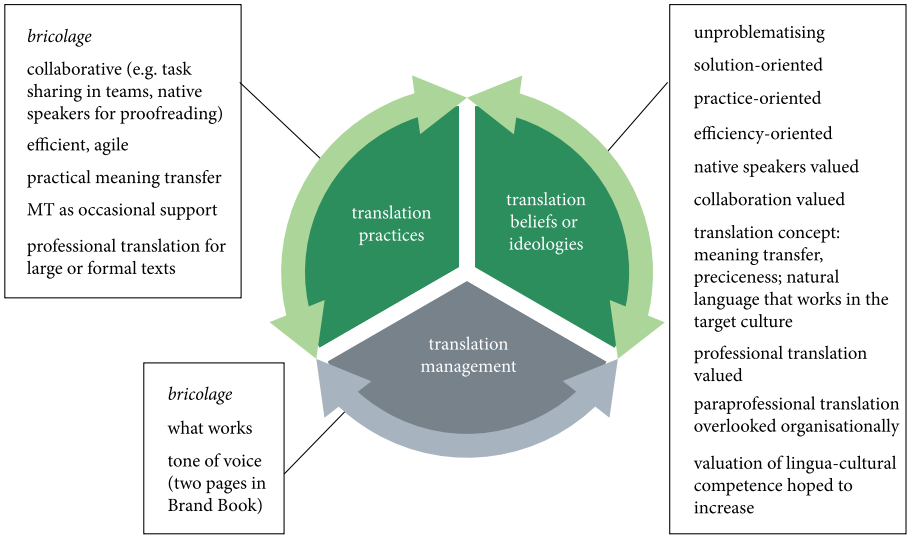


Figure 4. An implictness–explicitness continuum of translation policies vis-à-vis company size

Each individual business setting can have both implicit and explicit features, moving somewhere in-between the two extremes, while larger companies tend to benefit from more explicit policies (Lesk, Lavric and Stegu 2017, pp. 284, 295). At ActiveLife, the written-out corporate tone of voice is the only open and direct language policy measure. All other measures may be quite openly shared between the employees through interaction; however, as they are tacit, every time they must be somehow discovered. The data suggest that the policy is currently between implicit and middle-ground policies (Figure 4), leaning significantly towards the former. Thus, as the company continues to grow, it is likely that some kind of translation management will be needed "for successfully communicating the ActiveLife brand in all its touchpoints", as the introductory phrase in the Brand Book states.

It is noteworthy to point out that translation policies most likely will always benefit from having a dynamic quality to them. After all, MT and artificial intelligence (AI) are continuously being developed, and business fields themselves continue to change regarding trends, standards and legislation, for instance. Following the idea of Lesk, Lavric and Stegu (2017), Figure 4 should not be perceived as a rigid categorization of which policies are suitable for which businesses, but rather as an overall depiction of what seems to work usually and as a reflection of where ActiveLife currently is on the continuum, and, furthermore, where it might be in the future as it continues to grow.

To return to the three components of a translation policy (Graph 2 earlier), *bricolage* (Lavric, 2012) at ActiveLife seems to work because the translation practices are strong and the beliefs and ideologies at the background align with practices. See Graph 3 for an illustration.



Graph 3. Current translation policy at ActiveLife

Graph 3 illustrates the translation policy at ActiveLife, demonstrating the importance of functional practices. Equally important are the beliefs and ideologies at the background, as they need to align with the practices for them to work. For example, an attitude open to MT development and dynamic understanding that terminology and concepts of e.g. safety standards need to be regularly checked from the original standard works with the practices at ActiveLife. The most crucial aspect thus seems to be what happens at the grassroots level regardless of how loosely or tightly it is managed.

If the beliefs or ideologies were not as collaborative as they seem to be in the data, practices would most likely look very different and there would also be more use of time, most likely, when consultation of colleagues were not as straightforward as it currently is. This could all be reflected in reduced effectiveness of work and consequently in lower result gains.

In Graph 3, both practices and beliefs or ideologies relate to many qualities that imply vitality and a well-functioning, psychologically safe working environment where colleagues are in good terms with one another. Then again, translation management is minimal. This combination (2/3 components) at this point of the company's development seems to work, since the employees seem content with their translatorial and translational ways of working. There was a critical voice by communications manager Raija who enjoys her work but who also pointed out that language skills and consequent paraprofessional translational competence could be valued more, implying that there are mechanical translation concepts at the background in the company.

Any translation management ought to be tightly connected with robust knowledge of practices, and beliefs and ideologies. Therefore, at ActiveLife or similar settings, those creating translation management guidelines should be familiar with and be sensitive to translation practices, and beliefs and ideologies in the company, as they differ between teams.

Discussion and conclusion

This study contributes to knowledge on translation policy in a business environment. Because the results reveal a dynamic policy relying on *bricolage* (Lavric 2012) i.e. responsible employees' experience and intuition, it can be postulated that ActiveLife values its workforce, rewarding accordingly. As the employees reported, and I confirmed through field observation, the atmosphere is supportive and psychologically safe, which for many may surpass the meaning of monetary remuneration.

Although meaning transfer across lingua-cultural boundaries is at the core, *translation beliefs and ideologies* differ between teams, depending on the nature of their work and the purpose of the translation. In the accounting team, preciseness was highly valued whereas the communications team regards that translation ought to be idiomatic language. Their attitude towards translation was open and positive.

Translation practices have been chiselled to their present form over the years while staying up-to-date on the possibilities of MT. Here lies a risk of data protection if sensitive corporate content is uploaded onto MT databases, suggesting that training in the use of MT could benefit the company. Professional translation is used for large or formal documents.

It became clear that the translation policy at Active Life is *very loosely managed*, but the employees are skilled at themselves managing translation processes based on experience and intuition. How these tacit processes are shared, remains a question mark, urging further research, and suggesting documentation for ActiveLife. Certainly, the collaborative and empathic atmosphere encourages knowledge sharing and contributes to positive onboarding of new employees. An undocumented translation policy is flexible but insecure, and such may implicate unnecessarily laborious processes in the long run.

I would like to postulate that the largely implicit and dynamic translation policy is linked with neuroplasticity of the paraprofessional translators: they are the ones who — through their actions and words — every day translate into being the corporate community, its values, its tone of voice, and its identity. It seems that the employees gradually become in tune with each other on how to handle translation

and convey the tone of voice. The more experienced employees set an example, and here the fresh ones' ability to perceive and align with this shared social reality (Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2019, 2024) comes into play. Thus translation is embedded, although rarely mentioned, in all aspects of work and, guided by the Brand Book that has been internalized by experienced employees and transferred to new ones through social alignment (ibid). It is likely that the employees manage to communicate the corporate identity internally and reinforce the brand externally quite successfully in their paraprofessional translation, however perhaps some undulation takes place due to its unmanaged quality. Further research on paraprofessional translation as a collaborative effort in organizational life is needed.

With this book chapter, I have contributed to empirical research on translation policy, called for by e.g. Meylaerts (2011, p. 745). Bringing three interrelated RQs into one study was simultaneously an intellectually challenging and rewarding task of discovering patterns and tacit cues. In the process, reciprocity and mutual trust with the field was particularly rewarding.

As ActiveLife grows, establishing a written-out translation policy — perhaps as a part of a comprehensive language policy — could help the company to avoid pitfalls such as an inconsistent tone of voice, inequal distribution of work, slowness and unclarity in the onboarding of newcomers or difficult information retrieval for existing employees. Such could erode the corporate identity, atmosphere and attractiveness. The now discernible translation policy will help address with foresight any gaps in e.g. equal access to information (United Nations, 1948) or hindrances for integration in its diverse and multilingual business domain.

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CHAPTER 13

Spaces of translatoriality within hospital knowledge departments in England

Elisabetta Geromel-Lister & Jérôme Devaux

Over the last century, English has become the global lingua franca in scientific fields, but medical evidence continues to be produced in national languages. Existing research highlights the persistent exclusion of non-English medical evidence from systematic reviews, revealing a significant language bias. This chapter intends to answer the following research question: what role does translation play in the evidence search process when Clinical Librarians (CLs) in NHS Knowledge Departments in England engage with non-English medical evidence? This chapter presents findings from a broader PhD project conducted by the first author (Geromel-Lister, 2026),[1] which explores unregulated translation practices in hospitals' knowledge departments across England. The data, consisting of 18 transcribed interviews with Clinical Librarians, is analysed and interpreted through an actor-network theory (ANT) approach. Drawing on Latour's (2007) conceptualization of the oligopticon and Callon's (1984) translation process analysis (TPA), ANT functions as both a methodology and a theoretical framework in this study. Results show that librarians engage in both intralingual and interlingual translation during evidence searches but do not differentiate between translatorial strategies for English and non-English literature. Additionally, inconsistencies in the search process led to the uncritical use of automated translation tools and a lack of inclusivity of multilingual medical knowledge.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, actor-network theory, oligopticon, scientific multilingualism, clinical librarians

1. Ethical approval for this project was granted by the Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom on the 7th of April 2021, under application number HREC/3955/Geromel-Lister.

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Introduction

Non-professional translation encompasses a wide range of practices, often labelled as volunteer translation, where bilingual individuals contribute without formal training or financial incentives (Jiménez-Crespo, 2015). Volunteer translation is widely studied across various domains, including humanitarian work (Ogie et al., 2022), crisis response (Federici & Cadwell, 2018), fan subbing communities (Jiang & Doherty, 2024), and socially oriented initiatives (Piróth & Baker, 2020). While these studies emphasise diverse applications, non-professional translation is often perceived as an extension of bilingualism rather than a deliberate translational act (Angelelli, 2020). This chapter focuses on how Clinical Librarians (CLs) in the National Health Service (NHS) operate as "evidence searchers" to disseminate global medical evidence within the local hospital trust.[2] Despite their specialized role, these librarians often engage with translation practices as paraprofessionals without formal acknowledgement or guidance about translation.

The issue here lies in the unregulated and largely invisible nature of translatorial practices within the healthcare system in England, which risks excluding valuable multilingual medical knowledge and perpetuating language biases in evidence-based medicine. These gaps highlight the need to examine how translatorial strategies are applied — both intralingually and interlingually — by information professionals who are pivotal to healthcare knowledge dissemination.

To investigate this, an actor-network theory (ANT) approach was employed, capturing the socio-material complexity of medical knowledge dissemination. This chapter draws on data from 18 interviews conducted with CLs across England. Supplementary materials, including Search Request Forms and procedural guidelines, were analysed to contextualise these translatorial practices. Participants were selected based on librarians' role as "evidence searchers", highlighting their daily engagement with translatorial acts among other information specialist tasks. To limit regulation variability yet ensure a range of institutional perspectives, the study was restricted to NHS Hospitals in England.[3]

As highlighted in the Discussion section, while intralingual translation is embedded in routine practices, interlingual challenges expose significant gaps in formal support and guidance. Interlingual translation occurs in the absence of

2. NHS Trusts are legal units set up by the National Health Service Act 2006, to provide goods and services for the purposes of health services. For instance, they provide hospital and community services, and/or other aspects of patient care (NHS Data Model and Dictionary, 2025).

3. Regions considered: Southeast, Greater London, Northwest, Southwest, North East, and Midlands (Geromel-Lister, 2026).

explicit frameworks, leading to ad-hoc and often invisible translation acts that may perpetuate language biases in medical research.

By focusing on paraprofessional translatorial practices in healthcare, this study contributes to addressing the broader issue of language bias in knowledge dissemination. It advocates for greater recognition of translatoriality as an integral part of evidence searching, paving the way for more inclusive, multilingual approaches in evidence-based medicine.

The knowledge dissemination environment in the NHS England

Clinical Librarians (CLs) within NHS hospitals Knowledge Departments play a key role in disseminating global medical knowledge to healthcare professionals, supporting medical practice and research. They provide advanced evidence search services, offering literature on diverse topics to help staff address work-related questions. By delivering guidelines, evidence summaries, research articles, and case studies, CLs promote an evidence-based culture, enabling doctors, clinicians, and nurses to make informed decisions. Their contributions are vital in fostering best practices and addressing rare conditions, significantly influencing treatment outcomes ('Clinical Librarian/Embedded Librarian/Knowledge Specialist/Evidence Specialist', 2024).

CLs conduct searches across various medical disciplines, tailored to the urgency, depth, and scope required. According to a search protocol disseminated and used at national level among Knowledge Departments (*Searching and Training Forums Wiki*, 2025), these searches adapt to meet specific informational needs. The most comprehensive searches support Systematic Reviews of Interventions[4] (SR), offering a thorough overview of existing literature on a topic. SRs require rigorous, repeatable, and well-documented methodologies to minimise bias, involving experts in the research topic and SR methods. CLs play a key role by providing high level, reliable searches essential to these reviews. Their work is guided by the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions (2025), a detailed resource developed by Cochrane, a global network of health researchers, professionals, patients, and carers. This handbook outlines step-by-step protocols, ensuring accuracy and completeness in evidence searches, making it an indispensable tool for CLs.

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4. A Systematic Review of Interventions is defined as a methodological approach that "uses robust methods to reduce bias in the gathering, summarising, presenting, interpreting and reporting of the research evidence" (Cochrane, 2025)(Cochrane Interactive Learning, 2021, Chapter 1).

Cochrane's independent stance aims to reduce bias and conflicts of interest, promoting inclusion of non-English evidence. However, a mono-language bias favouring English in scientific research conducted in anglophone countries has emerged, especially in comprehensive studies like SRs (Amano et al., 2016; Johnson & Hennessy, 2019; Misso, 2023; Misso et al., 2018; Walpole, 2019). Although the Cochrane Handbook (2025) acknowledges this issue, its guidance on minimizing English dominance remains inconsistent. Research suggests non-English texts may vary in methodological standards, correlating language of publication with lower-quality outputs.

These studies have limitations, often correlating language with other factors (validity, compatibility, quality). They focus solely on randomised controlled trials, ignoring other relevant scientific methods (Cairns, 2024), and generalizing findings applicable to specific disciplines (Amano et al., 2021). This reinforces, rather than addressing, a bias excluding non-English literature, also neglecting access to grey literature,[5] which is vital but often overlooked in the search for impactful science (Barbrook, 2023). With around 40% of the literature reporting negative results being published in national languages rather than English (Stockemer & Wigginton, 2019), a further publication bias is introduced.

Importantly, while the translation of evidence texts is recommended, there is no guidance as to how translations should be conducted, who should undertake them, or at which stage of the search process translation is necessary. Consequently, librarians lack standardized procedures for including non-English evidence and must instead rely on individual judgment when selecting and accessing this material.

Translatoriality as a social practice

Translation, understood as the practice of transferring meaning from one language to another, is viewed as a natural consequence of linguistic competence, and has been carried out by bilingual individuals for millennia. Since the 1970s, however, translation has evolved into a specialised field, seeking to achieve scientific methods to produce 'objective descriptions' (Pym, 2023, p. 78) of how translations, and translators, function. This shift has coincided with a growing focus on the professionalization of translators, overshadowing the more holistic approach that histor-

5. Grey literature refers to any material written for professionals and disseminated outside of peer-reviewed journals, usually produced and published by non-commercial or public entities (Library Help, 2025).

ically shaped translation practices. Nevertheless, multilingual interactions among non-professionals take place, inherently involving an element of translation.

Research on non-professional translation has recently intensified (Koskinen, 2025), and it is starting to provide different perspectives on this topic. The view on paraprofessional translation, already adopted by numerous scholars (Davier & Conway, 2019; Koskela et al., 2017; Kuznik, 2016; Logemann & Piekkari, 2015; Pöchhacker & Kadrić, 1999; Tyulenev, 2014) is applicable in various organizational contexts. Koskinen (2020, 2025) proposes a conceptualization of paraprofessionals which focuses on non-professional translation capacities performed by individuals who (a) hold professional roles other than translation and (b) engage in forms of translation that are non-'prototypical', namely detached from translation norms and competence levels required in typical professional transactions. Koskinen (2020) describes translatoriality as a 'continuum' with prototypical translation at one end and 'encompassing, fragmentary, fleeting, playful, and serendipitous encounters between languages' on the other (p. 234) [our translation].

The definition of translatoriality is carefully chosen to highlight its link to translation's role in communication, and its core concept is deliberately removed from strictly professional or disciplinary boundaries and linked to the expertise of paraprofessional roles (Koskela et al., 2017; Piekkari et al., 2020). The idea of prototypical translation (Halverson, 2000) provides a reference point to expand the boundaries of what constitutes translation. The idea of traditional institutional norms (Hermans, 1995) in translation studies (TS) which historically restricts translation proper to interlingual practices, has been recently challenged by Korning-Zethsen and Hill-Madsen (2016). They argue for a continuum model which highlights shared features, rather than differences, between intra- and interlingual translation, particularly emphasising the translation act of crossing barriers, not only external (between languages) but also 'internal' (within a single language) (2016, p. 693). Functionalist approaches (Nord, 2011) and similarity-based equivalence frameworks (Chesterman, 1996, 2007a, 2007b) further support this inclusion by emphasising the purpose-driven adaptation of meaning rather than strict equivalence. In this way, intralingual translatorial practices demonstrate prototypical translational elements, bridging Jakobson's (2013) translation categories and the adaptability and functionality of paraprofessional translation in broader communicative contexts.

By pushing the boundaries between translation modalities, the analyst using a translatoriality approach can focus on how multilingualism is managed and conducted to prioritise organizational goals, freeing the process from assumptions about normative requirements or choices of strategies. Translatorial action embodies notions of ambiguity (is it translation or not?), fluidity (translatorial moments as transitional within broader workflows), and the absence of clear

boundaries. These examinations focus on the practices of translatorial action directed toward specific goals, examining how translation becomes an often unseen 'key resource' (Piekkari et al., 2020, p. 1) within local organizational work. This invisibility arises as translation embeds itself within other, more formally recognized tasks, and can manifest in various forms. This reveals the diverse ways in which paraprofessionals negotiate their translatorial choices, whether intermodal (within and between languages, or within and between modalities) or technological.

A pressing new perspective is emerging rapidly in TS research, arising from advances in digital and automated translation technologies (Jiménez-Crespo, 2019), and the use of machine translation (MT) by paraprofessionals. Recent research conducted by Vieira (2024; 2023) examining the use of MT in UK healthcare environments, reveals an often hidden reliance on automated translation tools. While MT is generally discouraged for doctor-patient communication due to concerns about accuracy and reliability (Moberly, 2018), evidence shows that institutions — such as the NHS — have little control over its use, which now extends beyond knowledge assimilation (Nurminen & Papula, 2018). In fact, users may turn to MT due to a perceived lack of alternative translation options, often using personal devices, even in high-risk or 'serious' situations (Vieira, 2024).

Currently 'there is no standardised method to evaluate the use of MT' in contexts outside professional translation (Vieira, 2024). The low cost, perceived ease of use, and high fluency of MT outputs (Bowker, 2023) have contributed to the unofficial adoption of these technologies, making such practices difficult to track. Research has also highlighted ethical considerations about accountability and transparency of translation outputs (Do Carmo & Moorkens, 2022; Guerberof-Arenas & Moorkens, 2023), particularly when raw MT-generated texts are used with no post-editing (Nurminen, 2020). Additionally, studies suggest that MT may facilitate hidden translation practices that remain largely unexplored in qualitative terms (Escartín & Moniz, 2019; Kepler et al., 2019).

Methodology

In recent years, the theoretical and methodological approach of actor-network theory (ANT) has gained traction within translation studies, mainly due to its adaptability in examining complex interactions between human and non-human actors. The rise of industrialization in translation practices (Sun, 2022) and the increasing reliance on machine-generated translation technologies (Bowker, 2024) have amplified the relevance of socio-material sociological approaches in studying translation. ANT has demonstrated to be a valuable framework for exploring

human-machine collaborations, such as in video conference interpretation (Devaux, 2017; Skinner, 2020), as well as for examining translation practices in diverse contexts, including journalistic translation in South Africa (Rooyen, 2019). Additionally, ANT has proven helpful in analyzing processual practices in translation, such as literary translation (Buzelin, 2002), translation within production networks (Abdallah, 2012), and Taiwanese literature production (Kung, 2009).

ANT originated during the 1980s within the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and has since expanded into a broader sociological framework. While ANT retains SSK's foundational tenets — symmetry, impartiality, causality, and reflexivity[6] — Latour (2007, p.142) and Callon (1984) shifted its focus from a human-centred perspective, central, for instance to Bourdieusian approaches (Buzelin, 2005; Inghilleri, 2003, 2005) to a socio-material approach. This shift introduced more flexible and inclusive methods for analysing the dynamic interactions between human and non-human actors in complex societal contexts.

Data was collected interviewing eighteen CLs — totalling over 16 hours of recordings. Only CLs with experience in evidence searches were included in the cohort of participants in order to capture insights from their daily, specialized activities. Various documents related to the information search process, such as Search Request Forms used by libraries and procedural guidelines, were also considered entities in the network analysis.

Furthermore, this project only focused on Knowledge Departments in England. While the UK healthcare system is publicly funded, centrally managed, and free at the point of use across the four devolved nations — England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (*Devolved Public Services*, 2021) — each administration independently manages its services. To minimize variability in the data yet ensure a broad range of perspectives, participants were recruited exclusively from different geographical regions of England.

Setting the library as an oligopticon

In our study, libraries function as an oligopticon (Hermant & Latour, 1998; Latour, 2007), a microcosm of micro-realities, where librarians and other actors engage in specific, focused actions to fulfil objectives. In turn, actions performed within libraries' oligoptica were examined using Callon's translation process analysis (TPA) (1984).

First, an oligopticon stands in direct contrast to Bentham's panopticon (1962), a surveillance mechanism that captures a panoramic view of everything. As

6. For more information regarding these four principles see Bloor (1991) and Michael (2018).

Latour (2007, p. 181) describes, ''Oligoptica [...] do exactly the opposite of the panoptica: they see much too little to feed the megalomania of the inspector or the paranoia of the inspected, but what they see, they see it well...''. Oligoptica serve as magnifying lenses, focusing on a limited, narrow portion of micro and local reality, while maintaining a grounded but extremely clear view of specific societal actions.

The oligopticon is not a physical space but an abstract, dynamic boundary shaped by the agentic force of heterogeneous elements engaged in collective action. The boundary emerges from evolving relationships that elements establish with each other. The inclusion of elements within the oligopticon is contingent on their ability to contribute agentic power towards the communal goal.[7] Inactive or non-agentic elements fall outside the oligopticon bounds and cannot be included in the TPA.

