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Cultus

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

Translation *plus*: The added value of the translator

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ICONESOFT EDIZIONI - GRUPPO RADIVO HOLDING
BOLOGNA – ITALY

Registrazione al Tribunale di Terni
n. 11 del 24.09.2007

Direttore Responsabile Agostino Quero
Editore Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding
Anno 2021 Volume 14
ISSN 2035-3111
2035-2948

Policy: double-blind peer review

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via Ferrarese 3 – 40128 Bologna

CULTUS

the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

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ICONESOFT EDIZIONI – RADIVO HOLDING
BOLOGNA

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The translator *plus*: An Introduction

Cinzia Spinzi

In an era where the advancement of automated translation seems to blur the edges between professional and amateur translation, the translation profession appears to be suffering an existential crisis (low status and uncertain future). However, this is not the whole picture since a parallel universe seems to loom large on the horizon. This parallel universe hosts “premium-market translators”, an expression that distances itself from standard translation and mainly refers to those translators who, super-endowed with a divine gift from Saint Jerome, work in environments such as high finance, banking and marketing. In other words, a parallel world where a professional translator can thrive.

This issue of *Cultus* attempts to zoom in on this world and serves as a catalyst for theoretical reflections and practical personal experiences on ‘premium translation’ or better on the translator *plus*. In other words, the focus is on the value that translators and interpreters may add to the collaborative production of verbal and written texts. In 2013, Romero Fresco, borrowed the expression “universal design” from architecture, and underlined the role of the translator as an active collaborator in the filmmaking process. Much earlier Wilss (1977: 74) had warned against the danger of misinterpreting the author's real intentions because of the absence of contact between the translator and the producer of the original text. Both contributions, in different contexts and time, seem to point to an almost kuhnian shift in the profession. A pro-active role for the translator, from the initial assignment to the very end of the translatorial collaborative-based process, now seems to be an inevitable consequence of the tumultuous changes in the translation service market.

In situations where the translator is not “just the translator”, and is listened to rather than simply ‘used’, how has her status been re-evaluated to include higher autonomy decision making? And, what are the models suitable for investigating this role of agent as an integral part of a

cooperative chain or circle? And again, what skills are necessary to make the translator more proactive and less reactive? These concerns and many others are tackled in this issue starting from the two provocative interviews that David Katan delivers in company of two professional translators thriving in the premium market – and who have both written about the subject: David Jemielity and Rose Newell.

The opening interview features **David Jemielity**, the Head of Translations at Banque Cantonale Vaudoise (BCV) in Switzerland, where he is also a member of the bank’s editorial committee, the group that coordinates BCV’s communications across languages. The Swiss bank exemplifies translators’ gradual transition from their peripheral role to a more central position in the bank’s communications organization. As Jemielity points out, the role of the translator *plus* is an ambitious project that starts with one’s own writing, one’s own translations and impacts positively on the professional *status* and financial rewarding. Crucially in this position is the translator’s participation in discussions regarding communication, text production and, crucially at times, in the original text (re)drafting. This involvement allows the translator to appropriate the diachronic dimension of the text, or as Katan puts it, ‘the underlying narrative’. It goes without saying that, in order to create “texts that give authors a voice in a different culture and language” (Chris Durban cited by Jemielity p. 19) bilingual and intercultural competences are taken for granted. He also does caution that collaboration is never guaranteed, and that all along the way “You pick your battles” (p. 21).

What seems to give this parallel world of translators an extra kick is the set of soft skills, the questioning and responsiveness, as **Rose Newell** suggests. Sounding less comfortable with the expression ‘premium translator’ because “a person cannot be a premium as such”, Newell brings the conversation to a number of points she considers crucial, including the translator’s ability to turn down the work that doesn’t live up to her professionalism. The translator’s proactive behaviour starts at the drafting level of the texts to be translated to ensure communicability and usability, even though – she observes – translation agencies discourage translators from doing so. A good example of how this added value of the translator can be made more visible – Newell proposes – is to ensure that clients see and understand the ST-TT file with the translator comments to make clients understand the translation process, the significance of the words and how they matter in the choices the translator makes. Sometimes, as Newell says, there is a problem educating clients, and rather like Jemielity’s “battle-

picking”, she points out: “You can’t get blood out of a stone” – and some translation projects should simply not be undertaken. In conclusion, since market accessibility, needs, and size will unceasingly vary, the key for Newell “is to think hard about what any given client is looking for, and who they are selling to” (p. 40).

The first paper in this issue is a state-of-the-art on collaborative translation, by **Angela D’Egidio**. D’Egidio notes that the concept was originally discussed in the field of literature following the traditional vertical dimension. Here, collaboration was among partners acting at successive stages in the process of translation. This model is known as translate-edit-proofread (TEP), and is widely used in translation agencies. Today, the growing presence of online communities has pushed towards more horizontal collaborative work where interconnectivity is enabled by collaboration among translators and other professionals working at the same stage of the chain in a team. This interdependence gives rise to feelings of cooperation and cohesion among the workers involved, fostering better translation performance. D’Egidio then reviews a series of examples of the translator as a consultant in the collaborative circle, from literature to audiovisual translation and including the videogame industry. D’Egidio concludes by stating that this type of work is becoming increasingly popular in sectors beyond the literary and that such collaboration allows the translator to concentrate more on “creative tasks by for example giving cultural advice, supporting localization, marketing objectives or company branding image, and negotiating with clients” (p. 56).

Gary Massey continues, pointing to the value that translatorial agencies may add to operational and strategic communication that take place within multilingual organizations if a more positive and strategic role of the translator is valued. Massey argues that translators, far from being marginal to the communicative organization, are endowed with a “‘hidden power’ (Piekkari *et al.* 2020, 3015) as they reshape meaning through the chain of the interpretative decisions they make when they translate” (p.63). In his analysis of the stumbling blocks to a pro-active role for translators within multilingual organizations, he mentions the translator’s invisibility, the one-dimensionality of the dominant models of translation service provision, and also the linear model of communication within organizations which often neglect the role of the final recipients and their interpreting capacities. Massey suggests that a combination of translatorial linguistic ethnographic research methods should be used to detect factors that inhibit the

professional translators' agency building on the results of previous research studies (Katan 2011, 2016; Massey and Wieder 2019, 2020).

Massey observes that the main problem for the present lack of recognition of the added value of a translator lies in the professional translators' own self-concept of inadequacy regarding more creative mediation or consultancy roles; a self-perception that arguably derives from the traditional subservient function. Additionally, the linearity in the communication framework as practised by corporations should be changed in favour of "sustained, meaningful interactions and unmediated feed-forward and feedback flows" (p. 76). As evidence of this, paraprofessional translators, not being bound by professional norms and the self-concepts rooted in the professional translators' habitus, transcend the boundaries of conventional professional translation behaviour by exerting greater influence and adopting more creative translation stratagems than professional translators.

The three following papers are personal contributions which help show how to break away from the vision of the acquiescent, and "lonely translator" (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017: 1).

The first personal experience is narrated by **Patrick Williamson** and takes place in the financial sector where translator's agency is more than welcome. Williamson's personal experiences are in line with both Jemielity's and Newell's discussion of translator interventions from inception. Williamson gives us a practical example of clarity issues and specialized language in the original text. By relying on Chesterman's pragmatic strategies (2016) and textual manipulation, the author demonstrates how translation can benefit from transediting, above all in case of poor-quality source text and close deadlines. This implies intermediation between the author and the translator at the level of information organization, cohesion and also correction of factual and logical mistakes in the original text. By comparing machine translation output and his own translations, Williamson shows where the added value resides both at linguistic and pragmatic level of language and communication, stressing once again the difference between human translation, or transcreation, and machine translation.

And we return to transcreation in **Claudia Benetello's** personal case that follows. The added value for the commissioning author is visible through what she calls "hybridization", a more far-reaching form of specialization that helps translators to move up the market. Based on her polyhedric experience as a translator and interpreter in a number of sectors, and on her idea of transcreation as a "fully-fledged consulting service",

Benetello argues that possessing skills that belong “on the other side of the fence” (p. 104) contribute to a premium professional profile that will benefit clients. Hence, her particular profile includes anthropological, copywriting and marketing skills.

Transcreation – as her final transcreated Ryanair TV campaign shows – is described as a service rather than an approach for a number of reasons: multiple transcreational options are provided by the translator together with comments which justify the choices adopted; and additionally, further techniques such as voiceover may be required in the translatorial process. Hybridization is also discernible from her practice of interpreter. She notes that in some interpreting settings, such as interviews with artists, where there are often multiple stakeholders involved, her interpreting is informed by her background as a journalist and by her expertise in journalistic techniques, norms, and timing. These previously acquired specialized translator *plus* accessories are invaluable in knowing how and where to “think outside the box and produce a target copy that truly resonates with the intended audience” (p. 121). In conclusion, the hybrid translator is highly accessorized, flexibly adapting her *modus operandi* according to context or setting.

With the third personal experience, a theoretical model of translation as collaboration that guides the translator’s decision-making process is described. The model is the outcome of **Wenhao Yao**’s two personal and self-reflective studies of translation. The first concerns the translation of the autobiography of a collaborative ‘engaging’ writer (Zhang), while the second example involves a more traditional silent author. In both cases the final re-established translation version is made possible by the translators’ devotion and creativity.

Four steps are distinguished in Yao’s model of collaboration, which takes both from Steiner’s 4 stage Hermeneutic Model and from Taoism: the flow of exchange, reflected here in the interaction between the author and the translator. The flow is the underlying principle behind creation where through a continuous act of devotion and creativity the translator becomes the “Other Author”. The initial step is Cooperation. This starts with the commissioner’s mandate, which sets up an unequal status and identity between the translator and the author – in the sense that the translator agrees to cooperate following the conditions established by the commissioner. This status is altered in the following stage, Competition (seen here as ‘yang’, the masculine active force), when the translator responds or *attacks* the source text and the author’s authorial status is

undermined. At this point, the translator is no longer passive because she intervenes in the text. Balance is restored in the following phase, Compromise (seen here as ‘yin’, the feminine, passive, conservative force), where the two ‘authors’ co-exist by virtue of the final phase, Collaboration, where both author and translator are enriched.

Nina Georgiou's paper takes up the concept of gatekeeping in translation by reconstructing and analysing the correspondences that the well-known translator Kimon Friar had with his publisher of the poems he translated from Greek into English. Exploring Friar’s voluminous translated work, Georgiou highlights how Friar pioneered collaborative translation. He worked in tandem with the poets of the time, and saw himself as translator/gatekeeper, filtering the work to be translated. The case analysed shows how the issue of gatekeeping is closely linked to that of professionalism in translation and that agency lies in the network as a whole rather than in the translator as a single individual. The results of Georgiou’s study allows her to venture an enlarged definition of translator as gatekeeper which includes a number of critical aspects such as the control over what or who is to be translated, the possession of a peer monitoring capacity of the translation field, the right to endorse or decline permissions, and the right to be financially rewarded when the works are used.

Creativity, a skill which has represented a common thread in most of the articles collected in this issue, is the main focus of the closing article where **Pablo Romero-Fresco** explores current practices of creative and artistic media accessibility. Creativity in AVT has always been associated with the need to adjust the audiovisual product to make it work in all target markets without losing sight of the original intent. What this actually means has been affected by changes in legislation. This has become more strict to improve accessibility, while there has also been a general shift from a particularist to a universalist approach and from reactive towards a more pro-active approach in media accessibility (Greco 2018). After differentiating creativity in translation from creativity in media accessibility studies, Romero-Fresco notes that the focus on the abilities rather on the impairments of the recipients allows translation to be more creative. With accessibility as a priority the final products are not treated as derivative but as “other” originals. Romero-Fresco offers a plethora of examples of creative media accessibility practices from creative industries that “seek to become an artistic contribution in their own right and to enhance user experience in a creative or imaginative way”. He also shows how creative subtitling constitutes a way forward in avoiding discrimination of the deaf and the

hard of hearing and, more generally, towards reducing other forms of exclusion.