We interviewed librarians about their daily work as evidence searchers in NHS Knowledge Departments. They gradually revealed the agentic micro-elements within this process through the magnifying lens of the oligopticon. By keeping the analytical focus limited to the relationships among the elements rather than broader social influences, we gained clearer insights into the dynamic connections between actors as they pursued their goals. Focused magnifying lens pointing to individual interactions do not isolate individual relationships from the communal agency, but instead they represent 'progression [of images], a formatting, a networking' (Hermant & Latour, 1998, p. 61). Thus, the oligopticon perspective remains fluid and evolving, constantly shaped by the choices and actions, or all the connections occurring among all agentic elements.

In turn, the translation process analysis (TPA) visualized all the heterogeneous active agents involved in an evidence search process conducted by Clinical Librarians in a hospital's Knowledge Department. The oligopticon's boundary emerges through the TPA in four stages. Elements actively engaging in mutual relationships and negotiations are first identified (problematisation stage). Whether human or not, heterogeneous actors remain symmetrically aligned to ensure an impartial approach during the analysis (Callon, p. 200). In this way, agency is not determined by an element's intrinsic nature — human or non-human — but by its ability to engage with other elements (interressement stage), integrate, negotiate, and perform a role (enrolment stage), and contribute to the collective goal (mobilization stage).

Power emerges solely from the strength of the relationships within this shifting, interdependent network, where elements become agentic as long as they

7. Elements with unpredictable agency, and whose impact may be unexpected, are referred to as 'mediators'. (Michael, 2018, p. 160).

actively contribute to the collective process. Agentic relationships create a local ecosystem of 'complex processes of resource exchange and conversion' (Westney et al., 2022, p.7) within the oligopticon. Within these spaces, translatoriality emerges as resources are converted (or translated) to bridge the gap between individual agency and network goals.

Figure 1 shows all the agentic elements emerged from the data and identified in the Library Oligopticon (visualized in the centre) through the TPA. It also identifies three networks of action — Planning, Searching, and Accessing the evidence — each with a specific communal goal to be achieved. In the Planning Network, actors work together to prepare for the search; in the Searching Network, actors collaborate to produce search results; in the Accessing Network, actors ensure that identified relevant knowledge becomes available.

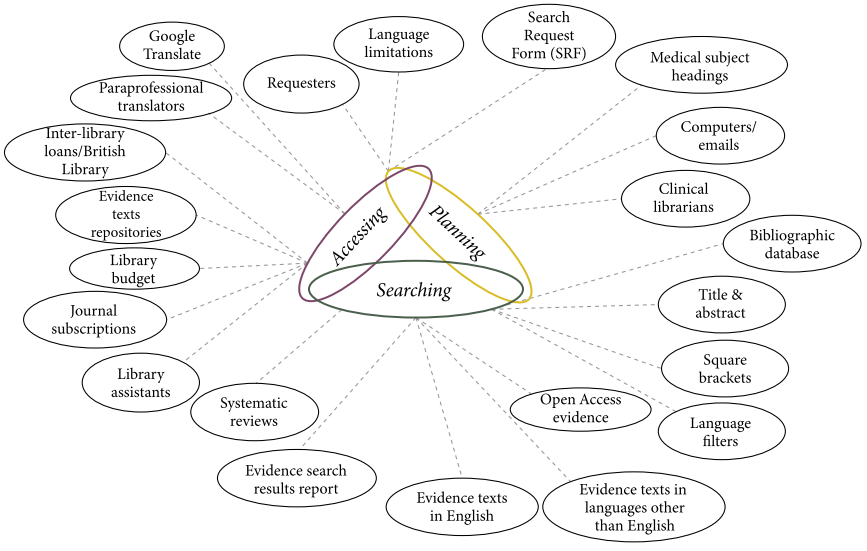


Figure 1. The library oligopticon and its problematisation

The Discussion section will address the results of this network analysis and how the Library Oligopticon's magnifications interact with the concept of the translatoriality continuum. To our knowledge, the concept of the oligopticon has not yet been applied to research in translation studies. However, as we will demonstrate in the following sections, this method has enhanced the visibility of translatorial actions undertaken during evidence searches by librarians, which may promote more awareness in librarians' search practice.

Spaces of translatoriality within the library oligopticon

This section will present and lay out in detail how the juxtaposition of the translatoriality continuum on the library oligopticon performed in this study has revealed four spaces of translatorial action performed by librarians. The continuum demonstrates how translation, despite its invisibility, occurs in librarians' everyday tasks and at every stage of the evidence search process. These micro-moments of translatoriality (Koskinen, 2025) are fragmented and ephemeral, reflecting the idea that translation can be difficult to identify and detect within a paraprofessional environment.

Figure 2 illustrates the translatoriality continuum identified through the analysis of the Library Oligopticon. This analysis reveals four distinct spaces where translatoriality takes place.

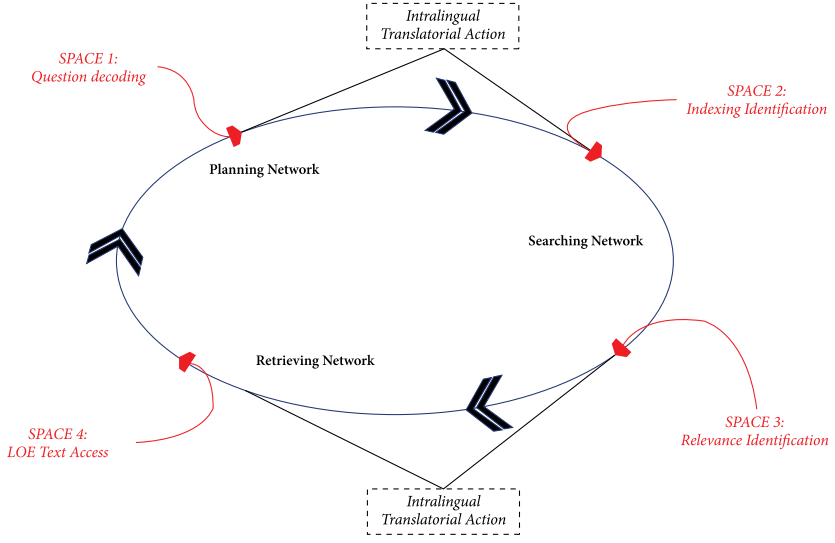


Figure 2. A translatoriality continuum juxtaposed to the library oligopticon

Space 1 and 2 — defined as Question Decoding and Indexing Identification– unfold during the Planning and Searching Networks. Librarians routinely carry out embedded intralingual (in English) translatorial acts.

Spaces 3 and 4 — defined as Relevance Identification and LOE Text Access — librarians' translatorial mode switches to interlingual when database searches produce results in non-English languages. The next two sections will examine intralingual and interlingual translatorial actions respectively.

Magnifications on intralingual spaces

Space 1

The first space (see Figure 3) identified through the Oligopticon magnifies the intralingual translatorial action of requesting a search from the library through a Search Request Form (SRF). In this space, the search question is decoded and broken down into smaller elements that will serve the database search.

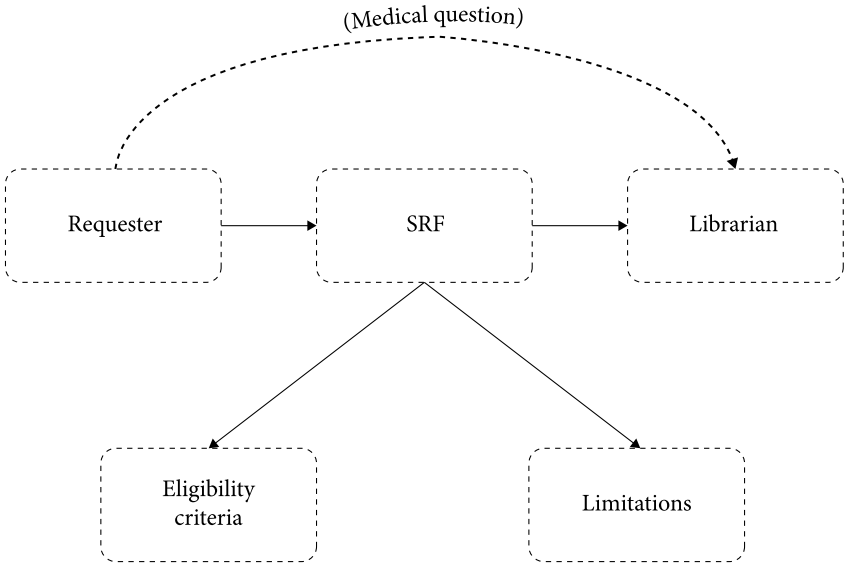


Figure 3. Magnification of the 'question decoding' space of translatoriality

Specifically, the magnification examines the relationship between a medical specialist — a requester — and a Clinical Librarian (CL) during the Planning network of the search. Although communication among these actors takes place exclusively in English, linguistic consistency alone is insufficient to ensure effective interaction due to the highly specialized jargon often used by medical specialists, such as doctors and nurses. To address this gap, Search Request Forms (SRFs) act as non-human mediators, bridging the flow of information between highly specialized medical experts and librarians, who function as Information Specialists.

SRFs are essential for facilitating specialized literature searches performed by librarians. The quality of the information they capture directly affects the accuracy and success of the mediation between a requester and a librarian. As participants in this cohort do not have medical training, their understanding of medical

terminologies comes exclusively from their experience within the library. SRFs help interpret medical professionals' queries, ensuring that all necessary information is collected for effective database searches.

To do this, SRFs use two strategies (listed in Table 1). The first strategy aims at decoding the eligibility criteria[8] of the medical question by using the Population, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome (PICO) Framework tool. The PICO Framework is a widely used evidence-based model for 'formulating a clinical question' (*Health Education England — South*, 2019, as well as breaking the question down to its essential meanings. This framework is designed to find alternative 'natural language terms, synonyms, spelling variations, truncations, [and] adjacency operators' phrase-searching' (*KSS Search Protocol*, 2021, p.7).

Table 1. Search request form decoding strategies (Geromel-Lister, 2026)

Eligibility Criteria Decoding	Use of limitations
– **PICO Framework**	– Study type
– **Alternative terminology**	– Date
– **Background information**	– Human/Animal
– **Keywords**	– Gender
– **Subject headings**	– Age
– **Synonyms**	– Geographical provenance (UK Only)
	– Ethnicity
	– Language

The second strategy is given by the provision of a list of limitations that can be used to restrict the search to focus on the eligibility criteria. Requesters are asked to select limitations options (see list in Table 1) which would not contradict the eligibility criteria, also providing a legitimization of the use of automatic filters during the database search (see next section) to reduce overall results.

Language is inconsistently listed as one of the limitation options in SRFs. Data show that only 8 out of 11 forms examined explicitly as part of this research project included language as a selectable criterion. While the content of SRFs is recommended in search protocols (*KSS Search Protocol*, 2021; *TWS Search Protocol,* 2019), their format is neither standardized nor mandatory. As a result, the format and content of each SRF vary between libraries, and the information passed on to librarians regarding language selections is inconsistent.

8. A definition of 'eligibility criteria' by Cochrane: 'Eligibility criteria are a combination of aspects of the clinical question plus specification of the types of studies that have addressed these questions. The participants, interventions and comparisons in the clinical question usually translate directly into eligibility criteria for the review.' (*Eligibility Criteria*, 2024).

Space 2

The second magnification examined, visualized as Space 2 on the intralingual area of the continuum (see Figure 4), focuses on the connection between the information provided by SRFs and international databases where the medical question will be queried. This relationship is mediated by a librarian, who intralingually translates the information passed to them by the SRF into Medical Subject Headings (or MeSH Terms). MeSH Terms represent the indexing language used by international databases to store metadata.

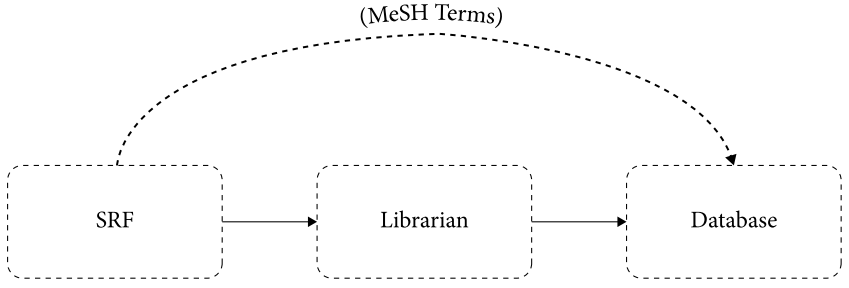


Figure 4. Magnification of 'indexing identification' space of translatoriality

MeSH Terms produce unfiltered results, which may include some that are only partially relevant to the eligibility criteria. However, data show that the entire cohort of participants in this study does not apply automatic filters, including language, at this stage in the search. Participant 11 clearly expresses the shared concern about using filters: *'No, I don't use any limits 'cause it's a right pain… 'cause you can never take them off again'.* This is due to frequent errors in metadata indexing, which may affect the quality and reliability of results and often require the search to be restarted. This suggests that texts in non-English remain within the oligopticon at this stage in the search and, therefore, are available as possible answers to the medical question posed initially.

Magnifications on interlingual spaces

Space 3

The third space (see Figure 5) magnifies interlingual translatorial actions that may be needed to identify the relevance of initial findings during the search. In this stage of the search, librarians assess search results from databases, including non-English outputs, for initial inclusion among relevant search results.

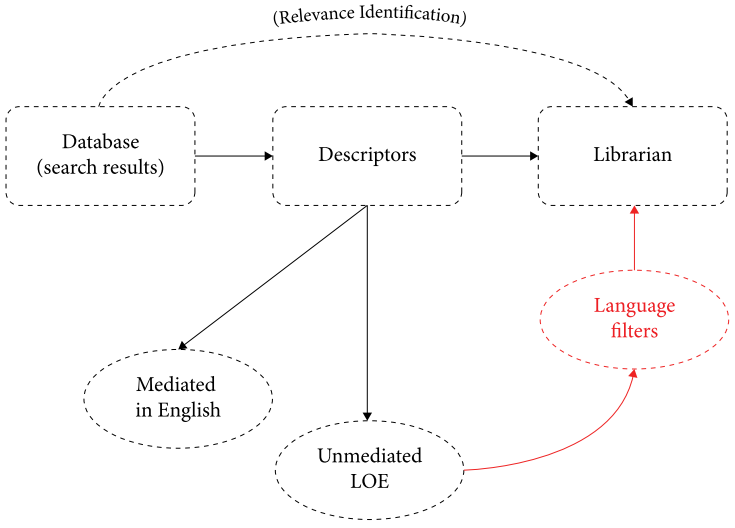


Figure 5. Magnification of 'LOE text access' space of translatoriality

Intralingual strategies often become ineffective if descriptors, particularly Title and Abstract, remain in a language other than English (LOE) and no translation in English is available. Descriptors here act as mediators between databases and librarians, determining if and how librarians can effectively screen results for relevance. Participant 4 states: *'[…] usually the title and the abstract is in English; but I have to say: if you do search purely with medical subject headings you do get papers that come up and they have no translation at all.* Non-English descriptors weaken the relationship between librarians and databases, as the language barrier hinders the evidence screening. Librarians are generally unprepared for this linguistic shift, and no participant reported using any specific interlingual strategy during this phase.

Databases inconsistently address language differences, sometimes providing untranslated descriptors or pre-translated English texts marked with square brackets. This is perceived as a signal that the content of this evidence will remain inaccessible to users due to a language barrier.

Figure 6 shows how librarians' practices for handling non-English evidence in Space 3 vary significantly.

Of these practices, only the use of 'all non-English results' (Practice 1) guarantees inclusion of LOE texts. Other strategies, such as reliance on requesters' language competence or database filters, conflict with eligibility criteria and often justify inclusion. Practices 5 and 6 reflect institutionalized choices that rely on automated database filters to exclude non-English evidence. This dependence contradicts earlier findings on librarians' reservations about using filters due to

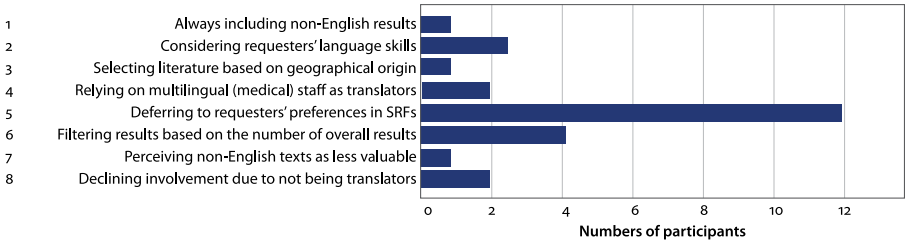


Figure 6. Distribution of librarians' negotiations with descriptors in LOE

frequent indexing errors (Aali & Shokraneh, 2021). Such practices — and specifically Practice 5 as the most common — are concerning because risk excluding relevant, unscreened material, making language a key determinant for exclusion.

Practices 7 and 8 reflect conditional attitudes rather than strategies. Some librarians view non-English texts as less valuable, while others avoid engagement due to a lack of translation expertise. These attitudes highlight the lack of standardised approaches and the need for better interlingual strategies.

Space 4

While data indicate that texts in languages other than English (LOE) are often excluded at identification stage, participants reported instances of interlingual translatorial efforts applied to non-English texts within the library oligopticon during interviews. Requesters may still need full access to relevant non-English texts and depend on librarians to facilitate this access. The last magnification examined here (see Figure 7) shows the relationship between an evidence text in non-English and a requester's access.

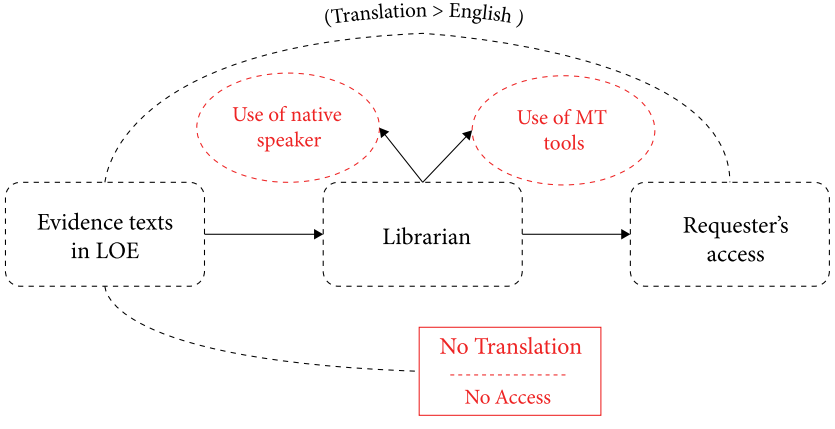


Figure 7. Magnification of 'relevance identification' space of translatoriality

- Participant 14, a native non-English speaker, was asked to translate the entire content of an evidence text. Recognising a gap in their skills for this highly specialized translation, participant 14 did not engage in the translatorial act. Instead, they conducted an alternative search on the topic and delivered a different text in English.
- Participant 12 was tasked with resolving a referencing error within a systematic review study. The citation translation, already available in English and required for replicability reasons,[9] did not correspond to any existing literature. With the help of a bilingual colleague, the librarian used Google Translate to re-translate the descriptors, consequently locating and retrieving the article. No additional content translation was required.
- Participant 9 translated an entire text in non-English for their requester, using 'rudimentary' linguistic knowledge, and a free, online automated translation tool.

Only three librarians reported using interlingual translation strategies to support requesters' access to descriptors, suggesting that this practice, performed using automated translation tools, is sparse. However, only one participant reported that using interlingual strategies as unsuccessful.

The interlingual translatorial acts described by the participants exemplify prototypical translation transactions (Koskinen, 2025). When librarians, whether or not they have sufficient linguistic knowledge or use automated tools, take on and volunteer translation services, they assume the role of para-professional translators. The significance of this finding is that these para-professional translators do not establish a deliberate or informed translation process with the requester. Instead, they provide an unregulated translation service often unaware of established translation processes and potential consequences. Given that participants provided no further feedback on the translatorial act (i.e. once the translation was delivered, its use or reception remained unknown), such interlingual translatorial actions by librarians reveal embedded and preconceived notions about translation and machine translation (MT) tools, as well as unacknowledged ethical implications.

9. Systematic Reviews replication is carried out to test and review results. The lack of replicability may introduce uncertainty about the implications of the body of evidence (Karunananthan et al., 2022).

Discussion

This explorative study examined how Clinical Librarians (CLs) working in NHS Knowledge departments across England use translatorial activities in their daily tasks. A specific emphasis was placed on how librarians engage with medical evidence published texts disseminated in languages other than English, and what translation strategies they use. The chapter focuses on how multilingual communicative acts occur among health professionals and how they are mediated by published documents and literature-searching services provided by CLs working within Knowledge Departments in NHS hospitals in England.

As discussed in Geromel-Lister (2026), within the National Healthcare System in England (NHS) existing translation policies are limited to the interaction between medical professionals and patients. Knowledge dissemination environments are not governed by explicitly defined rules for translating evidence, highlighting that, despite the specialized nature of the texts involved, this type of translation is performed "in the wild" (Koskinen, 2025). The inclusion of translated non-English evidence texts among search results becomes relevant to further enquiries, as the use of such texts in knowledge dissemination is broad and diverse, spanning multiple medical disciplines and language pairs, and ultimately impacting both urgent patient care and the research outputs of health professionals within the hospital. Results of this study indicate that translatoriality is present within this environment with both intralingual and interlingual practices. Intralingual practices are embedded within the workflow, however, interlingual ones, remain not formally recognized as labour, unaccounted within protocols, and performed as occasional, unpaid tasks by non-trained paraprofessional translators, or via automated translation tools. The lack of visibility and recognition of the shared features between these two translatorial modalities (Korning Zethsen & Hill-Madsen, 2016) causes shifts in the relevance of LOE search findings.

Librarians use established translatorial decoding practices in Space 1 and 2 to conduct preliminary textual analyses of the language used in evidence medical specialists' evidence searches' requests. Although these practices are carried out fully in English, they involve navigating an internal barrier (Korning Zethsen & Hill-Madsen, 2016). This process transforms a highly specialized medical question posed by a requester — the source text (ST) — into MeSH Terms — the target text (TT) — to generate the desired results (see Figure 8).

Intralingual translatorial strategies are a vital component of evidence searching and are seamlessly embedded in everyday practices. These strategies involve mediating and transforming a medical question into database-specific terminology, making the process inherently translational.