As this issue shows, the language services sector has grown exponentially and rapidly recently. In this ever-changing environment, the professionals involved have adapted to pressures, rules and models coming from fields outside translation. Roles have become much less rigid than in the past, and in order not to be left behind it is necessary for translators to rethink their status and professionalism. A *conditio sine qua non* to move up the chain and up the market is collaborative translation – no longer “the lonely translator”, but one working with (rather than just for) a team of other professionals towards a common goal. A “collaborative” team is one whose end result is more than the sum of its parts. Creativity is foregrounded in all its facets as problem-solving, decision-making or adaptation to new situations, making the translator more visible. Translators, proofreaders, project managers, together with the client, working in harmony, build the added value that really makes the difference, though other specialisations or *plus* features also deserve attention. In a nutshell, all the contributions in this issue seem to point to the same direction: encouraging translators to be willing to risk by adopting a *transcreate* approach (Katan 2018).

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Translation *plus* and the added value of the translator: An interview

David Jemielity and David katan

DK: Dave, as you know this issue of *Cultus* focuses on the recognition of the translator’s added value: the premium translator who is paid well for what she (or he) does; and, as we mean here, the translator *plus*, the translator who is part of the collaborative chain, who is part of the decision-making process – rather than at the end of a vertical chain. And you are one of the few translators, along with Chris Durban (2010; 2020), to have talked and written about this. It really appears to be a radically different – and much more optimistic – view of what a translator does and how a translator is valued. And yet, it seems to me to be an area hiding in plain sight (as also discussed by Vashee 2021).

DJ: “Hiding in plain sight” and “radically different”? I suspect we’ll end up saying “yes and no” to both of those characterizations by the end of our talk today. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. What exactly are we talking about here? You’ve just called it an “area,” whereas I’d be more likely to call it an “approach” or a “business model.” Your term “translator plus” is also new to me – it’s not a word that would spontaneously occur to me as a label for my job. I’d be more likely to reach for “the premium market” as a label for what I think you’re talking about.

Perhaps this is indicative of some difference in perspective between observers of our profession who are academics, and observers who are practitioners? Of course, one wouldn’t want to oversimplify. Many academic translation scholars also practice professionally, as Esther Torres-Simòn and Anthony Pym have demonstrated (2015). And some practitioners also teach part time in university translation-studies programs, generally as adjuncts or lecturers. So the lines do blur.

Nonetheless, I think there are important differences between the ways people whose professional context is essentially academia view the profession and the prism that practitioners — even those like me who dabble a bit in teaching and research — see it through. You, David, have explored some of these issues in an article whose title, “The Great Divide,” kinda says it all, doesn’t it? (Katan 2009; see also Katan 2011).

So perhaps it’s revealing on some level that a peer-reviewed academic journal editor spontaneously reaches for terms that cast today’s topic in terms of people (“premium translators”) and fields (“area”), while a practitioner who works in a bank will talk about it more readily in terms of “markets” and “models.” That said, I do think that all these terms map the same basic concept: a more optimistic (as you say) and ambitious (as I might) approach to doing what we translators do.

DK: Well, your own professional trajectory at BCV (Banque Cantonale Vaudoise) is certainly grounds for optimism, isn’t it? BCV is a large company, Switzerland’s 5th largest bank, so on the face of it one would never expect the in-house translators to have any access to the bank’s CEO and CFO. But your team is, in fact, in regular face-to-face meetings with them. Nor would you expect the bank to put its American head of translations in charge of creating multi-year brand identity campaigns from the ground up, leading the team that works on the messaging, writes the scripts and storyboards, and shoots the actual ads — all in French! This, to my mind, is certainly an example of what we’re calling “the translator plus,” a translator whose added value is recognized and who is viewed as a fully-fledged communications consultant. I hope you can tell us exactly how you and your team managed to position yourselves so favourably.

DJ: It really comes down to having a more ambitious vision. And although that “high-ambition” approach eventually impacts your status, your salary and the like, it doesn’t start there. It starts with the writing — your translations themselves. I know in any case that that’s where my own “high-ambition” approach to translation began. When we started developing the ideas we’ve applied at BCV, we weren’t thinking about our salaries, our place on BCV’s organization chart, or any of that “status-of-the-profession” stuff that translators so enjoy grousing about at conferences. We simply wanted to be able to produce better target-language deliverables.

Back then, when I looked at our team’s translations from French into English (including many of my own) and compared them to similar content

produced by Anglosphere banks, I often found myself thinking, “Gee, this just isn’t good. It’s not as effective as writing.” And I suspected the content we produced in our other target languages was no better. In brief, we needed to raise the bar.

And all the rest, for the last 17 years, has been figuring out how to do that. It’s all about processes – ways of making our target-language communications more effective as English and German copy designed to help my company sell stuff. And if you really drill down into all the processes relating to producing multilingual communications at a large firm, with an eye towards maximally enfranchising your translators as writers and communicators, I think you’ll find that there’s a lot that’s improvable. I know we did. And over the years we’ve managed to tweak quite a few typical multilingual communications business processes, coming up with less standard but to our mind more effective ways of getting it done.

What’s resulted is a fundamentally different overall model for translating, on both process level and product level, compared with what you tend to see on many other in-house teams.

DK: Can you tell us about the differences?

DJ: Well, for starters, on certain jobs, the English and German versions will be noticeably different from the original French. The differences are often stylistic, but I’m talking about more than the typical stylistic adjustments most good translators make for better target-text readability. For example, the order in which ideas are presented might end up changing, sometimes a lot. The last idea in the original French paragraph might end up as the first idea in the English version. Or the entire last paragraph might end up being the first. In some cases, the content might also change: we add, subtract, or modify some of the information in the original source text in the target-language versions of some content.

But I’d like to emphasize that when we make adjustments like that we’re not making them arbitrarily or independently. Everything is based on field-specific benchmarks. And it’s all discussed with the people in charge of the French-language source texts, who can range from product managers in the case of marketing material to the bank’s CEO and CFO for our corporate reporting. Generally, there’s some give and take between us and them. Often what emerges is a target text where the messages are a little bit different from those of the source text – but are still “on message.”

DK: You're now the lead writer and overall creative director for BCV's French-language brand identity campaign. So what we're talking about here is consultant status, not only for your bank's target language communications in English and German, but now also for communication 'tout court'. At your bank, at least, the process involves going to 'the translator' for communication needs, which is not 'normal'. At the moment the norm is still to go to your communications people, you go to your marketing people, you go to your copy-editing people. The default view is that you go to the translator because you want your text translated pretty closely. You are not really going to ask the translator much about it, or tell the translator much about it. And you are certainly not really interested in what the translator might think.

DJ: Yeah, I think you're right that what we're doing at BCV bends that norm to some extent. That said, our translation team spends most of its time translating French source texts rather than creating new content (in any language). And on most of our jobs we translate the original source-language content closely. There are, however, some types of content where a close translation won't be effective enough as field-specific communication in the target-language. And there, it's clear that we've got an advantage as translators having that "seat at the table" for BCV's high-level communications discussions. For starters, it gives you a more complete view of the source text. My term for this is a "diachronic" experience, as opposed to the merely "synchronic" view of the source text most translators get. For most translators, the source text exists outside of time. They don't see the previous versions, how it developed. Most importantly, they don't see what the source text writers thought about doing - but decided not to. But at BCV we have access to that whole source-text-creation process. In particular, knowing what they decided not to say in the original can help you make better decisions as a translator, particularly when you're sifting through several options where each is close to the meaning of the original, but where each moves away from it slightly, and in disparate directions.

In these cases, it's a disadvantage to only have that synchronic understanding of the text. And on the contrary, at BCV we're empowered as writers in those situations by dint of the role we play upstream creating some source texts, and because there's one of us, the head of translations, who literally has a seat at the table where this stuff is being discussed, on the bank's *comité éditorial*.

Concretely, that means that every Tuesday afternoon I'm part of a committee that discusses every major piece of communication developed by the bank. So, among other things, I know what the bank decided not to do, and why, including everything from what colour schemes we decided not to use to what keywords we decided not to use. That's an advantage when it comes time to translate.

DK: Yes, absolutely. It is that two-way discussion, which should automatically be part of most translators' work. Not always, of course; if it's the weather report then it's the weather report and you can't change that. But much of the time you need some form of recontextualisation.

I'm currently working on a tourist guide at the museum here and we had exactly that conversation. I came up with a translation, and went through it with the original writers. They read through it and they said: "No, you can't say that", and I said: "But that's what you wrote"; and then one of the writers started expanding on the machinations and vagaries of the historical and political background - exactly what you were saying, sizing up the alternatives. They said: "We started with the same clarity you have in your English version, making that point, but politically we can't actually say that - and the way you've worded it puts exactly into the limelight what we wanted to be there, but we couldn't say". That was because I said: "I'd be explicit here, otherwise the new readers won't really understand" and the writers said: "Yes, well, we can't tell them that". So I then sent them a rewording in English and they sent it back. Then I tweaked it, and so on (see Katan 2022). You are right, you need the commissioners, the writers, to give these ideas to you about what wasn't said and why it wasn't said. You end up with information which highlights the underlying narrative.

DJ: What you've just described, the conversation you had with these tourism guide writers, is exactly the sort of process we have put in place at BCV. It's one of the key processes that's taken us to where we are now. I'd argue, in fact, that it's an ideal process, the best way to produce target-language content that is 100% "fine-tuned" as messaging for your client in the target language.

But to work in these "high ambition" or "translator plus" business models, you've got to earn it, in terms of your skillset as a translator. Here, two key elements are field-specific knowledge and writing skills. Chris Durban refers to the writing-skills part as "knowing the craft" (e.g. 2015): "the ability to create texts that go beyond accurate (the bare-bones

minimum) to embrace style and flow and rhythm. That goes beyond the words to the ideas behind the words. Compelling texts. Texts that entice readers to jump aboard and keep reading clear through to the end. Texts that give authors a voice in a different culture and language. That opens windows and doors”. What I would add is that your writing skills need to be field-specific. You can’t expect to be able to simply walk in, sit down, and claim to “know your craft” in a field you aren’t deeply familiar with simply because you’re a good writer.

In wealth management marketing, for example, most close translations from French to English are ineffective as field-specific communication. So, if you have any game whatsoever as a writer in your target language, you’re going to want to change stuff (at least in the French-English combination). You’ll want to “transcreate” the original text, to a greater or lesser extent. But in a specialized field like wealth management, you’ll never be able to carry that off by simply relying on your writing skills in a knowledge- and dialogue-vacuum. You need to build a “high-ambition” approach to working in that field.

It starts by knowing “how the field sounds” in English. How does JP Morgan talk about the specific area of wealth management that your source text is about? How does Wells Fargo talk about it? What about Goldman, Merrill, Lloyd’s and HSBC? In my world, this truly deep familiarity with the field, “having it all on the tip of your tongue,” is an absolutely crucial part of the process, in part because it gives us credibility in the next step of the process. (Jemielity 2014).

That next step is you sitting down with your wealth management marketing head, the one who gave you the translation job, and discussing alternatives. Sometimes she’ll buy in right away. Other times she’ll tell you, “Sorry, but we can’t say that” for X or Y reason – just like what happened to you on your museum job, David.

DK: Definitely. Yes, but there is a difference. My guidebook writers are scholars, they’re experts, but they’re not experts in communication. Determinologization and popularisation (e.g. Gotti 2015) is usually only seen as dummifying down, which as far as domain experts are concerned is a no-no. But people who have spent 30-40 years working as experts in their field can’t easily get into a non-specialist way of thinking.

DJ: Yes, I see what you mean. The issue we face as translators at the bank isn’t exactly the same as yours, because our BCV marketing people are by

definition on some level “popularizers.” So our need to adapt the source text is driven by field-specific cultural differences rather than making the target text rendering resonate for lay people. For example, we’ll run up against differences between the norms of what one says, and in what order, in Anglo financial reporting as opposed to Gallic (or Swiss-French) financial reporting (cf. Jemielity 2010, 2012). Now, both the Anglo and Gallic audiences are specialists in their fields, so it’s not about popularizing anything, but rather field-specific differences in communication norms. But the overall process/product challenge you face with your tourism content is similar to ours. As is your solution!

However, I do want to make clear that we don’t employ processes like those on every text. You need to pick out image-critical content and focus your efforts on that. 80% to 90% of what we translate will not involve a client meeting. You pick your battles.

DK: I think ‘battles’ is very apt. The translator *plus* can’t sit back and presume that she will be respected for her job, and certainly shouldn’t fall into the “willing subservience” painted by Simeoni (1998).

So, should we make our translation graduates more aware of the road to take? Should we teach them how to become less timid and more – aggressive isn’t the right word – more assertive and more ready to pick up the phone, argue their case, and then go back and do that again without giving up. How do we move towards a standardization of this type of approach?

DJ: Arguing the case is of course fine, and I suspect that many translators are indeed a bit too timid in that respect. But it’s a truism in communications that showing is better than telling. What I mean is, if you can build processes that allow you both to turn out amazing work and ensure your clients know that it’s amazing work, then you won’t need to *talk* so much about your added value because you’ll have *shown* it. That’s what we’ve tried to do at BCV. Our use of meetings and our approach to meetings help us a lot with that second objective: making sure your stakeholders buy in, that they see, concretely, how good your work is.

There are entire conferences organized around the theme of how translators can communicate their added value. But I think it’s important not to put the cart before the horse: we need to start by building processes that ensure that we are, in fact, creating as much added value as we could be in our translations – and that includes the processes required to optimize

our own skill sets as translators. Once we've done that – once we are, actually, creating maximum possible added value – then we can start worrying about communicating it.

But at that point you might not even need to. If you manage things adroitly, it's likely your processes will end up showing your added value to your clients. And you can stop worrying so much about the telling.

DK: That sounds a lot like what you said in your TEF keynote address (2019): less grousing, and less whingeing. More ambition ... and perhaps also a bit more assertiveness?

DJ: Yes, exactly. When you've got a process that shows your added value you don't have to tell people about it – much less complain that it isn't recognized. And I agree with you that assertiveness is a part of that “showing.” Our BCV translators are extremely well-informed subject-area specialists who are highly skilled as writers, as editors, as rewriters in their target language. And they are, indeed, somewhat assertive in meetings.

That said, in meetings, listening skills are just as important as talking skills. Sometimes we translators are overly concerned about what we're going to say in a meeting, and it ends up distracting us from what our clients are saying to us. Which is, after all, crucial information, especially when you're brainstorming together over a tough passage of the source text and the client isn't on board with your proposed translation options. So assertiveness is important, but it should be very open-eared and open-eyed assertiveness.

DK: Yes, showing great interest is good, and the great thing is that the translator is probably the only person who will pour over every single word; the intended reader isn't going to critically look at the language. So, she (or maybe he) is the only one who should be automatically on board with discussions about how the client wants the text to work or to communicate, rather than simply “here's the brief, just translate it”.

I want to ask you how does ‘premium’ in premium translation work economically? This is the litmus test difference between technicians and consultants, and between transcreators and translators (Gaballo 2012, 101). Is it payment by word or payment by time?

DJ: Translators, whether they're self-employed or salaried, tend to account for their output in terms of words. And in-house teams almost as a rule track their throughput in terms of words.

At BCV, we don't. And here's why: words translated (per day, per FTE,¹ per whatever) simply aren't in our view a very meaningful metric of the added value we provide. We do of course have a good idea of how many words are going through our workflows each day, but when I report on my team up to management, words are not a metric I'll use. For starters, using the number of words translated projects an image of translation as something countable – a commodity. Like, say, coffee beans. And unless you want to have the career trajectory of a coffee bean picker that's not a smart rhetorical play.

But the more fundamental reason that I won't reach for words as an output metric relates to the grouching at conferences you mentioned earlier. Because one of the grouchers' favorite old chestnuts is that we translators have a similar level of academic training to that of lawyers, and we also have a similar level of day-to-day intellectual engagement in our work – and yet, the average translator has neither the professional status nor the taxable income of your average lawyer (generally this last observation is punctuated by at least three indignant exclamation marks: grouse-grouse-grouse!!!).

But consider this: when was the last time you heard a lawyer talk about her work-product output in terms of words?

DK: Well, lawyers work by the minute, six minute slices. Billable time for translators? And why not?

But how do we get there? You began about a decade ago advocating for a more “high-ambition” mindset for translating (Jemielity 2012, 2014). Most memorably for me in that 2014 guest essay on specialization for the ITI (11,000 views in the short period it was on-line). That essay was a forceful argument that we all need to up our game.

DJ: ITI has actually asked me to reprise that 2014 essay, with some updates, in 2022.

DK: The sequel! But my question is this. Your advocacy of “high-ambition” multilingual communications business processes is great. But...

¹ Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a way for employers to standardise their headcount and combine their part-time workers' hours to figure out how many full-time employees would work those hours.

OK, it's worked for your team at BCV, and you make a compelling theoretical case for it, but in practical terms, is this something the average translator or average translation team can apply? In a word, is your approach replicable?

DJ: Honestly, I'm not sure that's for me to say. I'm just too close to it to be objective. We've had success, to be sure, but that might just mean that my colleagues and I have succeeded *despite* rather than *thanks to* our business model, simply because we're good translators. So your question is founded. And also absolutely crucial, for an educator – I get why you're insisting a little bit. You're wondering, "Can I tell my students that they can aim higher and expect more? Or would that be unfair?"

DK: And I'm also wondering what you tell your students. Let's not forget, you are also a tenured lecturer at no less than at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, University of Geneva, teaching financial translation and transcreation.

DJ: Yes, I do proudly consider myself to be a teacher, if only on a very part-time basis. And I believe we have a fiduciary duty to our students to give them a realistic view of the profession they're about to enter. It wouldn't be fair to them to spin fairy tales.

DK: Exactly.

DJ: On the other hand, that same fiduciary duty means that it also isn't fair to tacitly discourage our students from aiming high by giving them the mistaken impression that there's nothing "high" out there to take aim at. If there are in fact a variety of different fields within multilingual communications that have premium-market segments, segments that are very rewarding but also very demanding, our students should know that they exist, how they work, and ideally, how to prepare for working in them.

So let me start with the other examples you asked for. I am in fact personally aware of several examples of freelance translators, in-house translation teams, and small boutique translation firms that have taken a high-ambition approach, positioned themselves as "premium-market" providers of highly specialized multilingual communications solutions, and bill accordingly. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Paris-based freelance financial translator Chris Durban. She wrote a book called *The*

Prosperous Translator (2010), a title which sums up her approach. And lots of other freelancers are applying similar “high-ambition” approaches – many inspired by Chris, who’s been a mentor to many of our most successful colleagues. The financial translators Dominique Jonkers, Dylan Gee, Christine Graf, Tom West, Robin Bonthron, Juliette Blume, Claudio La Rosa, Marta Villacampa Bueno, Lisa Ruth and Ralf Lemster immediately spring to mind as examples because we’ve worked with them at BCV, or I’ve listened to them speak at conferences, or both. I’ve paid their exorbitant rates :) and I’ve capitalized on their amazing work. These people are expensive and they’re not always available, but they are well worth your time and money. I could also cite high-end boutique firms like Scala-Wells here in Lausanne, Anglocom in Montreal and Quebec City, and Translations in Paris.

DK: Most of those examples relate to finance. Do you think this sort of thing can only happen in the financial sector?

DJ: Actually, although I’m obviously less familiar with the economics and work practices of other fields and other language combinations besides those we work in at BCV, I know for a fact that no, it’s not just a bank-and-finance thing (c.f. Jemielity 2012, 2018). For instance, Anglocom and Scala-Wells are both active in corporate communications outside of finance, and they both also have people who specialize in museum translations. For yet another example, in a very different field, there’s a huge premium market in the sci-tech and defense sectors. The Russian-to-English sci-tech specialist and former ATA spokesperson Kevin Hendzel has spoken and written extensively about it (2013, 2014). If you look hard enough, you’ll discover that we have “translator *plus*” colleagues in fields as diverse as wine, waste management and recycling, healthcare, fashion, the humanitarian sector and corporate law. Not to mention Google’s large in-house language team, by the way....

DK: Yes, as does Booking.com (Huston 2016), like all multilingual platforms which actually only in theory auto-magically substitute the translator.

DJ: My former student Svein Hermansen, who went straight from FTI Geneva’s masters in translation program to a job at Google, has spoken and

written (2014) about what Google’s large in-house translation team does. It’s high-ambition stuff.

So yes, I think it’s safe to say that there are in fact many different “premium market” corners of our profession.

But there is an important caveat, and it’s a key takeaway point I’d like to leave your readership with: if you want to penetrate the premium market in any field, be it sci-tech, finance, watchmaking or wine, you’re going to need to have exceptional qualifications, both as a field specialist and as a writer in your TL. In particular, the standard of what constitutes a “meaningful” degree of field-specialization in these markets should not be underestimated (Hermansen 2014; Jemielity 2014, 2019).

DK: So whether you want to take a position on the matter or not, it’s beginning to sound like a “translator *plus*” or “premium market” approach is indeed a replicable, if demanding, model.

DJ: I’ll stick to my Renaissance aphorisms here and continue to plead “*nemo iudex in causa sua*” regarding the particular process model we’ve put in place at BCV. But there are clearly translators out there who’ve taken a high-ambition approach and made it work.

I would however point out that it’s actually more likely what we’re talking about is a group of similar but not identical approaches. People have been advocating for these ideas for well over two decades, so there has obviously been time for different translators to start from the same basic “we can do this better” observation and take it in somewhat different directions. For example, back in 1996 the Washington, D.C.-based IMF language head Neil Inglis gave a conference talk on the low-ambition “poverty cult” he felt was dragging our profession down (Inglis 2016). Neil’s talk remains a seminal piece of thinking, one that I subscribe to 100%. But that doesn’t mean that Neil and his team at IMF do things just like we do them at BCV, even though our respective visions of what we’re doing and how we do it are probably fairly congruent. Which suggests that your “translator plus” and my “premium market” / “high-ambition approach” collectively map what Wittgenstein (1953/2009) might call a “fuzzy concept” or a “family resemblance” – an important point being that even if the idea or concept in question is subject to some degree of variability or “fuzziness” around the edges, it’s still useful.

DK: Perhaps it's because of that fuzziness that I sometimes feel that this translator plus / premium market model is, as it were, hiding in plain sight?

DJ: Ah, yes, I knew we'd get back to that. It is true that these "high-rent" corners of our industry can seem a bit like gated communities. Most people are on the outside looking in. And those markets are, in fact, in many cases gated, in the business sense of "moated." As Kevin Hendzel has pointed out, (2013, 2014), the sci-tech and defence solution providers who sell language assistance, among other services, to the American government are not exactly falling over themselves to explain their trade secrets to either translation studies academics or to potential-competitor practitioners. They prefer to dig an "information moat" around their business, thereby protecting themselves. So we're unlikely to be hearing from them at the ATA, SFT or TEF² annual conferences or reading about them in the *Journal of Specialized Translation (JOST)* anytime soon. But that doesn't mean those markets don't exist. If a tree falls in the forest but it wasn't written up, peer-reviewed and published, did it still fall? Yes, David, it sure did!