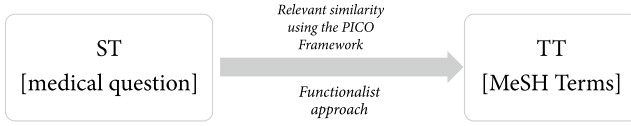


Figure 8. Intralingual translatorial act model (based on Korning-Zethsen and Hill-Madsen)

In this context, rather than equivalence, similarity defines the translatorial act observed. The goal is to preserve semantic fidelity to the ST through a combination of divergent (Chesterman 1996, p. 161) and relevant (Chesterman 2007b, p. 68) similarity transformations. Indeed, meaning is 'divergent' because it is transported from ST to TT, in a unidirectional process — i.e. MeSH terms do not convert back to the original question — and is also 'relevant' as it is shaped by the prospective role of the TT within the communicative situation — that of becoming a text which a database can understand — for which it is intended. Therefore, these intralingual translatorial acts align with a functionalist approach to translation, establishing a correlation between text-types (Nord, 2011) found within the medical question and the most effective database-compatible retrieval strategy.

This approach effectively empowers CLs to determine the relevance of search results based solely on the eligibility criteria specified in the medical question. First, it confirms that librarians engage in translatorial acts — specifically intralingual — since their planning and search are conducted in English. Second, this functionalist intralingual translatorial approach ensures that the evidence retrieved is both relevant and adequate to the eligibility criteria, thereby achieving an equivalence between the medical question and the search results.

During the first stage of the search the oligopticon continuum provides visibility on a new perspective on the role of the librarian. Rather than focusing on the searching act librarians perform, this chapter refers to the definition of "translators of knowledge"[10] as the practice of mediation and translation conducted by CLs, who transform a medical question into potential answers through three rounds of translatorial acts as shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Visibility of translatorial acts during evidence searches

10. For more information on the definition of Clinical Librarians as "translators of knowledge" see the first author's thesis (Geromel-Lister, 2026).

However, whereas intralingual translatorial acts can be clearly visualized in the search processes described by participants, the magnification of the oligopticon reveals that interlingual acts remain unseen by librarians. Interlingual acts may be needed when citations are in non-English (highlighted in red in the figure above), whereas the other actions are predominantly intralingual. The oligopticon continuum shows a fundamental shift in priorities, with language differences emerging as the primary factor for exclusion. This shift changes the focus of the search from the eligibility criteria of the question to the linguistic barrier. As a result, librarians' interlingual strategies relinquish the original target-oriented approach — that of identifying relevance to the medical question — and non-English texts become invisible.

This lack of translatorial visibility has led to the development of ad-hoc translatorial strategies that include a selective substitution of texts in LOE with available texts in English, or, alternatively, an omission of novel, original, and potentially relevant evidence altogether. Despite over 20 years of investigations, language bias remains poorly understood, as research has predominantly focused on hypotheses about benefits of inclusion or exclusion of non-English texts, rather than exploring why language bias — namely the absence of interlingual translatorial strategies — occurs (Geromel-Lister, 2026). This focus has evaded the causal question of 'why does a language bias exists?', halting the development of effective instruments not just to measure, but to address this phenomenon in its roots. The increased visibility proposed in this study resonates with the broader issue of the persistent exclusion of LOE in scientific dissemination (Amano et al., 2021), and emphasises the need to reorient research perspectives on language bias.

Interlingual translation acts still occur within the library oligopticon. Uses of automated translation tools — mainly Google Translate — were identified in the data, shedding light on the fact that machine translation (MT) is used within this knowledge dissemination environment. MT tools are not explicitly discouraged in relevant search guidelines, and they are portrayed as potential solutions in contexts where professional translation services may not be warranted, also considering their associated costs (Shokraneh, 2023; Walpole, 2019). However, little is currently known about MT usage in this specific healthcare setting, as research is primarily focusing on the use of MT in doctor-patient interactions (Vieira, 2024; Vieira et al., 2023). How multilingual heterogeneous (published literature>health professionals>new research outputs/patient care) communications occur are often surreptitious translatorial acts, demanding more visibility and further investigations, deserving integration among other translation practices regulated by policies.

The need for regulation in translatorial practices within paraprofessional environments is intensifying, driven by the growing relevance of AI tools in the

workplace. This study's findings, which report only two instances of MT tool usage, reflect contrasting perceptions, some viewing MT with scepticism, others considering it the sole feasible option. These diverging opinions, as well as the current use of MT, suggest that such unregulated practices may present risks not only in situations involving direct communication with patients (Moberly, 2018) but also within healthcare research environments. This study emphasizes that interlingual translation needs vary throughout the process, with MT used selectively, and primarily during information access rather than screening. This suggests two important points: first, that librarians may lack a critical approach to MT, often overlooking the need to adjust for varying levels of accuracy in gisting (Nurminen & Papula, 2018) versus full comprehension of content. Second, librarians' workflows that include the use of MT tools can likely be attributed to their commitment to meeting requesters' expectations rather than from a core role in knowledge dissemination as the elected translators of this knowledge. Recognizing the role of paraprofessional translators of knowledge in Knowledge Dissemination environments should be accompanied by targeted training, including MT literacy (Bowker, 2021). Such training could help librarians use MT tools transparently and responsibly, supporting their decision-making to ensure consistent target-oriented functionality in interlingual translation and effectively overcoming language barriers.

From a practical standpoint, there is a pressing need to disseminate these findings to increase awareness of the translatorial role of evidence searchers. The persistent issue of language bias, often only addressed by excluding non-English texts, emphasises a field-wide challenge. By adopting a translatorial perspective, however, librarians and searchers could become more attuned to incorporating multilingual knowledge in their dissemination work. The existing invisibility of translatorial labour not only limits it as a subject of enquiry, but also masks it as a valuable skill set, one assumed to require no specific training or additional time within standard working hours. Bringing visibility to these tasks could open pathways for structured training (Bowker, 2021), allowing practitioners to make informed decisions about how, when, or even if interlingual translation should be carried out by paraprofessionals.

Conclusions

This is the first study that combines the concepts of the oligopticon (Hermant & Latour, 1998) and a translatoriality continuum (Koskinen, 2025), revealing that investigations of translatoriality in the workplace may manifest in multiple and diverse modalities. While translatoriality appears to be embedded within intralin-

gual search practices, interlingual requirements may cause a shift in librarians' decision-making processes, influencing outcomes. It is demonstrated here how interlingual translatorial practices are overlooked and operated without formal guidance or support. Despite their invisibility however, interlingual acts may occur in brief, often unnoticed instances. By bringing these moments into focus, this explorative study sets a foundation for further research to explore these individual spaces more deeply and in diverse settings, where knowledge dissemination involves not only CLs but other health professionals as well.

This chapter focused exclusively on practices within NHS Knowledge Departments in England. Future studies could expand this scope to include NHS institutions in other devolved nations in the United Kingdom or even extend to knowledge dissemination environments conducting highly specialized evidence reviews, such as *Cochrane* (Cochrane, 2024). The replicability of this study in other anglophone countries should also be explored, alongside current research exploring impact of language restrictions and biases within specific scientific disciplines (Amano et al., 2023) and initiatives to promote multilingualism in global knowledge dissemination (Federation Of Finnish Learned Societies et al., 2019). Multilingualism inherently involves translation, yet this relationship remains largely invisible within scientific settings, where limited awareness within anglophone countries results in limited exposure to non-English knowledge. Themes emerging from this socio-material investigation reveal significant insights into how translatoriality is currently applied (and overlooked) in knowledge dissemination practices, emphasising the need for further understanding to enhance global knowledge inclusion and address language bias in international and multilingual knowledge exchange.

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CHAPTER 14

Paraprofessionals' approaches to subtitling work

Insights from a university context

Helmi Marttila & Johanna Vaattovaara

This article deals with professional orientation and attitudes of university academic staff towards intralingual subtitling of educational videos. The analysis is based on a survey distributed among university staff who had participated in university subtitling training ($N=31$) addressing their experiences, perceptions and attitudes towards subtitling and accessibility. As additional data we use open response feedback data ($N=49$) from the subtitling trainings, which provides additional insights into the topic. The responses are analyzed using quantitative and qualitative, inductive analytical approaches. The results show that the staff's attitudes and experiences towards subtitling and accessibility are complex and, in many ways, critical. Core issues raised by the respondents included the question of time constraints. The respondents generally recognized that subtitling requires linguistic competence.

Keywords: paraprofessional subtitling, subtitling for the d/Deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), language awareness, attitudes, accessibility

Introduction

The European Accessibility Directive (2016/2102) was mandated to be transported into national law by 2020 in the Member States to cover all websites of public sector bodies, such as universities. In Finland, the directive was implemented in The Act on the Provision of Digital Services (306/2019). Among other requirements, this new legislation stipulates that all videos published in university learning environments (such as Moodle), and in use for more than one academic year, must be subtitled in the language spoken in the video, and in the case of publicly shared video materials, subtitles should be provided within 14 days

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after publication.[1] In 2025, the EU implemented an even wider Accessibility Act (2019/882), extending accessibility requirements to commercial operators, such as online stores and banking services. These directives have turned subtitling to a considerable extent a paraprofessional task; the subtitles are frequently produced by employees representing a variety of (academic) fields and not explicitly trained in subtitling.

During the academic year 2021–2022, Tampere university established a principle that staff members should create subtitles themselves for the videos they produce. In order to support this task university offered one-hour trainings in video subtitling for the university teaching, research and support staff.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. how does the academically heterogeneous group of university professionals (non-professionals in subtitling) approach and reflect on subtitling work as a new part of their academic tasks and profiles?
2. what kind of attitudes they have towards this task, and what are the perceptual and attitudinal underpinnings concerning subtitling as a societal concern?
3. based on the current case study, what are the implications for future research designs?

The data for this study was gathered in 2022 among Tampere University staff members who had enrolled for the subtitling trainings. The primary data is a survey data ($N=31$ respondents) on attitudes concerning accessibility and experiences on subtitling work. As a secondary data, with consent of the organization, we use open response feedback data ($N=49$) gathered from the participants enrolled to the subtitling trainings ($N=133$). Therefore, there is significant overlap in these two respondent groups. The survey was distributed primarily to those staff members who had enrolled to the afore-mentioned subtitling trainings.[2] Despite the fact that the survey data is quite small, the combined analysis of the two sets of data largely consisting of open responses (in the case of feedback data, open responses only), will provide insights into further studies on paraprofessional subtitling and subtitlers.

In what follows, we will first (in Section 2) provide an overview of the multidisciplinary theoretical and methodological context of our study, followed by

1. With the exceptions of (1) live video content, (2) video as a media alternative for text (i. e. the video presents no more information than is already presented in text) and is clearly labelled as such, (3) videos published before 23.9.2020 and (4) live recordings available for less than 14 days (The Act on the Provision of Digital Services 306/2019).

2. The first author of this article had a role as one of the trainers in some of the training sessions.

introduction of our research setting and methods applied in the analysis of the survey and feedback data (Section 3). The results are introduced in Section 4 before the critical reflection and concluding remarks of the study.

Perceptual approach to subtitling

Our research is situated at the intersection of translation and language awareness and attitude research. The mainstream of language awareness (LA) research has dealt with different types of professionals' approaches to language, particularly in connection to language teaching and learning (Wilton & Stegu, 2011; Cots & Garrett 2018; Handford et al., 2019; van Essen, 2008). However, as pointed out by Handford et al. (2019), the interests of LA study are not only in second language acquisition but also language use in various contexts, such as language-sensitive professional ones. We consider paraprofessional translation as such a context, currently lacking research-based knowledge (for more on paraprofessional translation, see Chapter 2 in this volume). Due to recent legislation, the public and legal demand for intralingual subtitles has significantly increased, and the role of paraprofessionals is substantially growing in the fulfilling of the legal requirement. Paraprofessional subtitling is only beginning to receive scholarly attention. As a first step towards understanding this emerging practice, the translation strategies implemented by paraprofessional subtitlers have recently been studied (see Marttila 2024).

Subtitling is a relatively new and, as our outcomes will indicate, time-consuming task for paraprofessionals, which invites attention to perceptual and attitudinal dimensions. Our survey, introduced in more detail below, can be regarded to involve all three components of attitudes: cognition, affect and behaviour (Oppenheim 1982). These three dimensions are interconnected in a complex way. More recent literature has also challenged the status of cognition, affect and behaviour as components of attitudes per se, suggesting that these components are rather causes of attitudes than attitudes themselves. For example, an activation of an attitude might trigger an emotion or set of emotions. (Garrett 2010: 23)

The term 'subtitles' is used to describe short snippets of written text shown on top of video footage, normally near the bottom of the frame (Pérez-González 2020, p. 31). When subtitles are composed in the same language as the video audio, subtitling is usually referred to as intralingual subtitling (Pérez-González 2020, p. 32), subtitling for the d/Deaf[3] and hard of hearing (SDH) (Zárate 2021),

or (closed) captioning (CC) in the US (Neves 2008). The terms are not completely interchangeable, since SDH and CC can by definition be inter- as well as intralingual, but the practice has predominantly been intralingual (Zárate 2021, p. 4–6). (For more on terminology, see Neves 2019, p. 81–84.) Here we use the term intralingual subtitles, as the trainings held for the university staff did not cover special features of SDH but focused only on subtitling spoken dialogue. Traditionally SDH also includes description of the audio soundscape, as the main target group are the d/Deaf and hard of hearing (Zárate 2021, p. 4–6). However, intralingual subtitles are also widely used by people with normal hearing: according to the review conducted by Ofcom (2006, p. 2), about 7.5 million people had used (intralingual) subtitles to watch television, of whom about 6 million did not have a hearing impairment. Subtitles are used for example in noisy settings, learning a new language (Neves 2008, p. 131–132; Díaz Cintas & Remael 2014, p. 14–16) or just as a comprehension aid (Gernsbacher 2015).

Because of their audiovisual nature, subtitles have strict time and space constraints (see Gottlieb 2008, p. 209–210). Hence, speech present in the audio needs to be edited and formatted to the subtitles for it to be understandable to the viewer in written form (Neves 2008, p. 135–136; 2005, p. 150–151). Although there has also been advocacy for more verbatim subtitles as they are sometimes perceived as more 'equal' compared to edited ones (see Neves 2005, p. 140–151), editing the subtitles does make them easier and faster to read, and help getting meaning across more clearly (Neves 2008, p. 137; Romero-Fresco 2009). Furthermore, this need for language editing underlines how and why subtitling has traditionally been considered as a task for language professionals. As Neves (2005, p. 150–151) puts it: "Subtitling requires more than language transfer, it needs language processing. Messages will need to be decoded and re-encoded, perhaps in another mode or in another linguistic system." (See also for example Neves 2008, p. 135 and Gottlieb 2008, p. 211 on the requirements of a subtitler.) This makes the position of paraprofessional subtitlers particularly interesting — they are producing subtitles as part of their job, and are professionals of their own field, but not of subtitling. Paraprofessional subtitling should not be confused with *amateur subtitling, non-professional subtitling* or *fansubbing*, which are also not done by subtitling professionals, but occur outside a professional setting and are performed by volunteers in their free time (see for reference Orrego-Carmona & Lee 2017; Pérez-González 2012; Tyulenev 2014, p. 75; Secară 2011).

3. In the spelling 'd/Deaf', the term 'Deaf' with a capital D refers to people who consider themselves part of a linguistic and cultural minority (Deaf community), have a strong Deaf identity, and do not see deafness as a disability (Zárate 2021: 21–22).

Data and analysis methods

The primary data, survey, was collected using Lime Survey tool. The target respondents were university employees who had enrolled in subtitle trainings. The one-hour trainings covered essential legislation and obligations on when subtitling is required, basic information on how to produce good quality subtitles, and a presentation of a subtitling programme. The survey was successfully sent to 133 receivers. Responses were received from 31 employees, of whom 20 (68%) were currently working in teaching positions. 27 (87%) of the respondents did not have a degree in languages, making them paraprofessionals in language work. 26 (84%) had received training in subtitling from Tampere University, as the survey was sent to all those who had enrolled to the trainings.

The survey included seven parts using the combination of attitude rating scales (five-point Likert and seven-point Osgood scales) and open-ended questions. None of the scales nor open questions were obligatory to respond, and not all respondents reacted to all questions and scale items. This liberty was given primarily in order to see which elements in the survey instruments were regarded as most relevant by the respondents. As a result, the number of responses to each scale item vary from $n = 21$ to $n = 25$, and in the case of the open-ended questions from $n = 10$ to $n = 27$.

Thematically, the survey enquired on respondents' previous experiences of subtitling and attitudes towards this work task as well as more general level attitudes concerning accessibility. There were overlapping themes across the survey parts in order to gain insights into these from various angles, e.g. in the context of reviewing one's annual workload, preference of work tasks, and attitudes towards subtitling as a task. Along the numeric analysis, we provide details on the response rates as well as findings from the open response data. This data was analysed using inductive analytical approach (inductive coding) based on principles of qualitative content analysis, where the data is coded and analysed with codes derived (inducted) from the data itself (see Saldanha & O'Brien 2014, p. 189–190).

The secondary data consists of open response feedback from 49 of those employees who had taken part in the subtitling trainings and provided feedback on the training. This data was not originally collected for research purposes, but we acquired research permission from the organization to use this anonymous data in research. The subtitling training feedback data functions as a complementary resource as it includes open responses to questions (a) What new things did you learn in this training? ($n = 47$ responses); (b) What was successful and good about the training? ($n = 47$); (c) How could the training be developed? ($n = 37$); and (d) Further comments ($n = 28$).

Some of the responses in the feedback data were received originally in English, presumably acquired in the context of trainings organized in English. When citing these, the citations are word-by-word in the form of the original responses, with occasional deletions marked with [—]. The survey was distributed in Finnish only, and all of the open responses received in the survey were written in Finnish. The extracts from survey open response data have been translated from Finnish to English by the authors.

Results

The analysis section below will follow roughly the structure of the survey conducted. We will start with perceptual approaches to subtitling as part of academics' work, followed by experiences of subtitling as a hands-on activity. In the following section, attitudes and emotions towards subtitling will be analyzed, and finally, we will look at respondents' perceptions of themselves as subtitlers. Where applicable, the quantitative results of the survey data will be complemented with quotes of the open-ended responses of the survey and the feedback data.

Perceptual approaches to subtitling as part of academics' work

Sections 1–3 of the survey questionnaire inquired background information, views on accessibility, and quantitative experience of subtitling videos, as well as open-ended questions about motivation and time management. The data of these questions will be analysed further elsewhere. In section 4a of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate statements regarding subtitling as a part of teachers' workload on a five-point Likert scale. This set included eight claims, followed by an open-ended question (4b) for providing further insights on the topic of subtitling as part of one's work ("What else would you like to say about subtitling as part of your work profile?"). The scale was "Completely disagree (1) — Somewhat disagree (2) — Neither agree nor disagree (3) — Somewhat agree (4) — Completely agree (5)".

The attitude rating scales in section 4a received 23–24 responses each. Figure 1 illustrates the mean scores statement by statement, where score 1 stands for "completely disagree" and 5 "completely agree", making score 3 the neutral centre point.

In Finnish universities, including Tampere University, among the routines of all staff members is to make a plan each academic year, with support and acceptance of superiors and unit heads, of how the annual workload of individuals' (officially 1612 hours in all universities) is distributed in terms of teaching, research and other tasks such as management, societal impact and other duties.

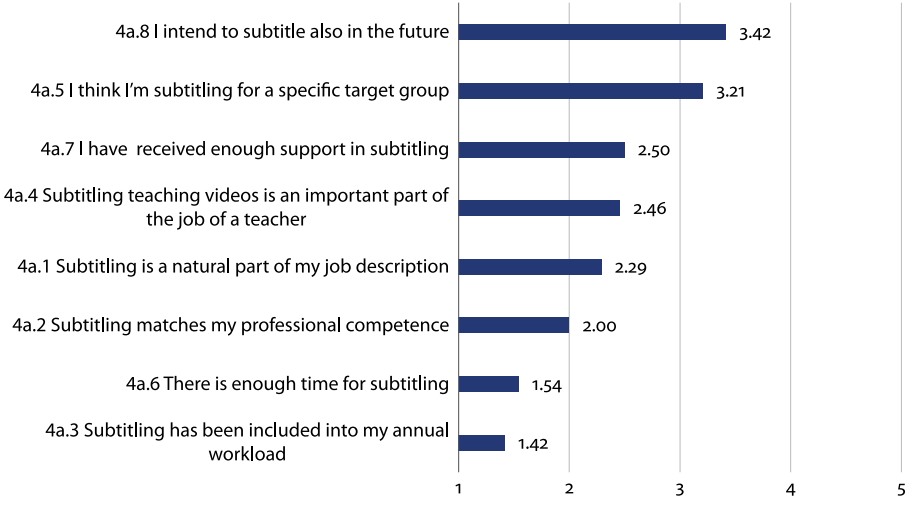


Figure 1. Mean scores of responses ($n = 23–24$) to 4a, subtitling as a part of teachers' workload

As the results show (Figure 1), at the time of the study, there were major shortcomings in the planning of the workload and in the time resources allocated to subtitling work. Statement 4a.3 addressed directly this issue: "Subtitling has been included into my annual workload" with the lowest mean score of 1.42. Here, the respondents were also largely unanimous; out of 24 respondents, no-one agreed, while 17 (71%) completely disagreed and 4 (17%) somewhat disagreed with the statement. Three respondents seemed to be unsure. Relatively many of the respondents skipped the statement 4a.6 perhaps due to similarity to claim 4a.3., but here the distribution of reactions to statement "There is enough time for subtitling" with a mean score of 1.54 was in alignment with the reactions to 4a.6. — 88% (21) of respondents disagreed completely or partly while two respondents "somewhat" agreed. Lack of time as a resource is also pointed out in the open comments in question 4b:

> "Se on aikaa vievää ja ylimääräistä työtä, jota ei ole huomioitu ajankäytössä." ("It [subtitling] is time consuming extra work that has not been taken into consideration in the work plan") (respondent 15)
>
> "Tekstittämiselle ei ole tarpeeksi aikaa, pakon edessä täytyy priorisoida muita asioita." ("There is not enough time for subtitling, you must prioritize other things.") (respondent 26)
>
> "Sinällään ei minulla ole mitään tekstittämistä vastaan, jos siihen vain kaikkien muiden töiden lomassa olisi aikaa." ("Basically I have nothing against subtitling, if only I had time for it in the middle of all other tasks.") (respondent 2)

In open-ended responses of 4b alone, lack of time was mentioned 7 times (out of altogether 17 responses). In all the open-ended responses on the survey, lack of time was mentioned 15 times; mostly in the context of subtitling not being included in the annual workload plan, it taking a lot of time, and lacking of time for it. This concern was also raised in the feedback data, where several participants expressed that the training session had made them realize the laborious nature of subtitling. For some, this worry seemed to be a dominant one (*Unfortunately, I couldn't concentrate [on the training] as I wondered how on Earth I would find the time to do this.*). Based on the overall data, then, lack of time appears as a fundamental challenge in paraprofessional subtitling as perceived by the university practitioners.

Statements 4a.1 and 4a.2 measured how the respondents regard subtitling as part of their tasks. According to the results, subtitling is not really perceived as a natural part of the job of the teaching staff, as 16 (67%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement "Subtitling is a natural part of my job description" with the mean score of 2.29. However, there are individual differences at play here, since 6 (25%) did agree to some extent, of whom three were teaching staff. The distribution of responses was very similar to the statement 4a.2 "Subtitling matches my professional competence", where, based on 23 respondents' data, 16 (70%) completely or somewhat disagreed and 5 (22%) somewhat agreed, with the mean score of 2.00. Out of those disagreeing, 12 respondents completely disagreed with this statement, while at the other end of the scale, none completely agreed. Therefore, the majority of the academics participating in our study regard subtitling as a task not very well suited to their academic profile.

In terms of attitudes towards whether this task could more generally be seen as a task of university instructors, measured with the statement 4a.4 "Subtitling teaching videos is an important part of the job of a teacher", there is slightly less disagreement; 14 (58%) disagree, but 7 (29%) do somewhat agree with the statement, with the mean score of 2.46. This implies that the subtitling task could generally be considered as a *suitable* task of a university teacher. However, it is notable that none completely agree with the statement saying that this is an *important* task for a university teacher. This we take to imply that the respondents regard subtitling as an important task as such although not for university teachers, or that teachers have other, more important tasks. The present data suggests that university staff is not generally oriented towards the subtitling task, given that the results reported here are based on experiences and views of employees who belong to the most subtitling oriented ones, as they had gone through the trouble of registering and participating subtitling training. The outcome of the scale result is supported by the open-ended data received in question 4b ("What else would you want to say about subtitling as part of your job description?"):

> "Ei se oikein omalta työltä tunnu..." ("It does not really feel like my task.") (respondent 11)

> "Tekstittäminen ei ole lainkaan osaamisalaani, ja tekstityskoulutuksessa kävi ilmi, että se vaatii ihan omaa osaamista." ("Subtitling is not at all my competence area, and in the subtitle training it came up that it really requires expertise.") (respondent 15)

> "En halua, että se on osa työnkuvaani." ("I don't want it to be part of my job description.") (respondent 24)

> "Opetusvideoiden tekstittäminen on tärkeää, mutta selkeästi ammattilaisen tehtävä. Ei opettajan." ("Subtitling teaching videos is important, but clearly a job for a professional. Not a teacher.") (respondent 3)

These findings are not surprising considering that the respondents of the survey were mainly not language professionals by their academic backgrounds (see the data description in Section 3).

The claims 4a.5, 4a.7 and 4a.8 focused on perceptions of subtitling as part of academic work, which relate to deeper aspects of the subtitling task. With the claim 4a.7 "I have received enough support in subtitling", the range of responses between 1 to 5 was quite varied, with a mean score of 2.50. Out of the respondents reacting to this scale, half of them (12) disagreed, 6 (25%) agreed, and 6 (25%) neither disagreed nor disagreed.

As mentioned already, Tampere University has provided written instructions and guides for subtitling, and also several trainings available in Finnish and in English. Particularly the feedback data offers valuable insights into learning needs. The question *What new things did you learn in this training?* elicited open responses from altogether 47 training participants. While only few mentioned here learning about the legal aspects of accessibility or gaining understanding on how much time investment this task requires, the majority of the mentions addressed learning about practical technical issues, available software, principles and basic rules of subtitling, some basics of practical instructions, as well as consequences of bad subtitling.

Only two claims, 4a.5 and 4a.8 scored beyond the neutral score 3. The claim 4a.5 "I think I'm subtitling for a specific target group" received a mean score of 3.21, with almost half (11, 46%) of respondents agreeing. Fairly many (7, 29%) however did neither agree nor disagree. The claim was targeted to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of paraprofessional subtitlers towards the subtitle users. It is possible that many of the respondents have, as teachers, a specific target group — students — for their videos, while others maybe have not thought about the target group at all. The claim 4a.8 shifted the focus to the future with "I intend to

subtitle also in the future" and received a mean score of 3.42. Here, the responses were fairly dispersed with an emphasis on agreeing; of 24 respondents, 14 (58%) responded to continue subtitling, whereas 7 (29%) disagreed. The majority of the respondents thus intended to continue subtitling. It is possible that this is at least partly not so much a choice but a mandate; when asked in open-ended question 3c "What motivated or got you to produce subtitles?", subtitling being (legally) mandatory came up in the responses 11 times. It was also mentioned in an open-ended response to 4b:

> "Tekstitys on pakollinen osa työnkuvaa, koska meidän odotetaan tuottavan myös videoita." ("Subtitling is a mandatory part of my job description, because we are expected to produce also video material.") (respondent 19)

It is also good to remember that out of all university staff members producing or recording video materials, only a small amount participated in the trainings. Therefore, as already implied above, the voices of the present data are likely to represent the ones most oriented towards the subtitling task.

Reported experiences of subtitling (hands-on)

Similar to the survey sections dealt with above, section 4c also consisted of five-point Likert scale statements dealing with experiences and perceptions of subtitling as a task. This section included a set of five scales, followed by an open-ended question 4d of "What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?". In the following, the quantitative results are analysed and supported by open responses extracted from the survey data as well as insights of the feedback data. For section 4c Likerts, reactions were received from 24–25 respondents, and 16 of them provided open comments in question 4d.

Figure 2 shows the mean scores per statement in order from highest to lowest, with the lowest score of 1 again indicating "completely disagree" and a score of 5 indicating "completely agree".

In this set of scales, the first claim (4c.1.) "Subtitling offers a nice variety to my other tasks", scored clearly the lowest (2.52.). This claim was set to measure the preference potential of this task in the overall workload of the academics. Overall, especially considering that the present data is likely to be positively biased towards most subtitling-friendly academics, the results are not very promising in terms of increasing well-being at work by adding this task to the work palette of teachers.

With a mean score of 2.52, almost half of the respondents, 12 (48%) disagreed with the statement, of which 9 completely. For some, subtitling does provide preferred variation among the work tasks; two of respondents (8%) agree completely and 5 (20%) somewhat agree with the claim, and as many as 6 (24%) seem to

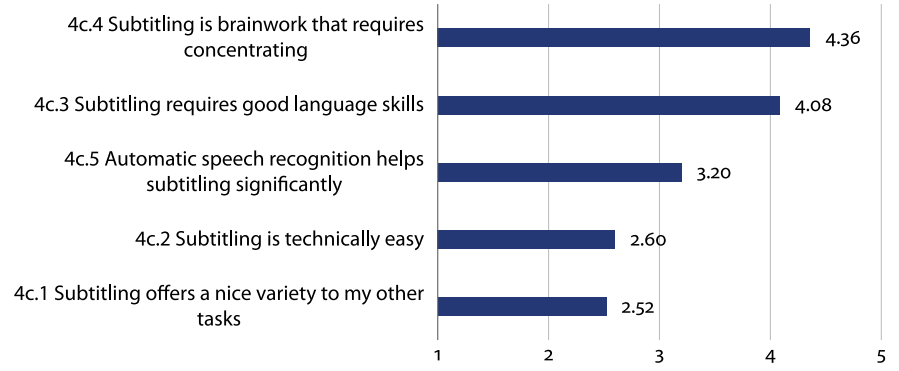


Figure 2. Mean scores of responses ($n = 24–25$) to set of scales 4c: Experiences and perceptions of subtitling as a task

have a neutral attitude (choice 3 on the scale). Open-ended data for question 4d ("What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?") was mainly received from the agreeing respondents, and these responses provided details echoing mixed feelings with regards to the claim.

> "Tavallaan ihan kivaa vaihtelua kyllä, mutta tuntunee taakalta heti kun rutiini on siihen." ("In a way it offers a nice variety, yes, but I guess it will turn into a burden once it has become routine") (respondent 11)

> "Varmaan olisi mukavaa vaihtelua ja hyödyllinen taito, jos tähän varattaisiin aikaa." ("It would probably offer nice variety and be a useful skill, if there was time allocated for this.") (respondent 23)

Similar views also arise also from some individual feedback comments. In the feedback questionnaire form, the section Further comments, which mainly consisted of praise and compliments on the quality of the training, one of the respondents had written a lengthy remark pointing out that the subtitling task, landing on tables of teaching staff, means working hours away from the lecturers' time for teaching duties ([—] *Should we then do half the amount of lectures, or stop doing open access?, or stop flipped classrooms, and only give livestreams?* [—] *we need clarity on this, yet it seems at the same time we have MORE work but we will lose 1 in 5 support staff...*).

The scale 4c.2 measured the extent to which the respondents perceive subtitling as "technically easy." With the claim "Subtitling is technically easy" 13 (52%) disagreed, 7 (28%) completely or somewhat agreed while 5 (20%) neither agreed nor disagreed, with the mean score of 2.60. It thus seems the respondents don't perceive subtitling as technically easy, although the experience within the respondent group varies considerably. While there might simply be individual differ-

ences in technical skills, the range in reactions might be to some extent related to the programmes used, the kind of videos subtitled, or the targeted quality level for the subtitles. On the basis of the training feedback data, approximately half of the participants (24) explicitly expressed having learned technical matters in the training session, starting from the awareness raising of the available software to more in-depth learning (*Correct ways to create captionings, technical elements—; Basic rules of captioning (amount of characters, how to do splitting,...; Technicalities about captions (length, punctuation, how to separate into reader-friendly lines.)*

Experiences with automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools seem to vary in relation to experiences of subtitling being easy or offering a nice variety. The scale 4c.5 was set to gain information on respondents' views on whether "Automatic speech recognition helps subtitling significantly". Here as many as 10 (40%) did not know or have a clear view (neither agreed nor disagreed), while 6 (24%) disagreed and 9 (36%) agreed, with the mean score of 3.20. In the open-ended question 4d ("What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?") respondents wrote of ASR:

> "Automaattinen puheentunnistus toimii ok-hyvin englannissa, mutta ei suomessa. Myös englanniksi teksti pitää kuitenkin tarkistaa, mikä vie aikaa." ("Automatic speech recognition works ok-well in English, but not in Finnish. Also in English you have to check the text, which takes time.") (respondent 1)

> "Jonkun verran havaitsen ympärilläni ylimitoitettuja odotuksia sen suhteen, mihin automaattinen puheentunnistus/tekstitys voisi pystyä. On helpompi hyväksyä työn vaatima aika ja vaiva, kun ymmärtää, että kyse ei niinkään ole jonkun ohjelman kyvyistä vaan siitä, miten selkeää (yleis)kieltä videolla puhutaan ja miten laadukas äänitys videolla on." ("I have sensed around me some unrealistic expectations on what automatic speech recognition/subtitling could be capable of. It is easier to accept the time and effort the task takes when you understand that it's not so much about the capability of some program, but about how clear (standard) language is spoken on the video and of how high quality the audio recording is.") (respondent 14)

> "Automaattisesta puheentunnistuksesta on iso apu etenkin siinä, että se jaksottaa tekstin automaattisesti. Varsinaisia tekstejä joutuu korjaaman paljon tai usein kirjoittamaan kokonaan uudestaan." ("Automatic speech recognition helps tremendously especially by sequencing the text automatically. The subtitles themselves you need to fix a lot or often even rewrite altogether.") (respondent 28)

With regards to experiences with ASR, the dispersion seems largely explained by the language of the subtitled video (Finnish or English), programmes used, language style and register of the video, and/or the video and especially audio quality. As respondent 14 above notes, there might also be differences in expectations for

ASR quality. It is also possible that ASR simply is not yet widely used, or that the possibility to use was not widely known to the respondents at the time.[4] Among the training feedback materials' suggestions for future development of trainings, focusing on ASR tools was pointed out in the name of efficiency and a realistic option (*so that I could get at least some subtitling done).*

Claims 4c.3 and 4c.4 focused more on the cognitive efforts of subtitling as a task, with high scores (see Figure 2). With the claim 4c.3 (average score 4.08) "Subtitling requires good language skills", the majority, 19 (79%) agreed, of which 12 completely. Only 4 respondents (17%) disagreed. This outcome is in line with the consensus in academia. For example, Neves (2008, p. 135) suggests that SDH professionals would need at least a degree in languages and/or translation studies with additional training on subtitling. Gottlieb (2008, p. 211) writes about the subtitler performing a diamesic shift — transferring information from spoken to written language –, which requires quite a bit of a linguistic reserve (see also Marttila 2024). Our results suggest that the respondents have a good understanding of these linguistic demands and competences related to subtitling work. With the claim 4c.4, "Subtitling is brainwork that requires concentrating", there was also a high agreement rate with a mean score of 4.36, with 22 (88) of the respondents agreeing of which 14 completely. Only two somewhat disagreed with this statement. In the next section, we provide more detailed perceptions of subtitling as a task as we move into the findings provided by Osgood scales and the related open response data.

Attitudes and emotions towards subtitling

Section 5a of the questionnaire comprised of ten bipolar adjective pairs on a seven-point semantic differential scale (Osgood scales), with a prompt of "I found subtitling …". This technique was applied in order to measure psychological distance between the chosen concepts (see Hahn & Heit, 2015). In alignment with the key principle of this measure type, the adjective pairs were designed roughly based on prior knowledge on relevant psychological dimensions (e.g. pleasantness, challengingness, importance). In the questionnaire, the respective adjective pairs were presented in random order so that the negative and the positive adjective did not systematically line up.

The adjective pairs with their mean scores are presented in Figure 3 ($n = 21$). Rating 1 represents the more negative end of the respective adjective pairs (marked first in the figure, i.e. *slow; exhausting*), and rating 7 the positive end

4. The programme demonstrated in the subtitle trainings offered by Tampere University didn't support ASR tools at the time of the trainings.

(i.e. *fast; refreshing*), making 4 the neutral centre point on the seven-point scale. Hence, the lower the mean score for each adjective pair, the closer the responses were to the negative adjective, and vice versa.

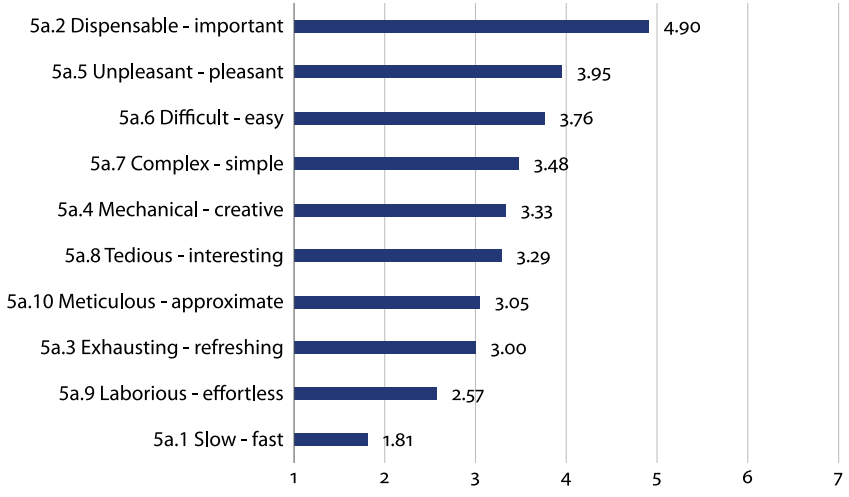


Figure 3. Mean scores of responses ($n = 21$) to 5a "I found subtitling …" on the semantic differential scale

As illustrated in Figure 3, the mean scores of two scales stand out. More than anything else, subtitling is regarded *important* and *slow*. The scale *important – unimportant* is the only one of the average value beyond the neutral point 4 (4.90). Other than that, the attitudes around subtitling are systematically concentrated more on the negative end of the scale. At the other end, the scale *slow – fast* stands out with the lowest mean score (1.81). The perceived slowness of subtitling was also strongly present in the spread of individual responses, where 90% of respondents (19) chose the closest options to "slow", and no respondents chose values closest to "fast." The results were in alignment with the responses presented in the previous Section 4.1 regarding subtitling as a part of teachers' workload.

The scale *laborious – effortless* scored second lowest with the mean score of 2.57. The value options closest to "laborious" got 17 (82%) of responses, whereas values closer to "effortless" only 3 (15%), option 7 even zero. Open-ended remarks verbalize the same sentiments and also the perceived slowness:

> "Hyvän tekstityksen tekeminen on työlästä ja hidasta." ("Making good subtitles is laborious and slow.") (respondent 9 on 5c: "What words would you use to describe subtitling to a colleague who hasn't done it?")

> "Työltähän se tuntuu…" ("It does feel like work alright…") (respondent 4 on 5d: "What did the different steps of subtitling feel like?")

The strong perception of labour intensity of subtitling work is thus present throughout our results.

Exhausting – refreshing scored 3.00, and *meticulous – approximate* 3.05. *Exhausting – refreshing* got 7 (33%) responses on the neutral central score of 4, but as many regarded the task highly exhausting with a score of 2. In *meticulous – approximate*, the distribution of the responses was more balanced, centring around the middle values of 4 (5 responses, 24%) and 3 (6 responses, 29%). The "exhaustive" and "meticulous" nature of subtitling were also pointed out in the open-ended responses:

> "Kaikki muu paitsi itse videon teko (ei tekstitysten) ja tekstitysten valmiiksi saaminen tuntuu aika uuvuttavalta." ("Everything else other than making the videos themselves (not subtitles) and completing the subtitles feels pretty exhausting.") (respondent 1 on 5d: "What did the different steps of subtitling feel like?")

> "Pikkutarkkaa ja hidasta." ("Meticulous and slow.") (respondent 3 on 5c: "What words would you use to describe subtitling to a colleague who hasn't done it?")

The evaluations "refreshing" or "approximate" were not mentioned in the open-ended responses.

Scales *mechanical – creative, complex — simple*, and *tedious – interesting* scored mean values slightly below the neutral point (see Figure 3). With *mechanical – creative* (3.33), the responses fell quite to the middle, with the neutral 4 receiving 6 (29%) responses, and rest of the responses leaning more to the negative side. The most balanced of the three was *complex – simple* (3.48), with value 4 receiving 6 (29%) and value 3, 8 (38%) responses. On *tedious – interesting* (3.29) the responses leaned towards the negative end but were distributed quite evenly between values 1–5. Of these, only "tedious" and "interesting" got referenced in the open-ended responses:

> "Monotonista ja äärimmäisen tylsää." ("Monotonous and extremely boring") (respondent 26 on 4d: "What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?")

> "Olen oikeastaa kiinnostunut tekstittämisstä [sic], voisin vaikka tehdä sitä työkseni!" ("I have actually gotten interested in subtitling, I could do it for a living!") (respondent 14 on 5f: "What else would you like to say about yourself as a subtitler, or about video subtitling in general?")
> "Mielenkiintoista nippelityötä, jossa yhdistyy kuunteleminen ja tekstin muokkaaminen." ("Interesting nitty-gritty work, where listening and text editing are combined.") (respondent 16 on 5c: "What words would you use to describe subtitling to a colleague who no prior experience on it?")

Scales *difficult – easy* and *unpleasant – pleasant* scored near the neutral centre point, with mean scores of 3.76 and 3.95 (see Figure 3). On *difficult – easy* the distribution of responses was perhaps surprisingly neutral, with 6 (29%) of responses on value 4, and the rest scattering on the whole scale. The same was with *unpleasant – pleasant*, with 8 (38%) of responses on value 4, and 0–3 on each of the other value points. These outcomes are indications of mixed feelings and experiences when it comes to subtitling; in the light of the present data, it is perceived clearly neither difficult and unpleasant nor easy and pleasant, or seemingly a bit of both.

> "Varsin helppoa kun sen osaa, mutta aikaa vievää ja tylsää." ("It's quite easy when you know what you're doing, but time consuming and boring.") (respondent 28 on 5c: "What words would you use to describe subtitling to a colleague who hasn't done it?")

> "Ei se loppujen lopuksi ollut kovin vaikeaa, muistaakseni." ("At the end of the day it wasn't really hard, to my recollection") (respondent 11 on 5f: "What else would you like to say about yourself as a subtitler, or about video subtitling in general?")

It is interesting, that even though subtitling was described as easy in the open-ended questions, none of the respondents gave it the highest value 7, "easy", on the Osgood scale. This might be connected to the experience of subtitling as slow and laborious, and as indicated in Section 4.2, most of the respondents did not find subtitling technically easy (see statement 4c.2).

Finally, with regards to scale *dispensable – important* which received the highest mean score of 4.90, respondents' value choices were also quite evenly distributed but centring on the positive end; values from 4 to 7 got 3–5 responses each (76%). The positive attitude was also reflected in the open-ended responses, where many respondents wrote along the lines of "subtitling (or accessibility in general) is important, *but*":

> "Vaikka tekstittäminen olisi suhteellisen mielenkiintoista ja joiltain osin tärkeääkin, priorisoin kyllä melkein kaikkea muuta." ("Even though subtitling is relatively interesting and partly also important, I prioritise almost everything else.") (respondent 9 on 4b: "What else would you want to say about subtitling as part of your job description?")

> "En sano tekstittämistä typeräksi, koska sillä on oma merkityksensä, mutta toivon ettei sitä automaattisesti ajatella opettajien keskeiseksi tehtäväksi." ("I won't say subtitling is silly, because it has its importance, but I hope it is not automatically considered as a vital task for teachers.") (respondent 26 on 4d: "What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?")

> "Pidän saavutettavuutta tärkeänä asiana, mutta opettajille pitäisi työnantajan puolelta tarjota enemmän resursseja kurssimateriaalin saavutettavuuden parantamiseen." ("I see accessibility as an important thing, but the employer should offer more resources for teachers for making the course materials accessible.") (respondent 28 on 2b: "What else would you like to say about accessibility?")

The open-ended responses seem to be in alignment with the scale measurements (see Section 4.1) in that subtitling is not generally regarded by the respondents as a part of their job description. It therefore seems that subtitling is perceived as important, but there is resistance in seeing it becoming a task of the teaching staff. The final analysis section focusing on the respondents' evaluations of themselves as those responsible for making subtitles sheds more light into this controversy.