What I'm saying here is that both academic research and industry-led market surveys have blind-spots. And my feeling is that those blind-spots tend to contribute to an overly bleak view of the economics of our profession. Large industry surveys like those commissioned by Common Sense Advisory (CSA 2020) or the various national translator associations likely miss out some high-ambition, high-earning translators, as Pym, Grin, Chan and Sfreddo point out in their book-length study of the status of the profession (2012, cf. esp. p.3, p. 92). But it is also no doubt true that the high-end pockets within our profession remain small relative to the bulk of the translation industry. And they also appear to remain a black box for translation scholars, even to some extent for the hardy few who are starting to sharpen their focus on those corners of the industry (see for example Pym, 2015, 16:50-17:20).

DK: Perhaps these high-end, translator plus opportunities are essentially confined to areas like banking and finance, healthcare, luxury products and other segments where there's a lot of money floating around and a lot more at stake? I was speaking to Rose Newell (see this issue), and she was saying that as far as she's concerned the only way that a translator can be regarded

² ATA American Translators Association; SFT Société française des traducteurs; TEF Translating Europe Forum

as a translator *plus* is where a lot of money rides on what and how something is being said.

DJ: Rose is probably right. Kevin Hendzel (2020) has written about the premium translation segment as being composed of "markets where the cost of failure is dramatically higher than the cost of performance." And Chris Durban has been introducing herself for years at the start of her conference talks by saying "I work in a field where the price of failure is high".

More generally, I think what Rose, Chris and Kevin would all agree on is that "life ain't fair" – and that includes translators. For instance, no matter how good and how dedicated you are, you will make less if the supply of translation into your TL and in your field outstrips demand in that TL/field, or if the economic stakes for whatever you're working on are low. (I mean as compared with how you would do financially in a more favorable macro environment, all other things being equal.)

And on some level that's not fair. But I think it's important to simply get over it, and, as you Brits are so fond of saying, get on with it. Kenneth Kronenberg (2016), who has disagreed with me passionately and articulately on some of these issues, is to my mind stuck at the "This is so unfair!" stage of the process. And the problem with that is that it does not, to my mind, generate any possible solutions or even any paths forward, other than a sort of "Translators of the world, unite!" battle cry that is not in my opinion realistic or helpful.

A corollary of all of this is that translators should make business decisions with clear eyes and dispassionate hearts. I'm talking about choices like what field to work in and whether to live in your target language region or your source language region. As Dylan Gee (2009) has argued, these are business decisions, and the choices you make will have economic consequences.

DK: Your advice to be more "business-like" recalls the beginning of our conversation, where we observed the differences in our terminology and wondered if perhaps academics and practitioners, at least the high-end practitioners we've been discussing today, view the translation profession through somewhat different prisms.

DJ: Yeah, you're right. But if so, then what you're doing here, with this issue of *Cultus*, should help to make the premium translation market less of a black box for scholars, so in my view it's a step in the right direction.

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Translation *plus* and the added value of the translator:

An interview

Rosa Newell and David Katan

DK: This issue of *Cultus* is focussing on the difference between those who say they “translate” and end up feeling underpaid, undervalued, and those who also “translate”, but feel that they are valued – and well rewarded for what they do. And I am investigating this area of translation *plus*, which seems to be a very profitable area in every sense of the term. There is also the question of “premium” in translation – but we will come to that later.

So, hello Rose Newell, welcome to *Cultus*. You have an impressive translation blog, *The Translator’s Teacup*, and your main website, where you market yourself as *English Rose Berlin*. It states that you offer translation, adaptation, copywriting and consultancy services.

RN: In my case, I’m a copywriter and translator, so the copywriting part is something completely beyond translation, to start with. A lot of what I do sits somewhere in the middle, so often when a client calls me, they might think that they’re asking for a translation, but they’re actually asking for copywriting, or I might think that they’re asking for a copywriting, but they’re actually asking for a translation, or something in the middle. My work is collaborative by nature. Part of that is working out with the client what the better solution would be.

Sometimes the client might have one idea about how to do it, but it’s not the right one, so discussion is required. This is a situation in which some translators might just do what they’re asked, but then they have problems thereafter.

I personally have as good as no issues with unhappy clients, but they’ve often had issues in the past. I wonder if that’s partly because these translators are not raising these issues right at the beginning. If I notice that the source text is weak, I say something, for example, “This works

grammatically, but this doesn't make sense to me", or, "I'm going to have to be more flexible here, some content changes will be necessary".

DK: These great examples are very much connected with advertising, marketing, and key selling points. It makes absolute sense to me that a translator would intervene and says: "Wait a minute, this isn't going to work". And I'm wondering to what extent is this strictly the role of a translator working in marketing?

RN: That's a good question. The majority of what I translate, although you may categorize it as IT or as high-end real estate, has got to do something with marketing – nearly always, in fact. See, even when the text is informative in nature, it's still going to have a message. Everything has a persuasive purpose, and I don't think this is limited to just marketing. Even a user manual has got to be clear, and you must think about the purpose of the text, its usability, so I'd say it's more generally about thinking about how the text will be used.

Take a social security or a tax form, you don't want the reader to say, "Oh no, this isn't clear, what are we talking about here"? As a user, your ability to interact with the tax authorities shouldn't be limited because you couldn't figure out how to use the form. Unfortunately, a lot of the texts that translators are given to translate are badly formulated in the first place: they need to communicate something, but they don't. Then it evolves into a downward spiral – the translation is inevitably bad, the translator gets the blame, and then the translator is unhappy. You know, "garbage in – garbage out". Things can get mangled if people aren't thinking about how the text will be used.

DK: That's an excellent example. What you are saying is that the translator should be proactive. You can say: "Hang on, this isn't as good as it could be, why don't we change it"? This is where you get the collaborative approach. But isn't this because you now have the experience and a certain status?

RN: It's not much about status, because I'm talking about new clients. They don't know me. They might have been impressed by my website or I might have been recommended, but I don't have any special status with them.

DK: Except they come to you because they have a pretty good idea of your work. In particular, I'm thinking of my students. They're young. It's a little

bit more difficult for them, particularly when the client doesn't know, or even care about the translation. These clients won't be aware of the effect of the words, or the mangling that can happen.

RN: I think the biggest issue is translators not asking questions and clarifying things. A lot of translators are working within agencies, and those agencies discourage translators from such interactions. Agencies are largely to blame for the impression that *Google* and *DeepL* can produce perfect translations. They are the ones giving their clients the idea that they can just insert the text somewhere, send it to the agency, and the translation will appear just like magic. The reason these agencies are struggling and lowering rates, and struggling to get their own clients, is because they're marketing and presenting themselves in exactly the same way as *Google* and *DeepL*.

One of my clients left me a review in which he specifically mentioned the fact that I ask questions. This was because I told him, "I've got some doubts about taking this particular job. I'm going to ask you questions, since it's stuff I know a bit about but not everything". He loved the process, and this shows that everything agencies are teaching freelance translators and their project managers to avoid is what certain clients are desperate for. He said how valuable it was that I could present him with a table of the translation – something people would never normally show to their client – alongside my comments and questions. The bilingual file allows them to easily review my comments and see how I addressed any content issues in English should they need to adapt the German. Often, I would correct the original German where appropriate, or I would say, "There's an issue in the German here". Sometimes I'll say, "I've done this differently in the English, but you need to fix this in the German", and so on. I truly get them engaged.

DK: This is a very good example, and in fact you wrote in 2018: "quality-driven translation buyers appreciate well-founded questions" so I presume that this is a case of a "quality-driven translation buyer". Maybe the ones you get are of that type, but speaking of the market in general, my feeling is they're a bit ignorant, in the sense of ignoring these things.

RN: You are always going to get some people who are quite sensitive, and you're always going to get people who are ignorant.

DK: As in "ignoring things", because they just don't know...

RN: Yes, but there are two sides: there are people who can be educated, but some people who can't be. Some people say, "You've just got to educate your clients". Well, you can't get blood out of a stone. For example, if you've got an independent author who is self-publishing their novel, they may want to get that translated. There won't be much blood in that stone.

Let's say it's a local artist, maybe, or a local restaurant, in a small village, and they want to have their menu in English. I could make a really good sales pitch and they might really want me, because I've been able to describe all the differences and they can see I'm the best person for that job. However, they're not going to hire the services of someone who is twenty times more expensive than what they can reasonably afford, meaning someone who generally works in and serves a different price category.

There are some people who will always be limited in the sense of what they can afford based on their own budget. You can't educate every client to enlarge their budget when they just don't have that flexibility, and it's a waste of time to try. Similarly, there are ignorant people who don't care about quality, and that's fine – I don't waste time educating people who can't be educated. At first, I might try, and I'll try to be crystal clear, but if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. Some nuts can't be cracked.

DK: On pricing, as far as I can see from your blog post in 2019, you do still look at the number of words or the number of characters, so is that your starting point, rather than "it's an artistic project and it takes what it takes"?

RN: It's about more than quantity-based rates. There are translators who just churn through the words, of course. If they're also able to translate well and fast, they might still be making the same money as me, but without engaging with the client. There's something I find a little bit misleading with this "premium translator" ideal: Am I worth more as a person just because I charge more? It doesn't even mean I'm earning more – I probably am – but it's not guaranteed. It's just not the case that if someone wants to make more money, they have to do exactly what this particular person is doing, because that's what a "premium translator" is. Find your own path, because that's the only thing that will work. Imitations are never as good as originals with differences.

So, to come back to your question, I use a mixture of pricing models. I use hourly rates when it's something that requires a lot of input from their side, and if the project is awkward, I switch to hourly rates. I generally use a mixture of the line rate and the word rate when calculating the overall fee, but I also change it a little based on each client. When I get a new client, I

often copy the part of my table that refers to a similar client with a similar text. For example, creative real estate marketing is priced higher than a lot of the IT texts, because it's far more demanding. On the other hand, high-end IT marketing, where you should account for the rewriting, is also priced quite highly or charged at an hourly rate. But then there are other cases where it's a much more basic, straightforward translation, which can be priced a little lower. I just mix and match it like that.

You see, this is where the positioning part comes into play. For example, with a recent client I explained that, based on my experience, it would make more sense to recommission the translation entirely, because reviewing it would only take much longer and would cost more. My hourly rate reflects what I actually earn in an hour, so reviewing just doesn't work out cheaper than a new translation very often.

DK: At the very beginning, you said you are a translator and copywriter, right? Now you mention reviewing, revising, and I'm wondering if you do those as well.

RN: I don't sell myself as offering those.

DK: Ok, but for somebody who wants to work in translation or wants to be valued - a translator *plus* - you still need to show yourself to be someone who can write copy and proofread? It seems now to be a fairly core part of the position you're in today. Could you be the same sort of translator you are if you just called yourself a translator and nothing else?

RN: I was. You can be an excellent translator without being a copywriter, absolutely. For example, my reviewer, she is not a copywriter, but she is a first-rate translator. What matters is that people hire me because I can explain my reasoning to clients well. I can show where the writing is bad, where a translation is bad. If a translator doesn't explain why they are doing what they do, it doesn't help.

DK: So, it's important to have the language to talk about and articulate what the problem is – that's a very good point.

RN: Yes

DK: Something you also mention in your blogs is the importance of working together with a reviewer, in a team (Newell 2018). From what I've

understood, you don't really think that a translator can be a good translator if they work on their own.