Respondents' evaluations of themselves as video subtitlers

In order to measure respondents' self-efficacy and self-esteem with regard to subtitling work, each respondent was asked to rate eight statements addressing themselves as a subtitler (section 5e of the survey questionnaire). Reactions were received from 22–24 respondents on the five-point Likert scale. The mean scores of responses are illustrated in Figure 4, where score 1 stands for "completely disagree" and 5 "completely agree", making score 3 the neutral centre point. Again, the set of statements was followed by an open-ended question 5f of "What else would you like to say about yourself as a subtitler, or about video subtitling in general?". Here, 12 respondents provided comments.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the average scores of all scales scattered around the neutral value point 3. Two scales score under this. 5e.1, "I am the best person to subtitle my own videos", scored the lowest with a mean score of 2.65. 12 respondents (52%) strongly or somewhat feel that they are not the best ones to subtitle their own videos, while 6 (26%) to some extent agreed with the statement. It is possible that the lack of allocated time for subtitling (as indicated among the results reported above) plays a role in these perceptions. Subtitling does not appear to be regarded particularly difficult, as indicated by the relatively low mean score of the scale "subtitling was harder than I expected" (2.78). Here, most respondents disagreed (9, 39%) or did not agree nor disagree (10, 43%). The results correspond to the findings reviewed in Section 4.2, to 4c.2 "Subtitling is technically easy", and in Section 4.3 to 5a.6 "*difficult – easy*". These measures suggest that respondents generally perceive subtitling as not very challenging, or at least less challenging than anticipated. It is also possible that for the target group of this study, subtitling might have previously seemed like a challenging task, but after participating in the training, less so.

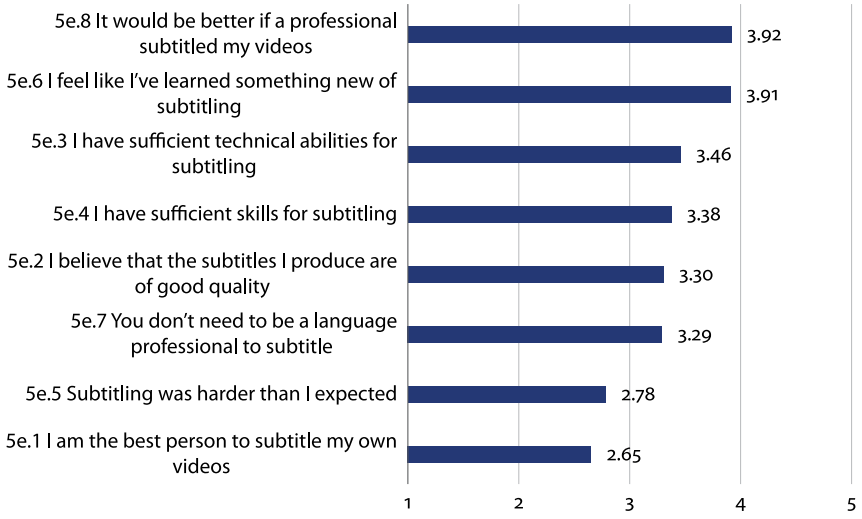


Figure 4. The mean scores of responses ($n = 22–24$) to 5e, respondents' self-regard as subtitlers

Statements 5e.7 and 5e.8 were set to examine who the respondents regard should be doing the subtitles. Interestingly with the claim 5.e7 "You don't need to be a language professional to subtitle", the majority (14, 58%) of 24 respondents agreed, with only 8 (33%) disagreeing. This is in conflict with the measures indicating that subtitling is seen as a task for language professionals that requires brainwork and concentration (see claims 4c.3 and 4c.4 in Section 4.2). The respondents thus feel strongly that subtitling requires good language skills and is cognitively challenging, but 58% of them do not see language expertise as a requirement for the task.

However, reactions to statement 5e.8 "It would be better if a professional subtitled my videos", the reactions were the complete opposite: 16 (67%) of 24 respondents agreed, of which 12 completely. This in part contradicts interestingly with the responses to claim 5e.2 ("I believe that the subtitles I produce are of good quality"), where altogether 52% of respondents agreed. Quality issues also came up in the open-ended responses to question 5f ("What else would you like to say about yourself as a subtitler, or about video subtitling in general?"):

> "Mielestäni esim. opetusvideoiden tekstityksen ei tarvitse olla täydellinen, riittää, että siitä saa selvän. Tässäkin tarpeeksi hyvä on tarpeeksi." ("I don't think that the subtitles of for example teaching videos have to be perfect, it's enough that you can make sense of it. Also here good enough is enough.") (respondent 28)

The responses to claim 5e.8 ("It would be better if a professional subtitled my videos") reflect even stronger attitudes than those reflected in the results of scale 5e.1 ("I am the best person to subtitle my own videos"), where 52% did not see themselves as the best option. When combined with the open-ended responses, these feelings seem to be related to resources and lack of time:

> "Tekstittäminen tulisi minun mielestäni kohdistaa aiheen asiantuntijoille, joilla tämä työtehtävä on osa työsuunnitelmaa/työtehtäviä." ("Subtitling should in my opinion be targeted to experts of the topic that have this task as a part of their work plan/tasks.") (respondent 18 on 4d: "What else would you like to say about subtitling as a task?")

> "Jos ajatellaan opetusmateriaalia, niin varmaankin opettaja itse olisi paras henkilö tekstittämiseen. Tähän ei kutienkaan riitä resurssit (lähinnä aika), joten seuraavaksi paras vaihtoehto on joku muu hyvän (meidän alamme tieteellisen) kielitaidon omaava henkilö." ("If you think about teaching material, I guess the teacher theirself would be the best person for subtitling. However, there is not enough resources (mainly time) for this, so the next best option is someone else who has good language skills (from our scientific field).") (respondent 23 on 5f: "What else would you like to say about yourself as a subtitler, or about video subtitling in general?")

Claims 5e.3, 5e.4 and 5e.6 mapped out the skills and learning related to subtitling. With the claim 5e.3 "I have sufficient technical abilities for subtitling", majority (14, 58%) of the 24 respondents agreed, only 7 (29%) disagreed. With the statement 5e.4, "I have sufficient skills for subtitling", the outcome was very similar, with 13 (54%) agreeing and 7 (29%) disagreeing. On 5e.6, "I feel like I've learned something new of subtitling", the majority, 15 of 22 (68%) respondents agreed. It thus seems that the majority of respondents, though not all, feel that they have sufficient skills for subtitling — and, as previously noted, that subtitling is not regarded too challenging as a technical task. Respondents also generally report having learned new things about subtitling, which explicitly came through in the subtitling training feedback data. These results make sense as the survey was delivered to the university employees that had enrolled for the subtitling trainings.

Conclusions

Handford et al. (2019, p.163) emphasize the need to build 'a stronger symbiotic relationship' between language awareness research and social and professional communication research. In this article, we have contributed to this call by addressing perceptions, attitudes and experiences of subtitling by academics who, with regards to subtitling, are positioned as paraprofessionals.

The most interesting results of the study lie in the profound complexity of the staff's attitudes and experiences towards subtitling and accessibility. As reviewed along the analysis, subtitling is perceived to require good language and focusing skills, but simultaneously, the respondents do not consider it necessary to have a competence of a language professional to produce subtitles. Subtitling is also considered relatively easy as a task. Furthermore, the university staff members responding to our survey regard the subtitles they themselves produce of relatively good quality, while they, however, wish that a professional would subtitle their videos.

In terms of attitudes and emotions, subtitling is, above all, regarded as *important* (see Section 4.3), but also relatively *slow, laborious, exhausting, meticulous, tedious* and *mechanical*. In addition, lack of time allocated for subtitling is prominent in the experiences of the respondents. Our findings suggest that, at least at the time of the study, the new task of subtitling had been generally forgotten from the annual workload calculations or, for other reasons, not allocated to the university staff's annual workloads. At best, the time reserved for this task was not considered sufficient with regards to actual time requirement of the task. It is conceivable that this scarcity of resources is reflected in the critical attitudes towards subtitling. As public sector organizations, universities generally struggle with resources, and subtitling educational videos seems to be a good example of a conflict between academic objectives and the resources allocated into achieving the objectives — which, in the case of subtitling audiovisual materials, is regulated by law.

Among the respondents of this study, mainly consisting of university teachers, there is resistance of subtitling as a task to be carried out by *themselves*. Participants of the study regard the subtitling responsibility as an embodiment of the growing workload of the teaching staff, resulting from the university funding cuts, and the tendency of duties of the support staff landing on teachers' tables. The findings of the present study encourage universities to (re)consider the use of resources when it comes to subtitling; is it a good practice to train the teaching staff to produce subtitles to their materials (with the risk of weak or uneven quality) or would it be better to invest in professional subtitlers in the name of quality and efficiency — a question that frequently accompanies paraprofessional language work. Based on the present data, many teaching staff members seem to be in the pressure of either giving up using video materials or, alternatively, breaking the law (leaving the subtitles out), which are both undesirable outcomes.

It is however also worth noting that despite the afore-mentioned views, experiences and attitudes towards accessibility are generally positive, and towards subtitling as a paraprofessional task they are not entirely negative: several staff members describe subtitling as important and/or interesting part of their tasks

(see section 4.3.). It is, however, good to bear in mind that the present results are likely to be positively biased as these data was gathered among employees who had been active enough to enrol for subtitle training. Therefore, more comprehensive data would be needed from both university context as well as elsewhere from public as well as private sector. Furthermore, the current data were gathered when the legislation was new, and it could be interesting to repeat the study in the future after practices have become established.

The overall results as well as rapid technological development also encourage further research on the topic from the perspective of using AI and automatic speech recognition (ASR) tools, as both have quickly become an integral part of the working life and especially paraprofessional language work. This opens up a possibility to a more ethnographic approach on how paraprofessionals use these tools, what kind of attitudes and experiences are present, and if the technology helps to address the perceived negative aspects of subtitling as a task.

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CHAPTER 15

Paraprofessional translation in research

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This chapter explores the role of paraprofessional translation (PPT) in academic research via empirical data collected from one Finnish university. Despite the dominance of English in academic publishing, research is inherently multilingual and involves various translation-related activities performed by researchers who often lack formal training in translation. Our study suggests that researchers frequently function as paraprofessional translators: they engage in multilingual communicative tasks throughout different stages of research work, often without recognizing the translatoriality inherent in their activities. We discuss the implications of this phenomenon for research, including questions of research ethics and methodology, and advocate for more translation awareness in academic contexts.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, research translation, research translatoriality, translation awareness, research ethics, research methodology, Academic English

Introduction

Academic publication is overwhelmingly dominated by English, and language skills in the current lingua franca are an important asset — even a necessity — for a researcher (e.g. Ammon, 2001, 2012; Kulczycki et al., 2018, 2020; Tietze, 2022). Yet research is an international and intercultural phenomenon and anything but monolingual: not all research is done in English, not all data is in English, and not all researchers use English to communicate. After all, the number of non-native English-speaking researchers is higher than those for whom English is their first language (Montgomery, 2009, p. 7; Stockemer & Wigginton, 2019). So, if any other languages are involved, there are degrees of multilingualism present at different stages of research projects.

In many ways, research work is indeed a showcase for numerous translation-related operations. However, most multilingual activities connected to research

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are done by the researchers themselves, and they rarely have any training in matters related to translation. Some researchers may even be oblivious to the constant presence of translatoriality in their work, unless professional language services are used. In this chapter, we explore the nature of paraprofessional translation (PPT) in academic research work based on data collected from one Finnish university. We suggest that translation is ubiquitous within research projects, and performed mostly by paraprofessionals.

This chapter provides an overview of how translation is interlaced with research. After some general ideas, we present our data and discuss the different aspects of PPT in research work. Before conclusion, we bring up some epistemological, ethical, and methodological challenges that relate to the phenomenon.

Translation and research

Koskela et al. (2017, p. 466) define paraprofessional translation as translatorial activity that "takes place in the context of professional activities and is dependent on the institutionalized professional framework of the participants". Such translation work is done by people who translate as part of their paid profession but who are actually hired and paid for other tasks rather than translation. Typically, these paraprofessionals do not identify as translators and may not even be conscious of the role of translation in their work. This applies well to researchers: as we demonstrate in this chapter, translation is an essential part of their professional activities and deeply embedded in their institutional context.

Within translation studies (TS), the term *translation* is used in a very broad sense to refer to a plethora of multilingual, multimodal, and even intersemiotic activities. *Translation* is viewed as a collection of practices which do not necessarily all share similar essential properties but are closely related.[1] In our data (see next section), translation represents a broad spectrum of multilingual activities. This is because we explicitly directed our respondents and participants to consider *translation* broadly from a multilingual perspective.

1. For instance, Gideon Toury ([1995]2012: 69) refers to *translation* as different activities that share a Wittgensteinian *family resemblance* as opposed to having an identifiable shared essence. Building upon Toury's description, Maria Tymoczko (2007) appraises translation as a cross-cultural *cluster concept*. This anti-essentialist perspective is also present in Lawrence Venuti (2019), who claims that translated texts do not contain an *invariant essence* that could be identified by the translator and transferred into the target intact. Thus, defining *translation* once and for all is an impossibility within our paradigm.

For instance, in research projects, practices that could be referred to as *translation* include activities ranging from the obvious cases of so-called "prototypical" translation to less obvious cases of "non-prototypical" translation (see e.g. Halverson, 2002; Tirkkonen-Condit, 2011). Examples include prototypical professional work of translating complete manuscripts (commonly from other languages into English), *ad hoc* interpreting performed by whoever is present during field work, multilingual discussions within research groups, and production of texts in one language based on previous research written in other languages. The layperson's initial interpretation of *translation*, however, is much narrower than that of a trained translator or translation studies scholar, for whom translation more likely covers a wider range of activities — for some, this may reach beyond interlingual linguistic processes into any kind of processes "in which meaning is created or interpreted" (Marais 2023, p. 6, see also Gambier 2023).

In a sense, every language user can, and does, translate.[2] Communication via languages is an inherently human feature, so everyday instances of translation are to be expected in potentially multilingual environments, including research work. For instance, in Finnish universities, a researcher's work is very much dictated by English. Researchers whose first language, research data, work environment, and way of thinking are inherently Finnish are still often expected to publish in English to reach a broader audience and consequently to produce more prestige and funds for the university.

To be more precise, the shared lingua franca of researchers' publications is Academic English[3], and one of the cornerstones of writing Academic English is to communicate with clarity and unambiguity by applying specific practices of Anglophone academic writing. However, this aim for clarity in communication might also be hindered by the use of a lingua franca. Using a language foreign to most, if not all, parties involved comes with possible risks, including limited potential for expression and possibilities for misunderstandings. This is especially important in knowledge production, and translation is indeed integral to the production of scientific knowledge (see also Temple & Young, 2004; Tietze, 2022; Xian, 2020; Penttilä et al., 2021). Before exploring translation in research work in more detail, we present the empirical data on which we base our further examination.

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2. Cf. Brian Harris' (1978) concept of *natural translation*.

3. There is a plethora of terms used to describe this phenomenon, including English for academic purposes (EAP), English academic discourse (EAD), or English as the international language of science (EILS).

Data of this study

We illustrate and examine the topic of paraprofessional translation in research by using one Finnish university as a case through which we investigate the phenomenon. For this example, we use empirical data collected via two means: (1) a questionnaire sent to university researchers and (2) material produced during a course for PhD researchers called Translating Research Material, which is discussed in more detail later in this section.

The data excerpts are marked as follows: the questionnaire answers are identified as UNI20[participant ID], e.g. UNI20_001. For material produced during the course, there are preliminary assignments marked as PRE [year] [participant ID], e.g. PRE 2024 001, and post-course reflections marked as POST [year] [participant ID], e.g. POST 2024 001. When referring to people who have answered the questionnaire, we use the term *respondents*. When referring to people who took our course, we use the term *participants*. For anonymity, we have redacted mentions of languages other than English and Finnish. When we present examples of our data, they are reported in English. If the excerpt is a translation, it is followed by a footnote containing the original source text. All translations are done by the authors, creating additional layers of self-conscious research translatoriality within our text.

While research itself can be seen a global phenomenon, we believe that research on this subject cannot be done from a point-of-view that is situated outside existing practices and institutions. At the time of writing this chapter, our data comprises yet material from one single Finnish university, and as such is subject to the cultural and situational practices and contingencies within this academic institution.

Questionnaire

The first data set comprises answers to a questionnaire for university researchers collected in 2020 ($n=114$). The questionnaire contained questions on topics of multilingualism and translatorial activities in research work. It attracted responses from researchers of all major academic fields that are studied at the university in question (see Figure 1). The largest representation is from humanities ($n=29$/26% of the total number), followed by social sciences ($n=24$/21%), medical and health sciences ($n=23$/20%) and natural sciences ($n=21$/18%). Only six respondents reported agricultural sciences as their field of study and one respondent was a researcher in technical sciences. Respondents were able to choose multiple fields of study, and, consequently, ten respondents chose more than one field. They were all categorized as "multidisciplinary". Their combinations included almost all pairings across the other options, and one respondent chose three different fields.

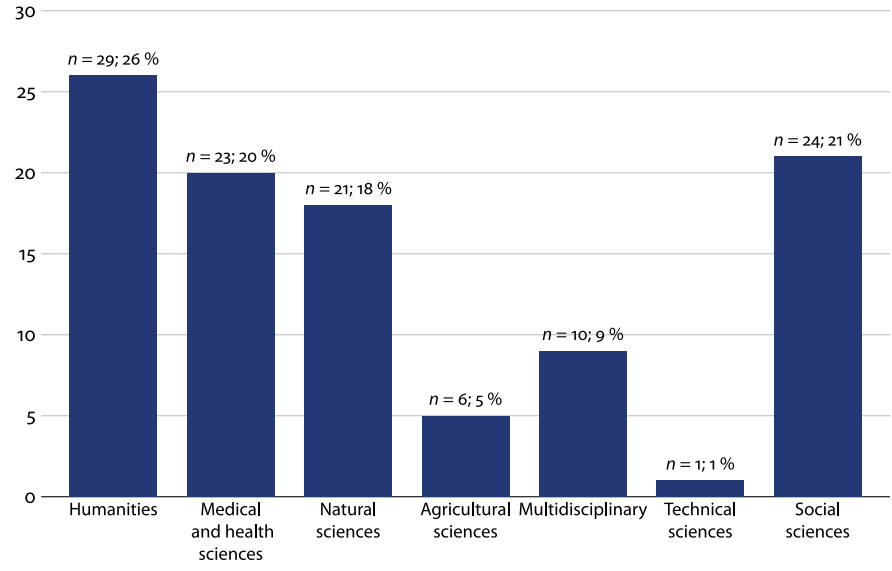


Figure 1. Distribution and frequencies of questionnaire answers across different academic disciplines

The exact number of potential respondents that could have answered our survey is difficult to determine. The number of staff members involved in research at the university in question in June 2020 was c. 1,800 and the number of those PhD students who have no funding but who were enrolled in the various PhD programs during the spring term of 2020 amounted to 1,682. Thus, it is obvious that the total number of responses ($n = 114$) that we received is only a fraction of researchers at the university we examined. However, all the main fields of study are represented in the data and so it provides evidence for the attitudes, conventions and practices concerning translation in the different fields.

Course material

The second data set comprises written materials produced by participants at the Translating Research Material (TRM) course, which has been offered annually for PhD researchers since 2018. During the course, we discuss theoretical and methodological basics of translation in research, give practical examples of translation tools and strategies, and hold workshops where we discuss each participant's research project from a translation perspective. We are not aiming to provide researchers with professional translation competence but help them consider questions of translation in their individual projects.

In the course, the participants write a preliminary assignment and a post-course reflection, which we have used as data for our research. While teaching the course and tutoring the workshops, we also take personal notes. Our data comprises the texts by participants who consented to be included in our research as well as our own notes (for more information see Riionheimo et al., 2024; Penttilä et al., 2021; 2024).

For this data set, we have material from 2018–2024, altogether 41 preliminary assignments and 38 post-course reflections.

Defining features of PPT in research

There are some key elements that are endemic to paraprofessional translation in research. We examine these elements based on the empirical data presented in the previous section.

The researcher can be considered a textbook example of a paraprofessional translator; they rarely have any professional training in translation and are not identified as translators but are nevertheless expected to perform translation alongside other professional activities. Based on both the questionnaire answers as well as in the opinions of our course participants, the basic assumption seems to be that researchers should be able to use Academic English in a professional manner and communicate their work in English, regardless of their first language or the language of their data.

When examining the phenomenon of translation in research, we have noticed that the researcher performs various translatorial tasks throughout all stages of the research process. The researcher's translatorial tasks may begin at the earliest stages of research projects, in coming up with research ideas, communicating ideas within a research group, and applying for funding. Translatorial activities continue throughout research processes, from data collection (i.a. translating research instruments, interpretation in interviews) to data analysis (i.a. translating qualitative data, applying theoretical concepts from other languages) to the final stages of reporting research findings (e.g. translating full articles, translating excerpts of data for publications). We have also identified two ubiquitous stages which include constant translational activities throughout research projects: interaction with previous research and communication within (multilingual) research groups.

While the researcher's translatorial tasks cover the complete research process, other translatorial agents may be involved during some stages but are not commonly present throughout the whole process. Common stages where other translatorial agents are often involved include interviews conducted with

the help of interpreters and full manuscripts translated by professionals for publication purposes.

Research-related translation also requires a high level of subject matter expertise. The dual role of researcher/paraprofessional translator is, for instance, visible in translation of highly specialized terminology which is endemic to research work. For instance, researchers might create new terminology or suggest translations for novel terms in their respective fields. We have observed that researchers often need to consider how to translate field-specific terminology, especially when no established equivalents between languages, or even established terminology within one language, is acknowledged. In some cases, different researchers may use different terms or different translations to refer to the same phenomenon. However, some TS scholars might not deem questions of terminology specifically problems of *translation.* For instance, Anthony Pym (2011, 6:15) claims that a problem where a source text has only a single way of rendering it into a target language is not a translation problem but rather "a terminology problem or a grammar problem." This brings up the question of who can be considered an authority on interlingual terminology. Highly specialized terminological work could be seen as the domain of both subject experts and language experts. And if the (paraprofessional) translator is also the subject field expert, the authority on interlingual terminology might thus be bestowed upon the researcher operating in both roles.

Translatorial agents in research

In our questionnaire, one consideration was who performs translation-related activities in research work. By far, the most common translatorial agent in our data is indeed the researcher, as 83% (95 out of 114) respondents say they do these tasks themselves. Yet, different contexts call for different agents, as illustrated by the following quote:

> I mainly translate texts myself. A colleague, who speaks [language X] as their mother tongue translates from English to [language X], which has been required every now and then. My partner helps translating into [language Y], when needed. Before I publish a research report in English, it is proofread either by a native English-speaking colleague or a friend, or if the work is large, it is sent to a professional translator. (UNI20_028)[4]

4. Pääasiassa käännän tekstiä itse. Kolleegani, joka puhuu äidinkielenään X, kääntää englannista X, mitä aina silloin tällöin on vaadittu. Puolisoni avustaa X kääntämisessä, mikäli on tarvetta ollut. Ennen kuin julkaisen englanniksi kirjoitetun tutkimusrapotin, sen oikolukee joko äidinkielenään englantia puhuva kolleega tai kaveri, tai mikäli työ on iso, se lähetetään ammattikääntäjälle.

The second most common agents are colleagues with good language skills (63 out of 114/55%), who are also mentioned in the previous excerpt. If we include the researchers and their colleagues as part of the same group of paraprofessional translators, we can observe that researchers not only do translatorial activities related to their own work, but also help their colleagues with similar tasks.

Some respondents explicitly mention that they have native English-speaking colleagues who help them with translation and proofreading. Working with native English-speakers (or being a native English-speaker) could be considered an asset in research work, although further discussion whether native-level English should be an aim in academic publishing is a question worth consideration. Similarly, as academic writing is itself a specific skill, some researchers suggest that merely being a native English speaker is not necessarily much of an advantage (see i.a. Hyland, 2016; Tietze, 2022; Zhao, 2017). Furthermore, our data suggest that translation skills are heavily equated to language skills; our respondents consider (bilingual) native speakers and language teachers as competent translators.

The third most frequently mentioned agent is machine translation (48/42.1%). Machine translation is mentioned as a tool to aid one's own translation work, but it is also used as a more autonomous translatorial agent in other situations, such as instant messaging, gisting articles in unfamiliar languages, and making sense of what is discussed in the university internal communication channel. For instance, one respondent finds that the tendency to communicate mostly in Finnish hinders their integration into the university, but that at least "written communication is [...] one click away via Google translate into English" (UNI20_070). However, there seems to be variation between respondents' and participants' views on the end-quality and reliability of machine translation.

> It depends on the situation we are in and which one we rely on. Machine translation is used only for quick messages and never for anything official, the quality is pretty bad. (UNI20_024)

The role of professional translation alongside paraprofessional translation in research projects is notable too. Only 25 (21.9%) respondents used professional translation services as part of their research work. Professional proofreading was more commonly mentioned (34/29.8%) than professional translating. However, the respondents' answers illustrate that professional language services have a specific role in research projects, although they also bring along other considerations. For instance, some respondents commented that obtaining good translators can be difficult.

> Colleagues with good language skills are essential but definitely we rely on professional translators and interpreters. We do however, also have to check their work, because finding a translator and interpreter that also is familiar with the field and its vocabulary in several languages is not very easy. (UNI20_024)

Agents who could be considered non-professional are relatives or acquaintances with language skills. Many (19/16.7%) mention that their partners or friends help with translation. Other, less frequently mentioned agents include fieldwork assistants, language teachers, and supervisors. A few respondents mentioned anonymous referees, who give comments on language and translations in their reviews.

Translation in research work

A multilingual world produces multilingual research topics, which requires translation. We have observed that when multilingualism is present, translation happens throughout the research process. The researcher as a paraprofessional translator is present at all stages of the process, yet our data also demonstrated examples of professional language services being used at each stage.

In this section, we present examples of how translation manifests in research by using excerpts from our data. For a simple description, we have grouped the examples under the two broader topics: (1) multilingual communication and (2) multilingual research materials.

Multilingual communication

Communication in a multilingual work environment includes in-group communication, administrative communication within the university, and communication with different actors and networks present in the research processes.

Especially in-group communication constantly involves translation, most notably between English and other languages. In our data, Finnish speakers may use Finnish for in-group communication if only Finnish speakers are present, yet write solely in English and default to English in the presence of one or more non-Finnish speakers.

> With my research group and partners we use English and [language X]. With people internally [at the university] I use Finnish. (UNI20_024)

> We work mainly in English even between native Finnish speakers, if the group or project has one or more people, who do not speak Finnish (UNI20_028)[5]

5. Työ tapahtuu pääasiassa englanniksi, yleensä myös suomea äidinkielenään puhuvien kesken, jos ryhmässä tai projektissa on mukana yksi tai useampi suomea osaamaton henkilö.

Multilingualism is present nearly by default in communication within the university, yet in solely English-speaking universities (if such even exist) the situation might be different. While it can be debated whether everyday communication in different languages constitutes as translation, we consider it as falling under the spectrum of multilingual activities that are at least closely related to translation. However, there are also hints of monolingualism in our data.

> Everything is in English (UNI20_042)

As a number of our respondents were PhD researchers, many of them reported that multilingualism is involved in communication with supervisors. For instance, an international PhD researcher may do research in their first language and use English for discussing their research with Finnish supervisors — in addition to reporting their research.

> I have two supervisors in Finland and two in [country X]. I use English for our communication, but there is some literature in [country X] that I have to read too. (UNI20_107)

One illustrative example from our data highlights how translation is present in both interaction with reference material as well as in-group communication:

> There is translation partly between thinking in Finnish and processing text in English (reading/writing); occasionally my supervisor has written me an email in Finnish and asked to translate the key points into English for colleagues, or I might incidentally help to interpret between foreign language colleagues and laboratory assistants who are less confident in their English. When writing, I usually keep the automatic spelling/grammar check on. (UNI20_045)[6]

Other examples include tasks related to funding, planning, and obtaining research permits. A common topic is preparing and modifying research plans and funding applications. As research plans are iterative and often need to be modified for different contexts, they are dynamic texts whose production often involves translation.

> Finnish is used exclusively when reporting to Finnish research foundations, everything else uses English (UNI20_025)

6. Kääntämistä osin suomenkielisen ajattelun ja englanninkielisen tekstin prosessoinnin (lukemisen/kirjoittamisen välillä); toisinaan ohjaajani on kirjoittanut minulle sähköpostin suomeksi ja pyytänyt kääntämään sen olennaiset kohdat englanniksi kollegoita varten, tai saatan ohimennessäni toimia aputulkkina vieraskielisten kollegoiden ja englannistaan epävarmempien laboratorioapulaisten välillä. Kirjoittaessani pidän yleensä Wordissä automaattista kirjoitus/kielioppivirheiden merkitsemistoimintoa päällä.

> Some funding applications have had to be written in English, so I have the research plan in both Finnish and English. (UNI20_066)[7]

As multilingual communication is endemic to research, it may also cause issues. We asked our respondents to describe such problems they have encountered. Many mention that the problems in multilingual communication are minor and mainly consist of misunderstandings, although there are also sociological implications caused by lack of language skills.

> Some find it challenging to discuss in English and may thus occasionally leave out non-Finnish-speakers from emails, or they might not be able to have their say in a group meeting held in English. (UNI20_028)[8]

This brings us to our second broader topic: how translation manifests in research in terms of multilingual research materials.

Multilingual research materials

Multilingual research materials in this case comprises previous research and other background material as well as data collected and produced for the projects. For instance, respondents report reading previous research or methodological material in either multiple languages or in languages that are different from their reporting language.

> In my work, I continuously manoeuvre between two different languages, for instance among different language source materials, my own thinking, and notes written in different languages. (UNI20_006)[9]

Our respondents reported mainly reading in English and Finnish, yet a plethora of other languages were mentioned too, including Russian, German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese. In certain fields, source materials are also written in extinct languages, such as Koine Greek and Latin. Yet, some might not identify any multilingualism in their work; as one respondent puts it:

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7. jotkut rahoitushakemukset on pitänyt kirjoittaa englanniksi, joten minulla on tutkimussuunnitelma sekä suomeksi että englanniksi

8. Jotkut kokevat englanniksi keskustelun haastavaksi ja jättävät sähköpostiketjuista pois ajoittain suomea osaamattomia, tai eivät englanniksi käydyissä ryhmäpalavereissa saa sanotuksi asiaansa.

9. Itse liikun työssäni jatkuvasti kahden eri kielen välillä esimerkiksi eri kielellä olevien lähteiden, oman ajatteluni ja eri kielillä kirjoitettujen muistiinpanojen myötä.

> I have never read or done or worked on any research that has been done in other language than English. (UNI20_104)

Many of our respondents mentioned multilingualism, translation, and interpreting as part of their data collection processes. For example, research instruments, such as interview questions and questionnaires (including the one we used to collect our data) are often translated into different languages. It is common for the researchers to translate the instruments themselves, or at least partially themselves. There was also mention of indirect translation of research instruments by using an auxiliary language:

> Part of the research is conducted in [country X]. The materials used in Finland, questionnaire, participant information sheets, websites, etc. were translated from Finnish into English (English as an auxiliary language) and from English into [language X]. There is only one person in the group who speaks [language X] and they do not speak Finnish. That is why everything is translated multiple times. (UNI20_062)[10]

Interpreting is most commonly present in the data collection stage, especially if the research project contains fieldwork. Often such interpreting can be described as paraprofessional or non-professional, as the people interpreting are most often not professionals, but either co-researchers or various other people involved in the fieldwork.

When analysing data, it is not uncommon for the researchers to use multiple languages[11] but some also mention translating the data either completely or partially for analysis. However, it is more common to analyse in the source language and translate excerpts for reporting purposes.

> The material in its original form is in Finnish, but from the start of the textual analysis it is grouped according to English terminology. The whole data is not translated, though, just examples. (UNI20_003)[12]

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10. Osa tutkimuksesta toteutetaan [maassa X]. Suomessa käytetty suomenkielinen kyselylomake ja tutkimustiedotteet, verkkosivut jne. käännettiin suomesta englantiin (englanti käännöksen apukielenä) ja englannista [kieleen X]. Tutkimusryhmässä vain yksi henkilö on [X]kielen taitoinen ja hän ei osaa suomea. Siksi kaikki käännetään moneen kertaan.

11. Some researchers also mention the use of different programming languages in data analysis stage, which falls somewhat outside the scope of this research but is still interesting to note how some of our respondents have thought of language questions also outside natural languages.

12. Materiaali on alkuperäisessä muodossaan suomeksi mutta tekstianalyysin alkuvaiheesta asti aineisto ryhmitellään englantilaisen terminologian mukaan. Koko aineistoa ei kuitenkaan käännetä, vain esimerkkitapauksia.

> Everything happens in English and the Finnish questionnaire data must be translated into English (UNI20_034)[13]

Translation of research data prior to the analysis produces a major epistemological question of what the researcher is analysing.

We have also had discussions with our course participants about whether translating their data in full would benefit their research projects, as some PhD researchers have felt that their supervisors, who do not speak the languages present in the researcher's data, should be able to read and analyse their data too. Our discussions have led the PhD researchers to conclude that they will analyse the data in the original language and translate excerpts for both their supervisors as well as for publication purposes.

Most of the translation dealing with the data analysis stage tends to happen after the analysis, as much of this is related to reporting and publication. This was also a major concern for many of our course participants, as presenting translated data excerpts for publication have been a constant point of discussion during the course workshops and the participants' assignments.

> For example, in my research case mainly when I am writing a paper for publication, I analyse the data written in [language X], but to emphasize the evidence for readers I need several times to do direct citation of informant opinion in English. (POST 201 002)

> Interviews in [language X], writing the research in English. (UNI20_055)[14]

As seen in the following example, translation is an interpretive act and thus reporting and analysing may become intertwined.

> The data might require translation from English into Finnish, if you publish in Finnish, or vice versa from Finnish to English, if you aim for an international publication. When analysing English language material, you sort of operate in two languages, trying to understand the nuances and connotations in a non-native language. (UNI20_013)[15]

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13. kaikki tapahtuu englanniksi ja suomalainen kyselydata käännettävä englanniksi

14. Haastattelut [kielellä X], tutkimuksen kirjoittaminen englanniksi

15. Aineistoa saattaa joutua kääntämään englannista suomeksi, jos julkaisee tutkimuksen suomeksi, tai päinvastoin suomesta englantiin, jos tavoitteena on kv-julkaisu. Engl. kielisen aineiston analyysissa tulee ikäänkuin toimineeksi kahdella kielellä, koittaen ymmärtää tekstin vivahteita ja konnotaatioita ei-äidinkielellään.

Some researchers view language as a neutral tool, which makes translation a trivial linguistic problem to be solved objectively. For others, language and translation are key factors in knowledge creation. Most researchers would likely find themselves somewhere in between based on the paradigm from which they operate.

Further considerations

Translation is a cause for many ethical, epistemological, and methodological questions in research. In this section we further examine topics related to translation in research, namely translation as interpretation, translation visibility, and the concepts of translation quality and equivalence in relation to research.

We could assume that questions of translation are more apparent in qualitative research, where basic research considerations include interpretations of meaning and descriptions of experiences. Yet, translation issues may also occur in quantitative, statistical research on methodological and epistemological levels too: for instance, if a qualitative questionnaire has been translated without consideration of connotations of terminology, we can question whether the data could lose the connection to what it is attempting to describe. An example could be differences between instructions, questionnaires, interview questions, and other research instruments: if different language versions have slightly different connotations in meaning, they might not be comparable as such (which, we would argue, does not make the data unusable, but rather is an issue that the researcher should acknowledge when reporting to make the presence of translation visible).

Translation as interpretation

In translation studies, translation is seen as an inherently interpretive act (e.g. Venuti, [1995] 2018, 2019), and as such, translation in research is an important ethical and epistemological consideration. Translation of data is interaction and interpretation, and an integral part of the analysis in many cases, thus making translation also a methodological issue (e.g. Temple & Young, 2004, Xian, 2008). Yet translated data should be considered to have an added layer of interpretation and thus examining a translation is different from examining the data in the original language. Interestingly, outside translation studies, some researchers hold the view that translating data *before* analysis can add rigor to research process (Regmi et al., 2010) and enable a deeper level of understanding of the data (Santos Jr. et al., 2015). Yet from a translation studies perspective, this can be a cause for concern as to what is being analysed, as we deem that a translation cannot be considered a transparent representation of the source material — it is the

result of a process of decision-making and interpretation, regardless of whether the decisions and interpretations are made by a human or an algorithm (i.a. Asscher, 2024).

The idea of translation as an interpretive act might seem foreign to researchers who operate in a more positivist setting, where language may be considered a neutral tool to convey information. From a positivist perspective, translation appears a merely linguistic problem of equivalence. Translation studies has, to a degree, mainly renounced positivism[16] (i.a. Tymoczko, 2007; Pym, 2010), still positivist and/or instrumentalist views on language seem to be more common in certain fields (i.a. Santos Jr. et al, 2015; Colina et al., 2017). As Angelelli and Baer (2016, p. 8) note, such views on language tend to favour domain experts over language professionals, so language-related positivism/instrumentalism in expert fields such as scientific research is not surprising. Yet even from the viewpoint of a positivistic paradigm, the notion of translation and language should not be simplified as mere objective tools. Such disregard for language would result in both ethical and epistemological problems. A translation, be it a simple utterance or a complex discourse, should always be considered an interpretation of the source text (even if the translator is non-human, then the interpretation is a probabilistic one based on training data), so disregard for the interpretative nature of translation would be an oversight with conceivably wide-ranging consequences, for instance, in such a case when a researcher is analysing translated data, yet presenting it as original in their research report.

Looking at our data, many of our course participants have expressed how their views on translation became less instrumentalist after participating. For instance, the following example shows how one participant accepts the idea that "one perfect translation" is unachievable, and may even hinder one's research, although this view of translation is commonly held in their respective field.

> It appears that in this particular field of study, whenever translation of research material is required, the aim for precision often makes scholars — myself included — attempt a verbatim translation of the texts. The unspoken assumption seems to be that by employing this approach it is possible to produce a translation which is faithful to the individual words and expressions found in the source. […] It dawned on me that since my translations will always be interpretations of the source text anyway, I could at least attempt to make them more readable to my fellow scholars, and less off-putting to the general public. (POST 2020 013)

16. Yet it could be worth considering further whether much of TS still holds an inherently *realist* view of language.

We suggest that to address methodological and ethical questions, researchers should acknowledge the interpretive decision-making nature of translation and make it explicit when translation is present in research.

Translation/translator visibility in research

As with other fields where PPT is common (i.a. journalism), researchers may not acknowledge that they are performing translation as part of their professional work. For instance, one of our course participants described how invisible translation can be even in researchers' everyday activities.

> One thing I had not come to think of before the course was that I actually do translations all the time when I am doing my research. I switch between Finnish and English when I am reading and writing, but I just had not thought about that as translating because it has been such an obvious part of doing research in an international project. Even though it is thought of as a normal part of doing research, I think it is good if this would be discussed more. Because when you realize that you are doing translations and start to look at it from that perspective, it might give you insight that can help you in doing these everyday translations and working with materials in different languages. (POST 2020 001)

The visibility of translation and translators is especially a consideration of research ethics; an illustrative example of the disparity between research ethics and translation visibility is how good research practice dictates that sources must be acknowledged and methodology described clearly, yet when (and if) translation is discussed, similar principles might not apply or be clear. For example, it is not uncommon for research reports to have no mention of a translator's input or of multilingual activities that have transpired in data collection and analysis, for instance, whether there has been interlingual translation of data before or after the analysis. Yet translation during research might affect the whole project — for instance, in terms of how the interpretive act of translation has affected the data and who has decided what, how, and when to translate during the research project. These would be important ethical and epistemological questions of which the readers and evaluators of research publications should be made aware.

We have discussed the topic of visibility previously in Penttilä et al. (2024) and pointed out that the invisibility of translation in research hides the tendency to over-domesticate and emphasize English language and culture when translating research texts for publication (see also Temple & Young, 2004). When publications require that the word-count be kept in check, researchers may leave out facts concerning translation in favour of more "relevant" information in their manuscripts, thus hiding any trace of interpretation via translation. Another

word-count casualty are the source texts and their translations as parts of the manuscript, as including both would take up a considerable amount of word count.[17]

Visibility of translation is also an epistemological and ethical factor in the use of English as the academic lingua franca, when (potentially multilingual) research is presented as monolingually English or when researchers are forced to comply with the hegemonic use of English in academic publishing. For instance, Tietze (2022, Chapter 2) demonstrates that using English leads to applying a certain way of coding and presenting information, and that upholding the hegemonic status English has in academia may hinder expression and produce epistemological problems. To illustrate, there are examples in our data, where the respondents have expressed very differing opinions on university language policies: some advocate for a monolingual English-speaking university, whereas others regard English as a threat to both the national language and the production of good quality research. Some also criticize the university's language policies and the global trend of publishing mainly in English.

> Universities' medium of communication should only be English as the language of science is English. […] Finnish is a hard language and acquiring professional-level skills may even need over 10 years. Finland should understand that English is not a threat to Finnish. Both are languages, and we must adapt to change at a good pace. (UNI20_038)

> I am also worried about how the abstraction level of research becomes lower as the English language becomes more prominent; many (including myself) do not have the ability to express similar levels of abstraction in English than in Finnish — the core questions of philosophy of science may become pleasures of the few because of language. (UNI20_049)[18]

One participant mentioned that increasing translation in research could lead to better quality research and more equal language policies.

17. We advocate publishers to consider whether source texts could be excluded from a manuscript's word-count (if such are enforced). This could be done by means such as adding the source texts as footnotes or endnotes.

18. Olen myös huolissani siitä, että tutkimuksen abstraktiotaso madaltuu englanninkielen yleistyessä; monilla (itseni mukaan lukien) ei ole kykyä samaan abstraktiotason ilmaisuun englanniksi kuin suomeksi — tieteenfilosofian syvimmät kysymykset saattavat jäädä muutamien huviksi kielen vuoksi.

> […] every country should cherish their own language as the language of science. In fact, translation should be done more — researchers could research and write in their first language and their texts would be translated and interpreted in conferences. That would be very refreshing and more equal. (UNI20_068)[19]

However, one problem — at least partially — connected to translators' visibility which was raised by a few respondents is access to competent translators and interpreters.

> In my projects, this is an ongoing issue. I don't like to call it a problem, rather something we have to acknowledge and try to work out straight in the beginning. It's important to use the same terminology, so we are on the same page. A problem: is when we have changes in translators and interpreters. Good translators and interpreters are very difficult to find. (UNI20_024)

In the case of professional language services, as discussed by Kristiina Abdallah (2012), translators may be working as subcontractors at the end of a long chain of production networks, and may not even be known to source text authors, if they have commissioned translations from larger companies.

It should be noted that in many cases the researcher might, in fact, be the best person to translate their research material. This comes with the caveat that the researcher should have at least a basic understanding of translation, make their role in translation visible, and indicate what kind of factors have affected the decisions they have made during translation.

Translation quality and equivalence

Assessing quality of translated research materials can be seen as an important question — especially a methodological one — on many levels of research, yet the methods applied for quality assessment may lack support from translation studies research. Especially technically focused fields, such as medicine, have collections of best practices and procedures for translation, which quite commonly include back translation as the main tool of quality control for research instruments, such as questionnaires (Colina et al., 2017; Xian, 2020). In our data, some respondents also mentioned such use of back translation.

To put it simply, back translation involves re-translating the target text into the source language by another translator unfamiliar with the original ST and com-

19. jokaisen maan tulisi vaalia tieteen kielenä ensisijaisesti omaa kieltä. Itse asiassa kääntämistä tulisi tehdä enemmän — tutkija voisi ensisijaisesti tutkia ja kirjoittaa omalla äidinkielellään, ja hänen tekstejään käännettäisiin ja tulkattaisiin konferensseissa. Se olisi hyvin virkistävää ja aiheellista ja tasa-arvoisempaa.

paring the ST with its back translation. This can be useful especially to validate terminology, if the field in question has established terms that correspond across different languages. However, there is no real support in translation studies for the validity of back translation as a quality control method. In recent years, the problems of using back translation in this capacity have been acknowledged in the fields where it has been traditionally used (Colina et al., 2017; Douglas & Craig, 2007; Fourie & Feinauer, 2005; Laaksonen, 2023). Colina et al. (2017, p. 9) point out that back translation may work in limited cases, such as in the aforementioned terminological considerations, but "it can actually work in the opposite fashion it was intended for other types of text/language."