RN: That's because my definition of a good translation is something that is not static, you can't just get to a level and stay there. As linguists, we know that if we don't use the language, we get weaker in it. So, if you continually translate, but don't get reviewed, you are missing the interactive component. Then what you have learned will slowly fade away. This happens to in-house translators working in isolation, but also those working in an agency. If working in a team, they may be lucky enough to learn from each other, but that's a rare case, and they are still limited by the lack of specialisation in most agencies. For me, it helps to involve another writer or another reviewer, just to get different perspectives. The selling points my clients have often listed to be the reason they've chosen me are the attention to detail, the way I communicate, my IT background, and the technical skills relating to websites.

But soft skills play a big role, too, and any translator can work on that. So, communication skills, and just logic in general. Simply spotting when something is not quite right and saying something. These are skills and practices that all translators can and should develop.

DK: When you were talking about your skills and how you have a team yourself, I was just thinking: "you do the translation, there's a reviser, and there's a synergy between you". Would you translate in tandem, or do you, already?

RN: It's not efficient, because I'm a particularly fast translator.

DK: What about translation software?

RN: I use MemoQ, I find it easier as it separates things at the sentence level by default. If I work without it, I can get lost with where I am, but MemoQ keeps things nice and separated. It also makes it easier for me, when I'm checking my own work, to look out for mistakes and say: "Wait a minute, there's something missing there".

DK: And what about *Google Translate* or *DeepL*? Do you begin with a rough translation done by one of those?

RN: No, since there's not much value in it; it can throw you off, even. The rough translation is the one in my head, and I don't want to lose that –

which you will if you base your translation on the low-quality machine output. Sometimes there are certain phrases I'll look up, and I'll want to see how they are most commonly translated. I might also want to look and see if there are any other options on *Thesaurus.com*. I do use *DeepL* for phrases sometimes, but more the *Linguee* part.

DK: Now the real question is really this. I'm hearing quite a lot about "the premium translator", or "premium translation". These are terms that were new to me a year ago.

RN: They're established terms, but they are commonly misused.

DK: Do you know their genesis or how long have they been around?

RN: That's the question. The premium market, in general, is something that some people have been talking about for a long time. We have Chris Durban (2016), David Jemielity (2014), Canadian Grant Hamilton (2017), and Kevin Hendzel (2017), too. You see that those people are mostly American, and they're native English speakers, of course...

DK: We'll leave that subject aside for now...

RN: But you know what point I'm making. These are the kind of people who have spoken about the premium market.

DK: Do they just use the term, or do they take the discourse somewhere else?

RN: No, they might claim to have popularized it, but you can't invent a term like that, because it exists in economics. It comes from market theory, and it's talked about in every market. In economics, you always get different sections of the market and different providers serve different sections of market. If you want a good definition, I can recommend a good book: *Mastering services pricing*, by Kevin Doolan (2015).

DK: What I mean is the collocation, because you don't find a premium electrician, for example.

RN: No, you do find them. They just won't be the ones fixing your dodgy light switch.

DK: Ok! I didn't think of it that way.

RN: People don't talk about the premium market, or rather, the premium translations as such. If people talk about premium translators, they're talking nonsense. A person cannot be premium as such.

"Premium-market translator", maybe, because that's a translator who serves the premium market. I personally wouldn't like phrases like "Premium translation". "Premium quality" is better, but just because premium sounds upmarket. That book I mentioned (Doolan 2015), is written by a lawyer with an independent practice. He takes law firms as an example, showing how to justify high prices while at the same making your client happy. To be honest, it's an expensive book, but it's great. Would you trust it if it were cheap? Interestingly, he points out that at the top level, clients don't care at all about how nice you are, because they just want your expertise.

DK: When you say "nice", you mean it in what sense?

RN: I was referring to the soft service skills, like friendliness and responsiveness, when they are present without much else. You can be nice, and it might help, but the thing is that when clients want these top-tier providers, they want you, they want only you, and they'll follow you to a different law firm to get you. They'll bend their own terms in order to get you. That's a good position to be in.

DK: What interests me is the translation field.

RN: Then it is referring to translators who are going a bit further, who also have the guts to turn down the work that doesn't match them. This is also essentially what I was doing yesterday. I was being asked to review something that was poorer quality than the client probably knew. So I explained, and tried to educate them, while offering a quote for a full re-translation. But if that client then says, "I'm sorry, we really need to watch our budget, if you can just have a quick look at it that's fine", then I'll say no.

Or, I'll estimate the hours it'd take for a total rewrite, and my hourly rate isn't low, so that may prove the point. It's being willing to turn down work, being happier not working than working on something that stresses you out while you're still not being paid enough for it. One thing I will add is that serving the premium market is also about having the self-respect necessary to actually charge appropriate rates. That's a big part of it.

DK: We've already talked about the fact that this clearly works well when you've got a particular type of translation in marketing, or maybe in finance, but it's not going to be in all genres. Although honestly, I don't see any reason why it doesn't extend to a lot more fields. The area I'm interested in is tourism, which is where you've got some of the worst translations...

RN: With tourism, there often just isn't the budget. There are some fields where there is money all around, because there are big wins and losses to be made – finance is the classic example, and that's what a lot of the well-known premium-market translators are specialized in. Even in tourism, though, you'll still have a small premium market for elite services serving the ultra-rich. That's a specific and ultimately small, somewhat secretive niche. Think high-end private jets, large private islands. The stuff that costs real money with a high value per customer, I would imagine, or where a public-facing individual, e. g., a member of royalty, has a personal stake in how things are presented. There's a little bit of an overlap with class A luxury real estate, since the ultra-rich are more likely to buy the holiday villa they want for keeps.

When it comes to big investments, for example a brochure for real estate that is still in development, this is often all the client – often a foreign investor – will see before buying the apartment. The reason the client needs a translation in the first place is because there are foreign investors involved. This is also why we need to put a lot more effort when translating.

DK: Interesting. So, you are saying that there is a premium market to be found in every field?

RN: Well, the accessibility and size of that market will always vary. It may be quite hidden, given the nature of some end users. Your language combination will also play a role. These factors can make targeting the premium end of a given market impractical.

In principle, though, there is a premium version of almost every product and service. You only have to look at the existence of £840-a-roll gold wallpaper or Swarovski-encrusted toilet brush holders to know that. The key is to think hard about what any given client is looking for, and who they are selling to.

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Collaborative Translation and Cases of *Translator Plus*

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Abstract

Evidence of collaboration can be noticed in all areas of translation, both professional and non-professional, and “across the whole process of translation, from authors, to publishers, to translation agencies and to translators” (O’Brien 2013, 17).

This paper will only focus on professional collaborative translation. Early examples of collaboration work can be seen in literary translations, even if these no longer dominate the field of collaborative translation. Nowadays, in translation agencies, translators routinely collaborate on work using a vertical collaborative approach. But it is the horizontal collaborative approach that is becoming increasingly popular because it helps optimize productivity and accuracy.

In this paper, recent case studies of collaborative translation in specific areas (filmmaking, tourism, marketing, banking) will also be included. The practical examples will show just how essential it is for collaboration to take place between the translator and authors/commissioners/directors or other actors in the translation process in order to improve the quality of the final product.

Clearly, when translators work collaboratively and offer a variety of services apart from translation work, they can be considered as translators plus in the premium market.

1. Definitions of Collaborative Translation

In recent years, when defining *collaborative translation* scholars have focused on one or at least very few specific aspects of the process. The most inclusive definition has been given by O’Brien (*ibid.*):

A general definition of collaborative translation (...) is when two or more agents cooperate in some way to produce a translation. Collaborative translation can also have a narrower meaning, referring to the situation where two or more translators work together to produce one translated product.

According to O'Brien's definition, *collaborative* refers to the activity of working together to produce a translation. This can be done between any agents whether human or not. It should also be noted that the locution "in some way" may be applied to the cooperative work required by a translator when performing non-translation tasks, such as "client contact, negotiating with client, administrative preparation, checking, "aftercare"; in other words, the whole service provision cycle recommended and described in EN 15038/ISO 17100" (Thelen 2016, 255). The European Union's EMT competence framework (2017) also includes cooperation as part of the skills and competences needed to meet the requirements of the translator profession. These include, for example, service provision and personal and interpersonal skills. So, O'Brien's definition may include collaboration between all parties involved in translation (not just translators themselves, but also authors, publishers, filmmakers and translation agencies) when producing a translated text.

The definitions of *collaborative translation* provided by other scholars vary considerably with discussions focusing mainly on recent technological advancements. For example, Désilets and Van der Meer (2011) state that the term can be used to refer to a wide range of software tools that enable collaboration in translation ("agile translation teamware", "collaborative terminology resources", "translation memory sharing", "online translation marketplaces", "post-editing by the crowd" and "translation crowdsourcing") but they do not refer to the activity of working together to produce a translation.

More specifically, a large number of researchers from various disciplines have drawn their attention to the emerging phenomenon of *crowdsourcing*. Howe (2006) and Pym (2011, 2014) have used the term *collaborative translation* as a synonym for "crowdsourcing", "community translation" and "user-generated translation", hence a kind of "volunteer translation". Yet, they admitted that volunteering does not always mean collaborating nor vice versa. O'Hagan (2011: 14) defines *crowdsourcing* as the production of volunteer or community translations in some form of collaboration by a group of internet users forming an online community. Volunteer translations can be 'solicited' or 'unsolicited' depending on whether they are initiated through a proposal to the 'crowd' or not (O'Hagan 2013).

Meanwhile, McDonough Dolmaya (2012: 169) sees *crowdsourcing* as “collaborative efforts to translate content ... either by enthusiastic amateurs ... or by professional translators” and mainly stressed the potential for professionals to participate in volunteer initiatives. Munday (2012: 282) considers *collaborative translation* and *crowdsourcing* to be the same and described it as “a collaboration often among large groups of non-professional translators”. More recently, quality of translated products in crowdsourcing has been the focus of a number of studies. By using a corpus-based approach to analyse translation crowdsourcing, Jiménez-Crespo (2017: 205), for example, argues that crowdsourcing has contributed to a more flexible and dynamic understanding of translation quality, moving from a maximum quality model to the ‘fit for purpose’ one, in which initiators, translators and end users select whichever process and quality matches the ‘purposes intended’.

Other synonyms for *collaborative translation* mentioned in Translation Studies – also used by O’Brien as subordinate terms – are *amateur translation* (Brabham 2008), *fansubbing* (O’Brien 2013), *fan translation* (O’Brien 2013, Pym 2011), *participative translation* (Pym 2011), *social translation* (Desjardins 2011; O’Brien 2013); *open translation* (Cronin 2010). Of all the definitions which have been mentioned here, it is evident that only O’Brien describes *collaborative translation* both as the activity directly pertaining to the translation process and to the other steps in the translation provision cycle.

Also, recently, closer attention has been paid to *collaborative translation* practices with the aim of conceptualizing translation as a collaborative phenomenon (Alfer 2017a; Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017; Jansen and Wegener 2013). Within the professional area of translation, in 2015, the term *translaboration* (Alfer 2017b) was coined by a group of transdisciplinary researchers at the University of Westminster, London. This emerging concept brings translation and collaboration together both in theory and in practice to develop a more acute transdisciplinary awareness of the profession. More specifically, the experimental group allows individuals who are interested in the fusion between translation and collaboration as well as scholars, including both those who work in the field of Translation Studies and those who do not, “to explore, articulate, and put to the test connections, comparisons, and contact zones between translation and collaboration” in a wide range of fields (Alfer 2017a, 275).