The popularity of back translation as a quality control tool in qualitative research can be traced back to the 1970s and Richard Brislin (1970, p. 191), who sees "equivalence of meaning as the most important aspect of translation". This idea represents what Anthony Pym (2010) calls *natural equivalence*, a paradigm which assumes that corresponding equivalents exist between languages a priori, independent of linguistic and cultural contexts, and it is the translator's task to find them. Under the natural equivalence paradigm, an expression would be assumed to stay identical when translated into target language and then back into source language.

While equivalence paradigms have been widely abandoned in translation studies since the 1980s, equivalence is often the lens through which other professional fields view translation, and as such is an important consideration for paraprofessional translation research, especially as back translation is still quite prominent in research methodology. As Pym (2010, p. 30) points out, one problem is that any kind of "naturalness" between translations is an illusion as any source text merits multiple interpretations from translators operating in different personal, cultural, and chronological contexts. Someone must still make a subjective decision to determine equivalence, as Xian (2020, p. 50) puts it: "Whether the original and the back-translated versions are the 'same' relies on subjective judgement of researchers."

There have been attempts within TS to suggest alternatives for back translation to ensure translation quality in research. One notable example is the work of Sonia Colina (i.a. Colina et al., 2017), who advocates for a functionalist approach to translation quality assessment in fields such as medicine. Functionalist approaches can be seen as part of an alternative paradigm for equivalence-based approaches — we could call this alternative paradigm purpose-based approaches (i.a. Pym, 2010). In translation studies these are represented by the aforementioned *functionalism* (i.a. Nord, 2010, Colina et al.. 2017), as well as *skopos theory* (Vermeer, 1996), and *user-centered translation* (i.a. Suojanen et al. 2015, Suokas 2022), to name a few. Where the equivalence-based approaches, such as back

translation, emphasize the similarity between source text and its translation, this purpose-based paradigm emphasizes the use context and target audience of the translation. We consider that it is often more productive to consider translation from this purpose-based viewpoint, and that it is easier to discuss translation and give advice on translation-related issues, when the focus is on factors such as why the translation is needed, whom it is for, and what is the point of conveying the chosen information in a new context. This is also the approach we have favoured in our Translating Research Material course when discussing questions of translation in research work.

Conclusion

Translation is a ubiquitous part of research. Most translatorial activities in research projects can be seen as paraprofessional, yet professional translation is also present to a degree. Distinctive features of paraprofessional translation in research include the researcher's omnipresent role as translator in research projects, the role of English as a target language, and the dual nature of the researcher as both a (paraprofessional) translator and subject-field expert. There is an apparent lack of visibility and awareness of translation in research. Failure to take translation into account in research projects raises questions that are methodological, epistemological, and ethical in nature. Similarly, there is an apparent need for more critical examination of the role of English in academia. There are yet multiple issues not explored within this chapter, which we are currently researching; examples include the use of machine translation and other language technology in multilingual research work, the views of professional translators who work with research, and how and why to improve the visibility of translation in research.

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PART III

Concluding remarks

CHAPTER 16

Exploring next steps

Expanding translation capacities of organizations, researchers and disciplines

Susanne Tietze, Rebecca Piekkari & D. Eleanor Westney

This collection of contributions edited by Kaisa Koskinen has deepened our understanding of what paraprofessional translation is and what paraprofessional translators do in organizations on a daily basis. This pioneering book is important because it contributes to a significant emerging research community that is literally situated at the crossroads of translation studies (TS), international business (IB) and organization studies (OS). Out of 22 contributors, 12 represent TS, four the disciplinary field of IB, three OS and three (socio-)linguistics. Interestingly, judging by the available information, only two contributors of a total of 22 are native speakers of English.

The composition of contributors to Kaisa's book suggests that an interest in language and translation as a research topic may be associated with researchers' own language profile and awareness. This is certainly the case with us as the authors of this chapter. Our respective paths into the shared space of paraprofessional translation have followed quite different trajectories. They show both unique and shared experiences of how we approached translation as an inevitable and concomitant part of language diversity in and around organizations.

Susanne grew up in a German family with no exposure to linguistically or culturally different positions that would challenge her normality. At school, languages were taught extensively and her first experiences are about endless grammatical exercises, dictations and also translation from and to German into 'the other' language. Mainly, translation was experienced as tedious and difficult. Much later in life, when working in the UK and having the role of a student placement coordinator, she was tasked to translate a survey from English to German for German placement providers. The survey was based on an initiative to measure employer satisfaction with placement students' competences with a view to develop a competence-based framework for the assessment of student placement performance. Susanne found this fairly simple task to pose several problems for her: Starting with the different meanings implied in the similar nouns *competence* and *Kompetenz*, which did not only play out at the level of different meanings of

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words, but also at the level of employer expectations. German employers did not understand how and why these Kompetenzen were to be tested, assessed and how they were useful, as some of them were far too generic from a German employers' perspective. This relatively simple translation exercise threw up conceptual and cultural differences, which triggered a deeper interest in translation, meaning change and contextual-cultural understanding of what appeared to be 'simple' terms and concepts.

When Rebecca was defending her doctoral thesis in 1996, her external opponent asked an innocent question about the pervasive impact of language barriers on inter-unit communication in the multinational she was studying. After the defense, Rebecca's supervisor encouraged her to re-analyze the interview data gathered for the doctoral thesis from a language perspective in order to check whether any systematic patterns could be identified. To be honest, Rebecca was far from enthusiastic to revisit her dataset soon after the doctoral defense: she found the topic of language so mundane! As a child of a bilingual Russian and Swedish speaking family and living in Finland as a bilingual country Rebecca was crossing language boundaries on a daily basis. Language did simply not raise any intellectual curiosity at all! It took her several years to realize that the topic had great potential in the disciplinary field of international business. Over the years, the research that started as a reluctant response to the external opponent's question turned into a passion that has lasted Rebecca's entire academic career. It was the increasing collaboration with Susanne, Eleanor and Kaisa that expanded her interest from the implications of language differences in cross-border business to an interest in translation processes.

As a native speaker of English who grew up in a monolingual environment (despite Canada being officially bilingual), Eleanor began studying Japanese as an undergraduate. She wrestled with language and translation issues throughout her academic career of studying Japanese society and organizations. However, in part because Japan was widely seen as a linguistic outlier whose problems with language in cross-border learning were unique, she was over three decades into her career before recognizing the potential value of taking translation seriously. She realized that translation was a set of social processes that interacted with and strongly influenced the cross-border organizational learning processes on which she had focused. First introduced to the concept of *organizational translation* developed in the chapter by Sahlin and Wedlin (2008) in *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, it was a visiting professorship at Aalto University in the mid-2010s that provided an opportunity to work with Rebecca on combining organizational and linguistic translation approaches to re-examining the internationalization of Japanese firms in the 1980s and 1990s and cross-border learning in MNCs (beginning with Piekkari & Westney, 2017).

The three of us have ventured into the unknown waters of translation in the later parts of our academic careers, drawing on the collective knowledge of OS and IB. What our individual experiences show is a shared intellectual awakening to the relevance of translation into all processes of communication because of its transformative power. As Margaret Atwood (as cited in *The Guardian*, May 13, 2025) recently put it, when accepting the Freedom to Publish Prize at the British Book awards: words are "our earliest human technology, like water they appear insubstantial, but like water they can generate tremendous power". This resonates well with the humanist approach adopted in this edited collection (see Afterword by Kaisa Koskinen).

In this chapter, we will look at three main topics that we believe are of interest for the future research conducted at the crossroads of IB, OS and TS: translation capacities of (i) organizations, (ii) researchers and (iii) disciplines. In her introductory chapter, Kaisa writes that scholars of IB and OS possess the understanding of the organizational context in which paraprofessional translation work takes place. Let us start from this topic and take stock of the various contributions to this collection while also envisioning the future research agenda for building interdisciplinary translation capacity.

Organizational capacity for internationalization and translation

The relationship between a firm's foreign market expansion and its internal organizational capacity has received limited attention in IB scholarship (Niskavaara, 2024; Welch, 2024). This is perhaps because the focus has been on what a firm does abroad rather than what it does in its home country. However, an early pioneer, who acknowledged both the external and internal sides of internationalization was the Finnish scholar Reijo Luostarinen (1979). His work was long neglected by his peers, because it was relatively difficult to access, being published by his Finnish university as a doctoral dissertation rather than through a North American or British publishing house, or as an article in a major IB journal.

Together with his co-author, Luostarinen analysed the internal company changes that arise from the firm's foreign market activities (Welch & Luostarinen, 1988). In this conceptual paper, they brought the external market activities and the internal organizational changes together by incorporating organizational capacity as a core dimension of the concept of firm internationalization. Recently, this model has been called the 360° framework to capture the holistic nature of firm internationalization and the interdependence between its two sides (Piekkari & Welch, 2024). Luostarinen emphasized the importance of language capability and regarded English language competence as a critical part of Finnish firms' capacity

to internationalize. He also stressed that the appointment of key people with border-crossing skills should be the first rather than the last step in a firm's internationalization strategy, demonstrating a forward-thinking approach (Welch, 2024).

In this volume, Chapter 4 recognizes the importance of key individuals in a Finland-based multinational with operations in Russia. It discusses the boundary spanning role of "a relatively young executive of Russian extraction with a business degree from a Finnish university and work experience from global MNEs" (p. 17). This manager had "long experience of working with Finns and spoke fluent Finnish in addition to very good English" (p. 17). Together with a professional translator, he was a core part of the "in-house" capacity for translation that the company had built up as shown.

OS scholars have long been interested in how organizations build what have variously been called capacities, capabilities, or competences, and how these develop over time. *Organizational capacity* is seen to consist of elements such as organizational goals, structure, processes, cultures, and people (Scott & Davis, 2007, pp. 26–27). In line with this social conceptualization of translation (see also Chapter 10), we define *organizational capacity for translation* as the policies, processes, practices and actors that influence a social community's ability to deal with language diversity, whether in its internal or external environment. Organizational policies, processes, practices and actors govern (para-)professional language and translation work and reflect the organization's underlying norms, values and beliefs (i.a., a language-aware culture). For example, Tampere University appears to embrace multilingualism as a value because it provides written instructions and trainings in Finnish and English for academics to support them in subtitling educational videos (see Chapter 14). At best, organizational capacity to translate across knowledge domains, linguistic, organizational and functional boundaries can constitute a significant, albeit often invisible resource for the firm, enabling it to engage in cross-border business, transfer knowledge and learning for various parties (Westney et al., 2022).

From the disciplinary perspective of IB, firm internationalization and its organizational capacity are interdependent: internationalization requires internal organizational capacity, but foreign market expansion also changes the firm's organizational capacity. As Welch and Luostarinen (1988, p. 42) explain, "internationalization both feeds upon and contributes to the development of international knowledge, skills and experience of the people involved." It is very common that investments in external market activities take precedence over investments made in internal organizational capacity. Consequently, the organizational capacity runs the risk of lagging behind the requirements posed by the firm's international expansion, putting an immense strain on the firm's ability to deliver to its customers (Piekkari & Welch, 2024). Thus, the early scholarship in IB featured

prominently personnel's language skills as an inherent part of a firm's internationalization strategy. The strategic role of language was rediscovered in subsequent work and placed in the context of the multinational corporation as a multilingual community (Luo & Shenkar, 2006; Marschan et al., 1997).

In their theoretical paper, Welch and Welch (2018, p. 854) introduce the concept of language operative capacity that explicitly incorporates also translation. In a striking example of interdisciplinary translation, they explicitly modelled it on Cohen and Levinthal's and (1990) influential concept of "absorptive capacity", which was itself drawn from industrial economics (Aldrich, 1999, p. 59). Welch and Welch define this "connective capacity" (p. 856) as language resources that have been assembled and deployed in a context-relevant and timely manner throughout the global network of the multinational corporation (p. 854). The contextual, timely and operative nature of the concept is also reflected in the authors' use of the terms "language-in-place, language-in-time, and language-in-context" (Welch & Welch, 2018, p. 856). Chapter 12 highlights the importance of team leaders who are knowledgeable about their team members' language skills and who collectively, together with foreign subsidiary employees, handle translation tasks so that they can meet tight deadlines and deliver them in a culturally appropriate manner. The concept of language operative capacity directs managerial attention to what "multilingual effectiveness" and a language-aware culture entail (Welch & Welch, 2018, p. 866).

By definition, language operative capacity is a "multilevel" concept in that it incorporates both the *individuals*, who develop, maintain, and contribute their own foreign language resources to the firm, and the *organization* that "can influence individual behavior" and provide its own language resources (Welch & Welch, 2018, p. 854). While it is recognized as an "assembled capacity" (p. 863), individual language skills are not "additive"; in other words, the organization is able to influence how individual language skills are identified, assembled, and utilised for company purposes, but it does not own them (p. 857).

We are particularly interested in highlighting here the organizational efforts to manage the firm's linguistic and translation capacity. These may include policies such as language and translation policies; practices such as team building, job rotation, and interunit exchanges; processes such as allocation of dedicated professionals to particular job roles that include translation work as well as actors – human or non-human – who reside in the broader translation ecosystem. The introduction of technological solutions such as computerized translation software, the establishment of in-house translation departments, compilation of company-specific terminology (Casals, 2025) or provision of templates in different languages to deal with customer queries (see Chapter 10) all contribute to the organizational capacity for translation. It is advisable to take heed of the view that

individual skills are assembled into a collective capacity: organizational interventions can contribute to its creation, but it can never be a mechanistic exercise of simply "adding up skills" — rather, building organizational capacity resembles a more continuous and unfolding social process.

The knowledge departments of the National Health System in England offer an example of the lack of organizational policies that may have implications for urgent patient care and research outputs of health professionals (Chapter 13). The NHS has little control over how clinical librarians use automated translation tools as non-human actors in their paraprofessional translation work. The authors refer to their use as "the unofficial adoption of these technologies" because they are not supported by any formal guidance (Chapter 13, p. 9). The authors explain that "existing translation policies are limited to the interaction between medical professionals and patients"; external data searches by clinical librarians remain "unaccounted within protocols" (Chapter 13, p. 24). The authors predict that there is a growing need for regulation in spaces of paraprofessional translation due to the increased adoption of AI tools in workplaces. While some other organizations have translation policies in place, they may remain in an unwritten and unmanaged form, rendering them "fragile" in organizational life (see Chapter 12, p. 3).

Like other kinds of organizational capacity, language operative capacity is not a static construct but dynamic. Welch and Welch (2018, p. 856) explain that it is strongly shaped by "the changing and diverse portfolio of organization-dependent, situation-dependent, and person-dependent language capability". At a particular point in time, Spanish-language capability might be deemed particularly relevant for the international expansion of the firm while at other times another language may take a leading role. The authors point out that language operative capacity "is constantly being built, reassembled, and lost as people move in, out, and around" the multinational corporation due to both individual and organizational decisions (Welch & Welch, 2018, p. 865).

The historical case study of Saarlor — a German-French binational company — offers an interesting counter-example of an organization with a rather stable capacity for translation (Chapter 8). The bilingual work was regulated by the norms of the organization as well as by the legal documents such as international treaties and bilingual statutes decided upon by the French and German governments. The main protagonist of the chapter — a paraprofessional translator called Jean Weill — was recruited to Saarlor in 1948. He worked as a management assistant and was eventually promoted to become the director of the entire local branch in Strasbourg in 1962. Mr Weill was very loyal and highly committed to Saarlor and continued to serve as the secretary of the board even after his retirement at least until 1983. Thus, he served as a paraprofessional translator for 35 years. This bilingual translation work was not undertaken by Mr Weill alone but

in collaboration with bilingual colleagues and a long-standing professional interpreter supported by a mobile interpretive device. The paraprofessional translators' long tenure offered "a living memory" of "Saarlor's way of doing and naming things" (Chapter 8, p. 28). In other companies, the organizational capacity for translation may not be as stable, with translators not even considered members of the community and thus not invited to organizational events (Chapter 5).

Capacity of researchers for linguistic and translatorial reflexivity

Another topic for future development is the linguistic and translatorial reflexivity that characterises many of the chapters in this volume and that expands the quest for reflexivity in the broader social sciences.

The contributors to this volume use social science methods for the exploration of (para)professional translatorial practices as they unfold in different work settings. The methods of choice mainly derive from a qualitative tradition using a multitude of data gathering techniques such as interviews, archival data, observations, field notes, case studies, informal talk data and so forth. Examples of conceptual frameworks include ANT (Actor Network Theory) and Spolskian approach to translation policy (Spolsky, 2004). Some chapters (e.g., Chapters 14 and 15) also employ surveys for data generation. Overviews are also provided with the purpose to understand phenomena of subtitling of teaching materials (Chapter 14) or the role of academics as paraprofessional translators (Chapter 15).

Notwithstanding the benefits of using survey data, in those chapters, too, the consequences and context-laden decisions about translation and translation practices figure strongly. This is perhaps not surprising as Kaisa breaks a lance for the continued and imperative need for "a human-centred approach in an increasingly machinic world" (Afterword, p. 347). Methodological choices taken by contributors to this volume demonstrate how such an approach plays out and contributes to interdisciplinary understanding. It is equally not surprising that the call for in-depth ethnographic research figures several times in this volume and is seen as advocating such a humanistic inquiry (see Chapters 10 and 12 for the use of ethnographic fieldwork).

Koskinen's (2020, pp. 60–61) notion of translatorial linguistic ethnography sees workspaces as ongoing and fluid spaces of translation where languages, through translation are in constant movement and contact with each other with translation ensuring mutual comprehensibility. The chapters in this volume attest the ongoing translatorial work done by paraprofessional translators and explore such spaces in depth and scope. Ethnography being in its very essence engaged and situated provides the depth, nearness and concern required for humanistic

inquiry. Ethnography delivers a temporal snapshot of the translatorial phenomena and is perhaps less well equipped to more longitudinal exploration. Also, ethnographic studies are often difficult to resource, in terms of time, finance and access.

There are some interesting avenues for equally deep, yet not quite as resource-intense approaches: A historic case study presented in Chapter 8 provides an example of tracking changes over time while employing a translation lens. Chapter 3 uses an already published ethnographic study by Koo and Kim (2024) and employs the tool of re-studying (Köhler et al., 2025) as a means to yield innovative and additional insights and re-theorize processes of inclusion. A similar process of re-analysis is applied by Piekkari, Tietze and Koskinen (2020), in which the authors use published empirical studies to develop a conceptually grounded matrix of the different dimensions of metaphorical and interlingual translation.

The contributors to this volume are skilled language workers: they are able to use the English language as the reporting language through which they record and write down the findings of their research. In using English, they engage with a global audience, which finds itself bonded together through this shared language. The authors do not use English naively or in a taken-for-granted manner; rather they use it with consideration and thus reflexively. Reflexivity is understood to be "a way of problematizing what we know and how we know it, by revealing some of the assumptions on which knowledge is based" (Kelemen & Rumen, 2008, p. 190).

It recognizes "an awareness of the situatedness of scientific knowledge and an understanding of the researcher and research community from which knowledge has appeared. Whereas objective knowledge claims to be unsituated — true any time and any place — reflexive knowledge is situated and includes a recognition of the multiple translation strategies that bring it into being" (Hardy et al., 2001, p. 554).

Linguistic reflexivity includes the problematizing the role of English, languages, and translation in the knowledge production process (Thomas et al., 2009; Horn et al. 2020; Tietze, 2022). In other words, the practice of linguistic reflexivity exceeds the mere thematic exploration of the role of language and translation in workplace settings; rather it demonstrates awareness of the influence that language (and translation) choices exercise on the very research process itself. Therefore, the exercise of linguistic reflexivity is a question of methods and methodology that allow us to theorize in particular ways. This requires that researcher-authors remain thoughtfully involved with the role of language(s) in the creation of knowledge (Tietze, 2024).

In this volume, there are several examples of how such sensitivities can manifest in written research accounts. For example, Chapter 4 reflects on the choice of interview language depending on respondents' preferences and availability and

language competence of research team members. Chapter 5 makes a strong case for opening the 'black box of translation' as central in paraprofessional news translation. Drawing on Van Rooyen (2019) the authors argue that the black box could be "reappropriated" for the study of the "final news product" (or "final target text" in terms of traditional translation studies) to make researchers aware of all the possible and invisible activities, practices, and multiple sources involved in producing the translated news text (Van Rooyen, 2019, p. 61). A similar case can be made for the production of academic texts based on cross-language research — there are actors, activities, practices and sources that point to the on-going translation work in the production of our knowledge accounts. In IB literature, some of these invisible agents and practices are articulated and integrated into commentary about methods and methodology (i.a., Outila et al., 2019; Xian, 2008).

In making visible some of the normally hidden processes of cross-language research, authors have left 'other languages' visible in the text. Contributors to this book do so by using footnotes — for example, Chapter 11 explains the meaning of terms in different languages by leaving some Polish expressions visible in the text. The practice of leaving the original (empirical) data visible in the text (i.a., Chapters 9, 14 and 15) is also a means to acknowledge the existence of other languages and to lift practices of translation that undergird the research process out of the black box. Borrowing Venuti's (1995) notion of foreignization approaches to translation, the authors use what can be called a foreignization strategy of writing by deliberately leaving some words, ideas or concepts from the source context untranslated and visible.

These practices are drawn upon and their use is reported in the chapters of this edited collection. In other words, authors account for their language practices and their translation decisions as they play out in the production of written knowledge texts. This is an important step forward as the cultivation of practices resulting in the production of multivocal knowledge will play a key part in the continued collaboration across language-sensitive fields of inquiry. Couper and Piekkari (2025) have recently made the case for developing dialogical approaches to (qualitative) cross-language research that cover both self-reflexive dialogue as well as dialogue between researchers and others. For them, dialogue includes the representation of non-English-speaking participants and scholars. Couper and Piekkari (2025) identify a number of opportunities in the research process where dialogue supports the emergence and development of new understandings and perspectives from cross-language research.