2. *Collaborative literary Translation*

Alfer (2017a: 276) states that “collaboration not just between multiple translators but also between translators, authors, clients, project managers, editors, and myriad other (both human and textual) stakeholders in the translation process is anything but a recent, let alone new phenomenon”. There is, indeed, evidence to believe that *collaborative translation* was very common in the past, especially in literary translation. From Antiquity to the Renaissance, translation was often practised by groups of specialists from a variety of languages and by people with varied skills, who all worked together to find solutions to translation problems (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017). For example, legend holds that the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek by a team of seventy-two translators who worked on it collaboratively (O’Brien 2013). Charles Haskins (1960) discovered an early case of *collaborative translation* of the *Almagest*, dating back to the 12th century, which was translated from Greek into Latin. In the preface, the Latin translator stated that he did not know Greek well enough to do the translation by himself entirely, so he had to ask for the help of another translator, called Eugenius, who was fluent in Latin, Greek and Arabic. Nevertheless, throughout the Renaissance, translators tended to hide the fact that any collaboration had taken place, preferring instead to claim that the work had been carried out individually. According to Cordingley and Frigau Manning (2017: 4) and Trzeciak Huss (2018: 389), the “myth of singularity” or myth of “sole authorship of the literary text” has obscured the centrality of collaboration in the production of a translated text, and as a result has made collaboration with editors, publishers or other people involved invisible.

Recent studies, however, have prompted reappraisals of *collaborative translation*. Trzeciak Huss (*ibid.*) investigates the approach to collaborative literary translation by examining who is collaborating with whom and the kind of collaboration according to relationship between the collaborators. She argues that *collaborative translation* is often automatically associated with particular relationships – author-translator, for instance. Yet, her actor-network theory also takes into account the network of relations between human and non-human participants (authors, texts, translators, institutions, editors, publishers, scholars, readers) and allows for the identification of other roles for various participants in the translation process: two or more translators working together on the same translation or a translator working closely with a playwright, director, actors or editors.

In literature, a number of scholars have examined cases of collaboration between translators and authors of literary works. For example, the translator Levine (1991: 47) called her close and active collaboration with the author Guillermo Cabrera Infante *closecollaboration*. In her book she talks about how working closely with her authors affected her translations, as we also see, for example from Yao's contribution in this issue of *Cultus*. Levine argues that playfulness and transcreation were made possible by the authors she was working with. She also shared with them her own interest in the manipulation of language.

Apart from Infante, another author with whom Levine experienced *closecollaboration* was Julio Cortázar. She worked on the translation of his book "Todos los fuegos el fuego" (1966), a collection of eight short stories that Levine translated under the supervision of the author, who was open to suggestions she made about the work. As one of the first readers of his work, Levine was asked to render Cortázar's ambiguous texts into English. She was, in her own words, not merely a 'scribe', but also a critical reader whose first aim was to interpret the story (Castaño-Roldán and Correa 2021).

Closecollaboration depends on a number of key factors: above all, the creativity of both the author and the translator, and their will to collaborate (Trzeciak Huss 2018). Collaboration generally implies that the author takes part in the translation process, but there have been other – rare – cases of an original text being modified according to its translations. Hersant (2017) found that the translator Gregory Rabassa, an American literary translator who translated from Spanish and Portuguese into English, stated that Cortázar, his first author, liked the way he translated his work to the point that he sometimes altered his original texts to better fit the English version. Similarly, the Italian translator Fabio Pusterla mentioned that some Italian-speaking authors he was working with, took part in the translation process, and one of them actually preferred the translation over the original and even modified some of the lines of his own original poem according to Pusterla's recommendations. Katan (2022) also reports his own experience of a museum panel translation from Italian, where his additions in English giving extra background about medieval Italy were subsequently incorporated into the 'original' Italian panel. In these cases, the original authors modified their own texts as a result of the translation due to the fact that the translators had managed to establish a collaborative relationship and were able to earn the trust of their primary authors. This does not happen very frequently, but when it does, as Hersant (2017) underlines, the collaboration has a positive

effect on the creative process, as it helps authors to improve their own work.

There are also other examples of collaborative translation where the translators' creativity and recommendations were welcomed and appreciated. Ivančić (2011), for instance, explored Italian writer Claudio Magris's correspondence with his translators, and described their interaction as a *dialogue* rather than an imposition from the author. However, Ivančić (*ibid.*: 10) points out that “very few translators actually follow the author's suggestions”, and take “liberties with the original text”. Ivančić also underlines the fact that the whole translation process gives authors the chance to reconsider their work. Peter Bush (2007: 28) had a similar opinion and suggested that authors who are willing to listen to their translators often modify the original according to their new translational vision (Zanotti 2011).

Another striking example of *collaborative translation* is that of Umberto Eco's collaboration with William Weaver, mainly because Weaver was highly visible as a translator (Trzeciak Huss 2018). Eco's instructions to all of his translators constitute a different category of collaboration. It was “a mode of authorial participation which aims at assisting the translator while at the same time limiting his or her space of freedom” (Bollettieri and Zanotti 2017, 269). Eco's aid in the translation process resulted in an informative and interventionist modality of collaboration (*ibid.*).

Interesting examples of poet-translator collaboration are those of Langston Hughes (2015), who, on a journey to Central Asia in 1932, collaborated with Uzbek poets to produce English translations of their poems, and Young's collaboration with Czech poet Miroslav Holub whose translation solutions often prompted Holub to go back and change the source language (David Young, email communication with Trzeciak Huss, 26 December 2017). Nadia Georgiou (this issue of *Cultus*) reports similar collaboration between the translator Kimon Friar and Greek poets.

3. Collaborative Translation in the modern age: what happens in translation agencies

The Internet, computer technology advancements and the rise of cloud computing have changed the perception and activity of *collaborative translation* in the modern age. Web-based platforms have enabled new modes of literary translation such as crowdsourcing and online collaborative

translation (Jiménez-Crespo 2017). New modes of *collaborative translation* are also becoming increasingly common in other areas of translation and translation agencies are exploring their benefits in the translation process. Over the last few decades, most translation agencies use what we can define as a *vertical collaborative approach*: translation work is done by applying the three step translate-edit-proofread (TEP) model (Kockaert *et al.* 2008). The translation part is usually carried out by a single translator, whose work is then revised by a senior translator or “editor”. After that, a third person checks the translation to make sure that it is accurate, and that no information has been omitted.

According to Kelly *et al.* (2011), this traditional model may have various disadvantages in terms of translation quality and efficiency. Firstly, those who are located at the bottom of the chain may receive less information or instructions than those who are located at the top. If editors and proofreaders do not know much about the topic or do not have enough information on the source text, they are likely to introduce mistakes, rather than correct them. Secondly, we need to consider it from the point of view of time. This model implies that individuals must work on the task on their own before handing it to the next person in the line. Consequently, translators, editors and reviewers need to wait for the previous person to finish before starting to work on their task, which can be time-consuming. According to Kelly and Stewart (2011) the TEP model still seems to be the most widely used in translation agencies, mainly because customers do not make agreements with freelance translators directly. Rather, they hire translation agencies that manage the whole translation process, including the people who carry out the TEP steps (*ibid.*). However, the client may also take steps to ensure quality. For instance, it is common for clients, especially for large organizations, to employ someone to review the translation to assure its accuracy and provide feedback. This is a process that Bass (2006) called “end client review”. This step is usually performed by someone on the client’s staff, generally located in the target language country, or by a partner organization, and takes place at the end of the project once the translation has already been completed. If errors are detected at the end, fixing them can be expensive, take a long time and require a considerable investment in human resources (Williams 2004).

The growing presence of online communities can help overcome these challenges by adapting what we can define as a *horizontal collaborative approach*. In her comparative analysis of 100 community translation environments and interviews with stakeholders, Kelly *et al.* (2011) found that translation

industry participants were already moving away from the traditional collaborative translation process toward a model which she called *community-based*. This is happening because of “the pressure to provide more local products, services, and content at a faster rate” (*ibid.*: 91). Through this collaborative translation process, for example, 20 translators can work asynchronously on a project for five days instead of having five translators work for 20 days. Therefore, translations can be done much faster than by using traditional TEP models (Kelly *et al.* 2011). Most importantly, using the *horizontal collaborative approach*, any discussion about possible mistakes happens at an early stage of the translation process with quality improvements made while the translation is in progress.

The *horizontal collaborative approach* brings about a change in the role of translators, who are no longer individuals working on their own, but become members of a community. Individuals with subject-matter expertise may also be invited to join the community to check the translation and make suggestions. As a result, the collaborative method brings translators and experts into a virtual work environment where real-time interaction with their colleagues may have a positive impact on the final product. For example, when translators have doubts, they can ask specific questions on online forums to receive more precise information, gain additional insights or obtain feedback. They can also add, share and review other people’s translation memories, thus having greater access to shared knowledge depositories. Consequently, this system tends to encourage error prevention rather than error correction.

Moreover, this model introduces a change in the role of project managers (PMs). They are no longer only responsible for the distribution of files and tasks, but they play an active role in the creation of the community, and they bring the necessary resources into it. In other words, PMs first organize the project for the community and, if necessary, they may pre-translate documents with machine translation and translation memory. Later, PMs upload the material and check vendor databases to find the resources that they need and then invite vendor databases to join the community, which will probably include translators, editors, proofreaders and other subject-matter experts. Finally, PMs monitor the translation process to make sure that it goes forward smoothly. PMs working with the TEP model often make use of translation management system tools (TMS) to carry out general management tasks. However, according to Kelly *et al.* (2011), this is not always the case with the collaborative model. This is because some tasks

become automatised through community translation tools, such as CrowdIn, CrowdSight, GetLocalization, GlotPress, LingoTek, Transifex. Finally, it is important to point out that the role of editors also shifts significantly. Reviewers do not need to wait until the end of the process to correct mistakes and give their feedback, but rather, they are available for consultation throughout the entire process for translators to ask questions. However, what needs to be underlined is the fact that, with the collaborative approach, some tasks usually performed by editors may be made by technological and authoring tools (such as Acrocheck and AuthorAssistant), which are developed in-house in most cases (Kelly *et al.* 2011, 85).

It is important to underline that the *horizontal collaborative approach* can be considered as a natural consequence of the increased presence of virtual environments. If this model implies communities of translators, subject-matter experts and editors cooperating simultaneously on the same project, benefits can be noticed in terms of productivity and accuracy.

4. Collaborative translation in specific translation areas and examples of *translators plus*

So far, we have explored, albeit briefly, cases of *collaborative translation* in the field of literary and commercial translation and publishing. In addition, we have described what *collaborative translation* implies in translation agencies. In this part of the paper the focus will be on specific areas in which *collaborative translation* is or has been applied and practical examples of cases where translators or interpreters have been essential collaborators working with the authors, commissioners, directors or other actors in the process. In other words, specific examples where the translator (in the widest sense of the term) has not been “just” the translator contributing to the language transfer of the text/product but a translator *plus* who made suggestions to improve the source text/product based on their experience and expertise, and handled a variety of tasks not strictly related to translation. In the cases mentioned below, a *horizontal collaborative approach* has been employed, similarly to what happens in translation agencies: the translator works together with the source-text author or other specialists/actors during the translation process in order to increase linguistic accessibility and enhance effective communication.

Good examples of translation being integrated in the production process come from the audiovisual world - with collaboration taking place between

filmmakers and translators during the filmmaking process. This is the ambit of what Romero-Fresco calls “accessible filmmaking” (2013; 2019; 2021). Udo and Fels (2000) were the first to point out the problems associated with accessible filmmaking and translation as a post-production activity. Traditionally, subtitling for the deaf and for the hard-of-hearing (SDH), and audio description for the blind and the partially sighted (AD), was only added after the completion of the film, which impacted negatively on the audience’s enjoyment and understanding of the film as well as the director’s intentions. This was mainly because audio describers and captionists did not have the chance to collaborate with the creative team. In order to tackle this problem, they put forward a collaborative model:

We assert that audio describers and captionists should operate under a similar system [to the rest of the filmmaking crew], reporting to or, at least, consulting with a director of accessibility services. This team would then meet with the production’s director to develop an accessibility strategy that re-interprets the “look and feel” of the production. The captioning and description team would then work together to develop prototypes that would, in turn, be approved by the director before being produced. The final product should receive similar attention. (Udo and Fels 2000, 24)

In their opinion, film directors should work alongside the director of access services or the subtitler/audio describer just as they work together with the lighting director or the director of photography.

The collaborative model proposed by Udo and Fels was then applied by the British filmmaker Raina Haig (2002) in the film *Drive* (1997). It included audio description as part of the production process. She thought that “the AD needs to be constructed in consultation or even collaboration with the filmmaker thus regarding the job of audio description as a part of the film industry” (Romero-Fresco 2013, 206). By integrating audiovisual translation and accessibility as part of the filmmaking process, filmmakers try to make their films accessible not only to visually-impaired audiences, but also to viewers in other languages so that film production is successful, cost-effective and wide-reaching. This falls within the principles of the “universal design” theory, a term coined by the architect Ronald Mace and applied to buildings, products and environments to promote accessibility for those both with and without disabilities (Mace 1976).

According to the architect, the design of a product should include as many potential users and uses as possible, starting from its earliest design. In SDH and AD, this concept is being applied to suggest that the designer

of the (audiovisual) product should from the outset be involved in helping audio describers and captionists develop an accessibility strategy.

While accessible filmmaking is still more of an ideal than a reality, the product designer involvement in the process is easier to find in part-subtitling, which can be viewed as another example of accessible filmmaking. O'Sullivan (2008: 81) describes partial subtitles or part-subtitling as follows:

Part-subtitling is understood here simply as a strategy for making a film shot in two or more languages accessible to viewers. Unlike conventional subtitles, part-subtitles are appended to part of the dialogue only, are planned from an early stage in the film's production, and are aimed at the film's primary language audience. Such films will have no 'original', unsubtitled version, but will be partially subtitled for all audiences. (O' Sullivan 2008, 81)

Part-subtitling can be found in many films such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), *Avatar* (2009), *Mystery Train* (1989) or *Night on Earth* (1991) where “the non-English dialogue is created in collaboration with the actors, but not necessarily as a translation of a script originally written in English” (Romero-Fresco 2013, 207); or where translations “are considered at the pre-production stage, when the script is being developed, and they are made during the post-production stage by the scriptwriters and the filmmakers often in collaboration with translators” (*ibid.*).

There are different degrees of involvement and collaboration between filmmakers and translators. McClarty (2012) and Romero-Fresco (2013; 2019; 2021) point out the case of creative subtitling in which the translator gained closer working access to the entire film production team and influenced the pacing and emotional content of a film through the language and visual aesthetics. According to McClarty (2012: 139) a creative subtitler fully responds to the communicative needs of each and every frame and “must keep a trilateral gaze: backwards to the source culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the source text; sideways to the influences to be gained from related disciplines; and forwards to the target culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the subtitles”. This means that the translator is a creative collaborator rather than a mere rule-obeying machine bound by standard font types, sizes and positions. The creative subtitler is, therefore, given the freedom to create a product that matches the aesthetic and linguistic function of the film.

The film-translation scholar, Romero-Fresco directed and edited *Joining the Dots* (2012), a 12-minute documentary about blindness and audio

description to better understand collaboration between the creative team and the translators. In the event, he worked in collaboration with the director of photography, camera operator, sound recording and editing, research and production, the translation team in eight languages as well as in English SDH and AD. After this personal experience, he created a list of pre-production, production and post-production practices to follow when a collaboration between filmmakers and translators is needed to make a film accessible to the deaf and blind and to viewers in other languages (Romero-Fresco 2013). The list is not exhaustive but it is a starting point to start bridging the gap that exists in teaching subtitling. In fact, translation postgraduate programmes rarely pay attention to filmmaking, and filmmaking courses do not usually teach translation and accessibility issues. Romero-Fresco (2019: 5-6) underlines that accessible filmmaking aims to integrate translation and accessibility into the production process of audiovisual media “(normally through the collaboration between the creative team and the translator) in order to provide access to content for people who cannot access or who have difficulty accessing it in its original form”. This would avoid regarding translation and accessibility as “an afterthought, which results in translators being isolated from the creative team and working in conditions that hamper their attempts to maintain the filmmaker’s original vision” (Romero-Fresco 2021, 325).

In the filmmaking industry, there have been cases of filmmakers who supervised the translation of subtitles closely. Zanotti (2018) discovered that the British director Stanley Kubrick had his own particular approach towards translation and subtitling, based on a close collaboration with the team of translators. He spoke with translators before they started working to discuss potential problems and to guide their work by giving them important annotations. Kubrick did not hire dubbing directors, audiovisual translators and dubbing actors. Rather, he hired film directors, literary translators or writers, professional actors and language consultants (*ibid.*). This approach led to close collaboration with translation teams and language consultants on major films such as *Dr. Strangelove* (Kubrick 1964) and *Barry Lyndon* (Kubrick 1975).

Unlike audiovisual translation, *collaborative translation* was already common in the videogame industry at the beginning of the century. Significant strides towards the integration of translation into the pre-production process have been made thanks to technology, which is even more pivotal in videogames than in the filmmaking industry. Videogame developers feel that it is essential for localization to be included when the game is in its development

phase (Christou *et al.* 2011). Engineers organize all the assets in computer programmes. This necessitates close collaboration between game developers and translators/localisers. Game files and metadata (pronunciation guides, glossaries, Q&A documents, etc.) are sent to localisation departments and to translation agencies to help them prepare videogame translations (Romero-Fresco 2013).

Another interesting case of *collaborative translation* worth mentioning again is the translation of a tourist guide from Italian into English for the Jewish Museum in Lecce. The guide was translated by Katan in collaboration with the writers and the commissioner (the Museum curator). Katan's previous experience as a translator/transcreator and his role as a full professor at the University of Salento meant that he could persuade the Museum to invest in a guide that would "equip the new readers with some of the local context" (Katan 2022, 7), which was not described in the original. Working alongside the source text writers and the Museum, the translator redesigned the guide, which resulted in a much longer and consequently more expensive book.

A further case of translator *plus* is David Jemielity (see also the interview in this issue of *Cultus*). At the Translating Europe Workshop Jemielity talked about his experience as head of the in-house translation team at the Banque Cantonale Vaudoise (BCV) in Lausanne, Switzerland and of his involvement in the editorial committee of the bank, a group focused on brand-level communications policies across all languages. He explained how, since his arrival, the bank has continually increased the number of translators in the team, thus raising the profile of the bank's translation department. He also became actively involved in creating the brand identity campaign. As the head of multilingual content at the bank, he was able to transform the Bank's understanding of translation, from "Is this a good translation?" to "Is this effective communication?", and was given free reign to reach that aim. Again, according to Jemielity, premium market service providers in general are shifting their focus on communication rather than translation; are improving the degree and level of engagement translators have with their customers, and are having more regular interactions with their CEOs regarding multilingual communication. This means that translators can also influence the way new and future content is created once the reputation of the translators as expert service providers is established.

During the same Workshop other translators working in the premium market talked about their collaborative work experience. There was general agreement that translators must have technical expertise in a particular domain field and a set of transferable, soft skills, such as communication,

flexibility, and critical thinking, if they want to be a translator *plus*. Robert Capurro, for example, is a translator working in international corporate insurance broking. He describes himself as the trusted advisor of businesses and not just a translator because he is competent first of all in the subject matter (insurance). Jane Martens is a court translator and works for a major German law firm. She is a translator *plus* thanks to her legal specialization which she obtained after gaining a diploma in translating. This was key to establishing a relationship of trust with commissioners and clients. However, it is also clear that a translator *plus* will need the ability to relate and negotiate besides the ability to translate. According to Jemielity (2018), at its most basic level, *collaborative translation* is a dialogue-based process between translators and text owners designed to negotiate differences that exist between languages. Yao talks about a similar process in her cooperation-competition-compromise-collaboration model (see this issue of *Cultus*). In the end, “value-added translating involves constant interaction” (Williamson in this issue of *Cultus*) and the translator provides, as Benetello suggests (in this issue of *Cultus*) “a consulting service rather than a language service”.

5. Conclusions

Research into *collaborative translation* is well documented in the literary field, while in all other areas of translation it is still in its early stages. Yet, thanks to technology, collaboration is “gradually becoming the norm in translation companies and is also becoming more widespread among freelance translator networks” (Gouadec 2007, 106). Understanding the complex interactions involved in the translation process is evolving as new cases of *collaborative translation* are explored or new needs arise. Recent research is focusing on the skills and competences – outside the isolated act of translating – that a translator should master when working collaboratively. General translator competence frameworks, such as that formulated by the European Union (EMT 2017), have already incorporated a number of the non-translating soft skills that now are deemed necessary for a professional translator.

Ten years ago, O’Brien (2011: 20) pointed out that “the ability to translate in a collaborative way is a skill that professional translators will need in the future”. Working collaboratively in translation means being able to engage with a wide variety of actors. The *horizontal collaborative translation*

approach may be seen as an opportunity for translators to concentrate not only on routine translation tasks but also on the more creative tasks by, for example, giving cultural advice, supporting localization, marketing objectives or company branding image, and negotiating with clients.

It would appear to be a fact that collaborative translators are a feature of the literary, the commercial - in particular, the premium market (Durban 2010, Jemielity 2018) - as well the filmmaking and publishing fields. O'Brien and Rossetti (2020) argue that translation companies have moved away from selling *pure* translation to selling expertise and services that have a perceived higher value. As a result, translators are increasingly expected to demonstrate their added value by showing their ability with more creative tasks (such as transcreation and copywriting, see Benetello, this issue) and with a set of transferable, soft skills, such as communication, flexibility, and critical thinking.

As shown in this paper, a number of professional translators have already exploited their specialist domain knowledge and their cooperative, technological, interpersonal and intercultural skills to become translators *plus* and work in a number of areas as well as in the premium market. Yet, collaboration with translators is still seen “as a source of expense” (Jemielity 2018, 536), an unnecessary cost rather than a core value of firms or organizations. To conclude, it would seem that it is time to pay much more attention to the collaborative aspect of translation and place it centre stage since *collaborative translation* is clearly part of the future of translation.

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Exploring and expanding the plus of translators' power: Translatorial agency and the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO)

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Abstract

Recent research from Organization Studies highlights the frequently unnoticed power of translators as they shape organizational and corporate identities and develop their own roles. Their function in conveying meaning across linguacultural barriers gives them a profoundly agentic role in the strategic and operational communication that takes place within multilingual organizations, but also in the way an organization presents, brands and markets itself to target groups and markets in other linguistic cultures. Research at the interface between international corporate communications and translation demonstrates a distinct demand potential for the added-value intercultural and transcreative skills that professional human translators have. The communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) provides a viable framework for exploring the agency of translators, but until now, CCO-oriented studies have focused on paraprofessionals working in organizational fields other than translation and rarely mention professional translators or, when they do, depict them as invisible conduits involved in a hermetic process of neutral, wholly faithful translation akin to transcoding. This article considers how a CCO framework for investigating translatorial agency can and should be extended to professional translation, thereby providing a key to empowering professional translators in the organizations using their services. It proposes linguistic ethnographic and (network) action research methods to investigate factors that inhibit and promote translators' agency in delivering effective multilingual organizational and corporate communications for international companies and institutions.

Keywords: translatorial agency; professional translation; corporate communications; organizational communication; communicative constitution of organizations.