A related, yet differently focused case for reflexivity is made in Chapter 15, which provides evidence for the almost omnipresent presence of paraprofessional translation in cross-language research. Here academics are the paraprofessional translators who often muddle through the various, multifaceted and ongoing

translation work required in cross-language research. The ethical imperative to be transparent about the translation decisions which inform the research project are part of the reflexive project:

> Visibility of translation is also an epistemological and ethical factor in the use of English as the academic lingua franca, when (potentially multilingual) research is presented as monolingually English or when researchers are forced to comply with the hegemonic use of English in academic publishing. (Chapter 15, p. 20)

We believe that translation as done by paraprofessional academic translators, such as the contributors of this book, demands its own reflexive engagement. We propose the concept of *translatorial reflexivity* as a way of remaining thoughtfully involved with the role of translation(s) in the creation of knowledge throughout the knowledge creation process: Researchers as paraprofessional translators (see Chapter 15 in particular) use translation as a means to 'dig deeper' into the analytic process. They draw on their observations, their data, even the obstacles they may experience in designing and executing their cross-language research projects as a means to engage more fully, more rigorously and more authentically with their research. Examples in this volume are provided in Chapter 10 about translation and translating in a multilingual IT customer service unit. Here data in the source and target languages are left visible next to each other and commented upon with some detailed analysis about the translation process as part of the analytic process. In a similar vein, Chapter 9 also exercises degrees of translatorial reflexivity: The authors comment on global-local translatorial spaces, within which an interviewee had to translate his message (from Chinese) into English. The interviewee felt a need to adjust his translation to be more "*artistic*" ("有艺术") so that the "*global*" (referring to headquarters of the multinational corporation) would buy into his ideas. The authors discuss the meaning of the term "*artistic*" (a widely shared belief in China that communication needs to be meticulously crafted akin to art so that the receiver would feel comfortable and supportive towards the speaker) and relate it further to their analysis of different translatorial spaces within the multinational.

There are not many studies in the extant literature of IB and OS which use translation as a means to develop and deepen conceptual understanding. Yet in the light of some published work, there is a case to be made for engagement with the opportunities inscribed in translatorial reflexivity. For example, Ciuk et al. (2019) adopt a translation lens to understand a cultural change process in a Polish subsidiary in a US multinational; Tietze et al. (2017) apply a translation perspective on knowledge transfer and Outila et al. (2019) study empowerment in a Russian subsidiary of a Finnish multinational.

Should translatorial reflexivity become a standard practice in the cross-language methodological repertoire, these (reporting) considerations meet with demands for rigour; translation not only provides epistemological perspective, but also analytic and theoretical opportunities. Related points are made and evidenced by the corpus of work by Lillis and Curry, particularly in their book *Academic Writing in a Global Context* (2010). The authors use textual ethnography as a method to study the complex relationship between text production in academic publishing, and the global dominance of English. They show that multilingual scholars (none of which has English as a native language) navigate the pressures of writing in English for international publication, through tracking their history of textual production. Clearly, in this volume translation is shown to be a key aspect of such textual production and further work is needed from within our respective fields to ensure a thorough and impactful understanding of these processes, their contexts and agency.

Conclusion: Translating and "back-translating" across disciplinary languages

Kaisa's Introduction puts forward a central aim of the volume as "back-translating" recent work in IB and OS into TS. The innovativeness of this approach can easily be overlooked: after all, the concept of translating across the distinctive languages and approaches of different disciplines is not new. Nearly seven decades ago, for example, Amitai Etzioni (1958, p. 304), working in what was then the relatively new field of the study of organizations, wrote an article advocating the translation of concepts and hypotheses from other subfields, on the grounds that "such translations… can both bring new insights into long-studied phenomena and draw attention to the missing elements, the uncovered, neglected areas". Back-translating across disciplinary boundaries, however, is a much more original approach, and one rarely even attempted.

There are a number of reasons for this. One is that those who are making the translations across fields are usually not 'fluent' in the originating language: they are "paraprofessional translators" working across disciplinary languages but usually without any real fluency in the originating languages. In the case of 'organizational translation', for example, most of the leading OS scholars who originally espoused the approach explicitly disavowed any close relationship with interlingual translation or TS, seeing the term as a metaphor (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008, p. 225). They did not exhibit much curiosity about the processes, practices, and challenges studied and illuminated by scholars of linguistic translation. In general, these paraprofessional translators focus on exploring the insights derived from a

borrowed language for their "home" fields and, if they resort at all to research in the originating field, often rely on a very small number of texts, rather than extended interactions with the "native speakers". Moreover, they rarely pay attention to ongoing work in the originating field. As a result, "native speakers" find the translations superficial and even irritating. Kaisa's Introduction is unusual in its thoughtful reflections on her initial reactions to the "metaphorical" use of translation in OS and her insightful description of the effort involved in moving into a "translation space" in which she could work with ease with colleagues across the boundaries of these different academic languages.

The development of a community of scholars working across the boundaries of TS, IB and OS provides an unparalleled opportunity to understand the complex processes of translating and back-translating across disciplinary languages. In this edited collection, two of the 17 chapters were written by co-author teams that involved scholars from TS, IB and/or OS (Chapter 7 and 11). What are the processes by which we become more effective translators across disciplinary languages, both as individuals and in terms of the organizational capacity of our institutions (departments, research centres, and universities) and the evolving translation ecosystems in which we as academics work and engage in paraprofessional translating activities? The emerging community of scholars from three different academic disciplines represented in this pioneering volume are in a position to move forward with generating new insights into these complex and understudied processes.

Taken together, the chapters in this volume provide plenty of evidence that the interdisciplinary translational project is well on its way. In particular, they share an interest in empirically-based exploration of the constitutive processes of translatoriality. Conceptually, the chapters are ripe with new ideas, words and applications of theoretical frameworks such as the translation ecology. Their use and application are important for fine-tuning interdisciplinary theoretical advances to forge dialogical modes of inquiry and thus, dialogical modes of theorizing. This is not a quixotic endeavour to conquer methodological windmills nor to develop a grand theory. Instead, '"[t]heory" has to do, above all, with paying close attention to the words one is using, especially their degree of generality of conception and economy of production, and most importantly just now, the release rather than the restriction of the sociological imagination" (Mills, 1959, p. 120). In leaning on and updating Mills' observation, we propose that this interdisciplinary translatorial project is superbly well positioned to pay close attention to words, meanings and the ways they are made, changed and reframed through translation.

In our concluding words, we want to express our hope that this volume will be recognized as a valuable reference for the broader project of building *interdis-*

ciplinary translation capacity. However, this takes time: counter-culturally, we see the slowness of translating across disciplinary languages as an antidote to the cultural imperative of producing publishable texts rapidly. We are thrilled that this book is a tribute to translation in its many meanings and to the close and mindful attention to words.

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CHAPTER 17

Afterword

Kaisa Koskinen

The goal of this collective volume was to bring together and take forward empirically tested knowledge, methodological insights, concepts and theorizing that has accumulated over the past decade or so, within and beyond a loosely collaborative interdisciplinary group of researchers. In this afterword I will discuss some general themes brought about during this process that to me appear most relevant for the current and future development of translation studies. These include the status and role of paraprofessional translation research in the discipline of translation studies and, in particular, for the training of future translators; new insights into the coexistence of interlingual translation and the translation of knowledge and practices; the outlook on future interdisciplinarity in translation studies, and the defence of a human-centred approach in an increasingly machinic world.

On paraprofessional and professional translation

In the 50 odd years of its existence as a discipline with a more or less defined identity, the field of translation studies has been through many phases of self-doubt and rethinking of its rationale and object of study. This has often taken the form of "turns", which have been many. But these turns have rather been extensions and new perspectives than Kuhnian revolutions where existing normal science would have been radically questioned (Gambier & Van Doorslaer, 2016, p. 2). Often the field has also seen a re-turn to earlier approaches, most prominent among them the return to linguistics as corpus tools became available around the year 2000 and opened radical new opportunities for a large-scale linguistic analysis of translations.

The notion of paraprofessional translation this volume revolves around may be a new label to many readers, and it may raise questions of relevance and purpose, or it may even be seen as a proposal for yet another turn. Or is this just another fancy term, or an attempt for scholars to maintain relevance in a world where professional translation is (at least seen to be) swindling as ever new technologies reshape multilingual practices? Maybe it is. But it is also a return to

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observe and understand practices that predate professional translation in its 21st century format.

As Luc Van Doorslaer and Yves Gambier (2016, p. 2) have argued, professional translation as a mono-professional phenomenon is some 50–70 years old (now some 80). At the same time, translation has often been recognized as one of the oldest professions in the world. This apparent contradiction indicates that prior to having been extensively defined as a separate professional enterprise, it has existed in other shapes and forms. Indeed, many scholars have pointed out the multi-professional nature of translation activity or translatorial practices in various times and places in history (i.a. Pym, 1998, p. 161–166; Paloposki, 2016; Wolf, 2012).

This volume attests to, or even celebrates, the continued relevance of this multiprofessional type of translation in contemporary societies, in spite of the increased division of labour that gave rise to the professionalization of translation among many other fields during the post-industrial era (Durkheim, 1893/1926). The ubiquitous existence of paraprofessional translation poses a challenge to a Durkheimian idea of this increased division as a natural law-like process of advanced societies. There may be organic and organizational benefits in keeping to more primitive, less differentiated modes of work. The strengths and benefits of paraprofessional translation for social cohesion and inclusion at work, agile and flexible ways of communication, motivation and well-being at work and others could well be analyzed also from the perspective of organizational performance.

The focus of this volume is on business organizations in different fields, with some chapters on universities. But one could just as well look at classrooms, sports, entertainment industry and arts, or any other field of activity, and find a multitude of translatorial practices. The agenda we are setting for researching paraprofessional translation in this volume can be adapted for uncovering new findings and manyfold manifestations of paraprofessional translatorial practices in numerous contexts. More often than not these practices can be interlaced with non-professional ones, creating fruitful contrasts and comparisons within research designs: a professional coach may engage in paraprofessional translatoriality while the amateur sports participants are to be classified as non-professional translators. Will this manifest in differences in their performance or not? This kind of blending is naturally also present in cases discussed in this volume. It is made explicit by Davier and Van Rooyen in Chapter 5 on journalistic translation, but it is implicitly present in some others as well. For example, in a flexilingual discussion between a hotel receptionist and in-coming holiday guests, the translator role may well be shifted between the participants. It would be interesting to see whether, or to what extent, these kinds of translatorial dialogues resemble public service interpreting (PSI) where the roles are much more fixed. Can one sometimes encounter PSI situations where all three modes are observable simultaneously?

Since the discipline of translation studies was a project of similar increased division of labour in the academia, and it progressed side by side with university level translator training initiatives which also responded to the same professionalization and differentiation, it has developed strong links with professional translation and interpreting. These continue to be valuable. But we are clearly entering a new phase in translation industries and in the organization of translation work. It follows that translator training needs will also, once again, need to be reinvented and reinterpreted, and in doing so, understanding paraprofessional translation will be crucially important. Within organizations, there is little evidence of translation work diminishing, and in many workplaces its role is becoming more recognized than before. As new AI-powered technologies are reshaping work and democratizing multilingual practices, it is also clear that skills and competences acquired in education programmes focusing on translation and mediation tasks will be in high demand in future years to support organization members who will be charged with these new practices (see also Massey 2021, p. 59).

As the new technologies are likely to lead to new workplace practices, moving multilingual practices upstream into companies, it is also relevant to acknowledge that this move is not entirely novel, and that in-house and paraprofessional translation practices actually preceded the current outsourced platform economy of translation. In empirical research at workplaces, it is not uncommon to find trained translators in paraprofessional translator roles. Amidst the current technological shift, these opportunities need to be made visible to current and future translation students, and to the employers interested in supporting multilinguality in their organizations.

Boundaries in and of translation: Translatoriality and translationality

A repeated finding in paraprofessional translation contexts is that one size does not fit all translation. The practices are varied. To deal with observed variation, several authors have developed dualistic conceptualizations. In Chapter 9, Liu, Piekkari and Tietze discuss *mundane* and *strategic* translation, in Chapter 10, Muñoz Gómez talks about *unrecognized* versus *explicit* translation, and in Chapter 11, Ciuk, Śliwa and Koskinen use the terms *small-t* vs. *big-T* translation. All these attempts reflect a perceived need to acknowledge that in paraprofessional practice translation is not only about full documents, strategy papers, simultaneous interpreting assignments — activities generally acknowledged as an area where not everyone feels competent to operate and many paraprofessional translators feel professional translators should be commissioned. It is also — and potentially predominantly — about mundane, everyday interaction where lan-

guage boundaries need to be crossed. And this "other" translation has important roles to play in the organizational life. As Liu et al. put it in Chapter 9:

> it is imperative to acknowledge another indispensable form of translatorial effort — namely the mundane yet synergistic one — that permeates all four translatorial spaces. This translation work, albeit considered mundane, is the glue that holds the organizational fabric together.

Methodologically, it has been proposed that the existence of multilingualism can be used as a heuristic tool, or indicator, expecting that where the researcher finds multiple languages coexisting, they will more often than not also find translation (Koskinen, 2020). Similarly, Chapter 7, a reprinted article on the translation ecosystem, argues that wherever we find a boundary that needs to be crossed, we can expect to find a translator and a translation making that crossing possible. The boundaries discussed in Chapter 7, however, also concern many other kinds of boundaries besides lingual: cultural, hierarchical, organizational, professional and so on. This is the productive tension that has been at the heart of this collaboration from the beginning: to what an extent are we discussing interlingual translation, and what is the role of all the other kinds of border crossings that take place in organizations? How do these two operate together, or do they?

The chapters in this volume take different approaches as to whether and to what extent they aim to expand the concept of translation. It was a deliberate editorial choice to foreground the interlingual side in designing this volume, that is, the one more aligned with traditional translation studies approaches and also the one that first pushed the business studies and translation studies together. Looking forward now, it is my firm belief that the next leap forward, relevant for both areas of study, will be most productive in the interstices and overlaps of the overly lingual and less lingually based translation concepts.

The emphasis on the overlaps will be a return to the first joint article that set this project in motion (Piekkari, Tietze & Koskinen, 2020). In it, we forced the two understanding separate to discuss both individually and, in particular, to draw the business studies audiences' attention to the interlingual translation that had remained in the sidelines. The next step will be to rejoin them. Into those new discussions we can now bring the new knowledge gained by looking a paraprofessional interlingual translation in organizations as has been done in this volume. They will also benefit from various kinds of cross-breeds that aim to rigorously apply the theorizations of one field to the theories, methodologies and research questions of the other field (see Barner-Rasmussen, 2020; Røvik, 2023). The ecosystems model (Chapter 7), with its accommodation of all kinds of boundaries within one framework, will offer support for such endeavours, as will actor-

network theory (Chapters 5 and 13) and other theoretical frameworks that allow researchers to account for complex and contextually embedded phenomena.

In moving forward, we need vocabulary to discuss the phenomena we aim to explore. For me personally, the main take-away from the journey of editing this volume concerns the question of how to account for these two kinds of extensions to a prototypical translation concept, one of them very much interlingual but ephemeral and fragmented and the other elusive and all-encompassing.

I started the journey towards a completed volume much more firmly in the interlingual camp than where I stand now writing this afterword. During the gestation process of these chapters, and also during the decade of collaboration, translation studies has evolved. The voices for a more extended concept of translation have never been absent, but over the past years they have become more and more compelling. For long, I resisted the word *translational*, and preferred to use *translatorial* instead (see also Chapter 1). At the back of my head, however, I had a nagging feeling that the relationship of these two was unresolved and confused. It was after a serendipitous encounter with Piotr Blumczynski in Galway in February 2025, and a productive small conference in Joensuu organized by the authors of Chapter 15 soon after, that allowed everything to fall into place in my mind, at least tentatively. I now think that both will be needed, and that they complement each other. Translatoriality is still necessary to include the hard-to-define translation elements in various interlingual encounters, accompanied by several other proposed terms that can also be productively used; translationality will be needed for zooming out to what Blumczynski (2023) calls material translations, that is, crossings of boundaries other than those that are language-based.

In a way, this volume marks us going a full circle in the interdisciplinary endeavour: starting out by a desire to enrich the research of multinational business with a more robust interlingual understanding of translation and at the end realising that we actually need to join forces in understanding what we first called metaphorical translation (Piekkari et al., 2020). What we first pulled apart although we knew that this required significant force, is now brought back together, with a renewed and much more robust understanding that researching interlingual translation in all its translatorial forms will also allow us to understand translationality better, and vice versa. In Chapter 4, Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen promotes a neologism of *omnitranslatoriality* as a special competence for a rare breed of people who can operate well across both linguistic and organizational or cultural boundaries. This approach is both novel and traditional, as translation used to be understood as a cross-cultural profession, but the more technology has taken the front seat in professional translation, the more the intercultural element has been overlooked. It is in need of radical retheorizing for the needs of the contemporary globalized but also increasingly polarized world

(Tomozeiu et al., 2016). Omnitranslatoriality, and different combinations of translatorial and translational competences may open up new avenues for research and for training. I look forward to exploring this interface, both theoretically and empirically, in continued interdisciplinary efforts.

Humanist approach for our times

The rise of translational approaches in translation studies responds to contemporary societal and planetary conditions. In an era of rampant climate change, accelerating extinction of species, homogenization of cultures and uncontrolled technological innovation, several translation scholars have turned their translation expertise to understanding translations on a planetary scale, in deep time and in gauging new non-central roles for humans in the loop in the posthuman era (Cronin, 2020; Marais, 2019; Vidal Claramonte, 2024).

This present volume is far less ambitious in its aims, and narrower in its scope. Still, I feel it resonates with these more extensive calls to rethink the remit of translation work and translation research. The resonance can be found in the area of understanding constant translation as a human condition, as a quality of how we as humans interact with one another and with our surroundings. The focus of the analysis in these chapters is on collaboration in organizations — another human trait of doing things together in societies. For many, the business context may appear as a constraint. And indeed it is. The application of systemic constraints and narrowing down the observations allows for a sharper vision and for a development of a joint agenda. How the context of work defines translation and translatorial practices can then be fruitfully compared with contexts beyond the capitalist logic of paid work.

The humanist ethos that can be found across the chapters in the form of foregrounding the human actors was not by design but rather emerged from how the volume was planned and how the individual contributions evolved. It is clear that translation, be it professional, paraprofessional and non-professional, is increasingly technologized. This is more evident in interlingual translation that has long been a hotspot for the development of AI-powered tools. It remains to be seen, how the current new wave of AI and robotics will affect translational processes in organizations and in our lives, and research efforts need to be targeted in this radical socio-cultural shift in our lives and workplaces. What remains constant is that we humans will remain human, and this human condition will remain the vantage point we will unavoidably maintain, however posthumanist and transhumanist our culture becomes.

One human trait that cannot be escaped, and that is being exploited by new digital technologies, is our embodied being in the world which makes us thinking, feeling and experiencing participants in any translation events. In some chapters, questions of paraprofessional translators' attitudes, beliefs and emotions are brought under investigation, but much more remains to uncover about the affective elements at play. This is a direction that some translation scholars are currently exploring, seeing translation as "a holistic and embodied experience that is not so much intellectual as sensory, experiential, and emotional" (Vidal Claramonte 2024, p. 34). Looking at translatoriality and translationality in organizations (and elsewhere) through this lens will create new knowledge on the role of translation in both successes and failures of collaboration and organizational change.

Interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary future(s) of TS

Translation, however it is conceptualized, is a transversal phenomenon by nature, cutting across organizational hierarchies and moving across domains. In the context of hierarchical transversality within organizational structures, a focus on translatorial practices can make translatorially competent employees and their below-the-radar organizational contributions visible. Shop floor workers and cleaners can be identified as core employees, and c-suite managers may be given credit for their altruistic mediation activities. This transversal nature gives translation and its research radical potential for rethinking and revisioning organizational roles and hierarchies.

As this volume aims to make visible, the study of translation is also transversal in a disciplinary sense. This is not a new realization. The field of translation studies has since its beginnings identified itself as an "interdiscipline" (Snell-Hornby, 1988) and taken on input and insights from many directions. At the early stages of disciplinary development this influence was largely unidirectional, as scholars trained in other fields migrated into the translation studies community. During the past decade, new approaches to interdisciplinarity have become pronounced. Extended collaborations such as the one that led to this volume have been established, and a more dialogic attitude has led to attempts at forging dialogical connections across disciplinary borders.

In their introduction to the first volume of *Border Crossings: Translation Studies and other disciplines* (2016), Gambier & van Doorslaer (2016) were not entirely optimistic about the successes of transversality, but things may be moving forward. In a programmatic article that in many ways aligns with the ethos of this volume, Gary Massey has called for workplace studies, arguing that the "actual

and potential impact of transdisciplinarity should frame translation research more explicitly" (Massey, 2021, p. 51). He (p. 54) points out to the growing diversification of the translation profession. Paraprofessional contexts add another plethora of situated roles and translatorial practices. Massey identifies a need to move from interdisciplinarity to a transdisciplinary agenda that he defines as "active, collaborative and transformative problem-solving directed at real-world issues by researchers interacting with communities of practice within a transdisciplinary action research framework" (p. 60). This definition implies a move towards increasingly participatory co-research modes of fieldwork in contexts where professionals trained in translation departments work. These developing research practices offer promising new avenues for studying both professional and paraprofessional translation.

Working across the boundaries between the academia and practitioners is a reminder that translation is also epistemologically transversal. A long tradition of intercultural approaches in translation studies reminds us that even interlingual translation is never only lingual but also a process of connecting groups of people who are different, and whose perceptions and knowledges of the world are different. Indeed, one can define translation, lingual and otherwise, as a process of making something meaningful in a new context, for a new audience. That is, translation is by definition interepistemic. Recent TS advances in focusing on the epistemic (see Vidal Claramonte, 2024) are highlighting indigenous knowledges; one can easily also extend this approach to multinational organizations, and the hierarchies and power dynamics between the headquarters and local subsidiaries. The linguistic dominance of the headquarter language often translates to epistemic dominance of the business models, practices and ideologies. This imbalance has been increasingly addressed in recent business studies research (i.a. Wilmot 2024). It is also discussed in Chapter 9 above, focussing on the paraprofessional translators caught in the middle, translating between the HQ and the local context, across epistemic boundaries and power structures.

Conclusion

I am grateful to all the authors who accepted the invitation to contribute to *Paraprofessional Translating at Work*. Their willingness to enlarge the interstices between disciplinary areas, looking for unifying themes as well as productive possibilities for mutual enrichment will hopefully encourage similar endeavours and continued collaboration. Translation is a fascinatingly manifold object of research, and also a powerful theoretical lens to mobilize for understanding how we humans operate in this world, creating meaning, moving boundaries and extending knowledge and understanding across communities.

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In the daily life of multilingual and multinational organizations, knowledge, ideas and practices are constantly crossing borders and boundaries. To make this movement happen, employees of many fields beyond professional translation participate in translating across languages, organizational and national cultures as well as epistemes and communities of practice. This paraprofessional translation is a longstanding phenomenon, but it has not yet received much scholarly attention. This volume brings translation studies, international business and organization studies scholars together to theorize, conceptualize and empirically study the practices and beliefs of these actors at varying levels of organizational hierarchies who create meaning and extend knowledge and understanding across boundaries at work.

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