1. Introduction

A widespread misconception about translation is that it is a mechanistic, neutral transcoding process from one natural language into another, fully and faithfully preserving an invariant core of meaning across languages and cultures. This is, of course, a hugely reductive view. It completely ignores the inevitable cultural filtering (cf. House 2014, 68-70) and interpretation consciously and unconsciously undertaken by the human translators themselves “that inevitably varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture” (Venuti 2019, 1) as well as the situated nature of translation as a purpose-driven, socio-cognitive activity involving multiple actors, factors and interests. The latter include those of clients, receivers and end-users of translators’ work, from private individuals to corporate bodies and public organizations. Moreover, as has long been identified by research from the field of cognitive translology (e.g. Muñoz Martín 2016; Risku 2010; Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2019a, 2019b), the translation processes and products are themselves deeply contextualized both in translators’ individual workplace settings and in the wider, complex socio-technical environments of the organizations they work for, whether as staff, agency or freelance translators.

It is in such organizational contexts that Organization Studies has described translators as having the plus of a “hidden power” (Piekkari *et al.* 2020, 3015) as they reshape meaning through the chain of the interpretative decisions they make when they translate. This is seen to endow them with key agentic roles in the operational and strategic communication that takes place within organizations reliant on more than one language (Piekkari *et al.* 2020; Koskinen 2020b), but also in the way that an organization presents, brands and markets itself, its services and its products to target groups and markets in other linguistic cultures.

The value that translatorial agency could add to organizations is, however, inhibited by three major factors. The first is the invisibility of the translator’s role. This has been nurtured, on the one hand, by the non-specialist public’s misunderstanding of what translation involves. However, as Venuti (2019) repeatedly observes, such an “instrumentalist” conceptualization of translation has also been promoted by a widely held professional self-concept of neutral, non-interventionist translation sustained by mainstream translation theories, training practices and professional ethical codes. The second barrier is

the relatively strict linearity of prevailing models that guide translation service provision. Translation typically takes place after a source document has been produced, with translators rarely involved at the document drafting stage, with only limited feed-forward mechanisms and with very restricted, mediated channels for providing feedback or advice (Massey and Wieder 2019; 2020). This places severe constraints on the agency of translators as linguistic and intercultural experts in the internal and external communication processes of organizations operating in multilingual and international contexts. The issue is further compounded by a third inhibiting factor, which is the way organizations traditionally model communication and structure their communication processes. Corporate communications, in particular, has largely aimed at a fully aligned, integrated and consistent communication that regulates employees to an extent that denies them participation and empowerment (Christensen *et al.* 2008). Its underlying models for communication are predominantly linear, reducing communication to a conduit between sender and receiver and reinforcing a “sender-biased view on communication that ignores or at least downplays the interpretative propensities and capabilities of the alleged receiver” (Christensen and Cornelissen 2013: 50-51).

This article explores the barriers to, and the benefits of, an expanded operational and more strategic role for translators and translation in organizations, one that takes fuller advantage of value-adding human intervention. It considers how CCO, communicative constitution of organizations theory, and translatorial agency research can be extended to professional translation, thereby providing a key to empowering professional translators in the organizations using their services. Finally, it proposes that a combination of translatorial linguistic ethnographic and (network) action research methods should be used to investigate factors that inhibit and promote professional translators’ agency. This will provide a solid empirical basis on which to develop, validate and apply models, processes and practices that are capable of delivering effective, quality-assured multilingual, international organizational and corporate communications.

2. Translatorial agency in organizations

A growing research field in Organization Studies has been translation between natural languages in organizational settings performed by paraprofessional translators (e.g. Piekkari *et al.* 2013; Chidlow *et al.* 2014; Ciuk and James 2015; Tietze *et al.* 2017; Koskela *et al.* 2017; Ciuk *et al.* 2019; Piekkari *et al.* 2020; Koskinen 2020b). The research done has shown how the language resources and the translatorial repertoires of members of an organization decisively affect their positions and roles at the workplace, and it has indicated the way they can use their translatorial agency to advance personal and organizational goals (e.g. Ciuk and James, 2015: 573; Koskinen, 2020b; Piekkari *et al.* 2020: 1322).

The study by Piekkari *et al.* (2020) is especially enlightening. Among other things, it addresses the performative functions of the decisions made by paraprofessional interlingual translators as they communicate and transfer organizational practices across language boundaries to receiving organizations. The researchers identify strong “directive” and “concluding” effects of translatorial agency, that is to say those effects that send organizations in particular directions and that close down alternative interpretations of messages (Piekkari *et al.* 2020: 1315). They also pick up on work done by Tietze *et al.* (2017) in identifying translators’ creativity and capacity for innovation in organizations, which they regard as a fruitful area for future research. There is evidence to indicate that paraprofessional translators, being unconstrained by professional norms, codes of conduct and the self-concepts engrained in professional translators’ habitus, might push the boundaries of conventional professional translational behaviour (Koskinen 2020b) by exerting more agency and adopting more adaptive and creative translation strategies than professional translators. Tietze *et al.* (2017), for instance, describe how a paraprofessional translator creatively deals with English terms for which he can find no equivalent in his native Slovak tongue by omitting large parts of the source text and embellishing it with invented examples. This and other cases are cited by Piekkari *et al.* (2020: 1319-1324), who contrast the creative and innovative approaches of paraprofessional translatorial agents, “more visible on the organizational scene”, with the “invisible activity” of professional translation. They (Piekkari *et al.* 2020: 1315) claim that “the *skopos* of the translation is often likely to be much more personal than for professional translators

rendering their services to clients, and the former can therefore be expected to take on more agentive roles”.

Piekkari *et al.* (2020: 1315) adopt the basic position that the task of the professional translator is to produce an optimal text to maximize the *skopos* or intended purpose of those commissioning a translation. While very few translation scholars or practitioners would dispute these functionalist underpinnings of professional translation, the complex, dynamic range and layers of activity that professional translators are called upon to perform demands a more nuanced approach to their roles and responsibilities in any given situation. Most obviously, the *skopos* might well require adaptive or transcreative approaches from the translator, for instance – but by no means solely – in reputational or marketing communication. Thus, the creative solutions ascribed to the paraprofessional in Tietze *et al.*’s (2017) study lies very much within the professional translator’s scope, as the now established professional field of transcreation (e.g. Pedersen 2014, 2019) demonstrates. Indeed, the increasing shift in demand for human translation towards user-centrism, intercultural mediation and adaptive, transcreative work (Katan 2016, 2018; Koskinen 2020a; Liddicoat 2016; Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow 2017; Suojanen *et al.* 2014) as well as ethically grounded risk management in translation and post-editing work (Canfora and Ottman 2015; Nitzke *et al.* 2019) strongly suggests that the entire profession must adopt a more identifiably interventionist role in the agency that translators exercise. Alongside finely honed technological and digital literacy skills, the intercultural competence that forms a basic part or prerequisite of current translation competence models (e.g. EMT 2017) and the intercultural mediation inherent in translators’ work (Liddicoat 2016) make them very well positioned to do so.

This appears to be corroborated by the preliminary results from in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with communication managers in large international companies (Massey and Wieder 2020). Three initial interviews, all in German, took place in 2019 as part of an ongoing study, currently interrupted by the 2020 pandemic, aimed at investigating the intersections between corporate communications and translation in a selection of international corporations and public organizations based in Switzerland. The interviewees were sent the questions in advance, which were subsequently used as the basis for an open discussion of the various issues raised. The questions, translated into English, are listed in summary form below:

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- How do you organize your international corporate communications, and why?
 - What are the positive and negative points about the way it is organized?
 - Where do you see the greatest challenges in international corporate communications?
 - What culture-related and language-related issues are you facing?
 - What competences are expected of you/your staff?
 - Are you satisfied with your/your staff's competences?
 - How do you see the future? Will you/your staff need different competences?

The first cluster of results reveals issues related to the way strategic international communication management is structured and organized. In brief, the data show that complex coordination and controlling processes between headquarters and local units are needed to ensure that global strategic messages have in fact been adequately communicated to all stakeholders in the target culture. One reason for these extensive processes is that the majority of communications staff lack the target culture and target language knowledge and competences to enable more streamlined, decentralized processes to be put in place. These, of course, are typically the core strengths of professional translators, who have the distinct aptitude to play a much more integral part in co-developing strategic communications output and assuring its quality. As one senior communications manager put it:

I believe we should do more to reintegrate the local touch, also in companies that operate worldwide. Although we should, of course, try to adapt and to standardize as much as possible and also to ensure that we convey our external image in language and visuals, the way our brand is perceived, as uniformly and congruently as possible, this is precisely why, I believe, we need much more of the local touch. On the one hand, we in Corporate Communications have to understand much more what the particular sensitivities [are] at local level, but on the other, they [i.e. the local branches] have to understand why we have certain commitments. [...]

I believe we need a better exchange [of thoughts, views, ideas, etc.] and a back and forth in all directions. I also believe that we should have confidence in again doing much more in local languages. But that will only work if, in the first place, it is clear what requirements there are on the part of Corporate Communications, and secondly, the trust is also there [to say] “ok, I can't speak Mandarin, but I know exactly that our

colleagues have captured the nuance that this press release should have.” That is often the crux.

We are sometimes very specific about our wordings on the subject of translation in particular – in the end, the nuances must be appropriately translated. It is not easy to sit together with someone and say “we should translate this like this or like that.” It only works that way if you know each other and know where your needs are. For me, that can only result from a better exchange [of thoughts, views, ideas, etc.] and also, in turn, from understanding particular cultures. (Author’s translation of the original German transcript).

The second set of preliminary results concerns the profile of international communication specialists. The interviewees concur that specialists should not only be familiar with the principles of communication management and digital channels, but also need extensive skills in foreign languages, including a near-native command of English and, ideally, fluency in at least one other language. They should be able to oversee communication quality in the organization’s key languages, have adequate knowledge of target cultures and possess sound intercultural skills. Organizational knowledge and work experience, project management skills and a thorough understanding of basic business principles are also mentioned. Here, too, translators are by default well suited to assume key agent roles in international communication management once they have covered the necessary foundations in business and management.

The “hidden power” of agent translation therefore appears to represent an untapped resource that, with appropriately re-designed structures and processes to manage and assure the quality of communications output, can effectively and efficiently help organizations to develop internally, and at the same time reach out to target groups and markets worldwide. Paraprofessional translators could be systematically trained and professionalized both to develop and sustain corporate identities within multinational, multicultural, multilingual organizations, and to convey strategic messages externally across linguistic and cultural borders. More pertinently, improved recognition from, and integration in, the organizations for which they work could empower professional translators to act as key translatorial agents in multilingual international corporate communications.

3. Factors inhibiting professional translatorial agency

However, tapping the plus of this resource is not as straightforward as it might appear. Achieving the necessary empowerment and agency for professional translators entails fundamental changes to the processes, models and mindsets that shape current quality assurance practices in translation and corporate communications. In particular, the more effective deployment of translators and translation in the service of organizations is inhibited by three principal factors, all of which bear important implications for the quality of strategic communications output in multilingual organizations with international or global operations.

The first derives from self-concept issues in the translation profession itself, which tend to shore up non-specialist misconceptions about what professional translation actually involves. Survey data (Katan 2011, 2016; Massey and Wieder 2019, 2020) does indeed show that a large proportion of professional translators do not possess a self-concept conducive to adopting more creative mediatory or advisory roles. Two international surveys of translators by Katan (2011, 2016) in 2008 (n= 890) and 2015 (n=388) have shown a relatively constant 60% of respondents agree absolutely with minimum intervention, source-text fidelity and adherence to source-text style, while only 30% at most consider it usual to actively mediate the reader or actively account for cultural differences (Katan 2016, 370). It is therefore hardly surprising that, in relation to the first of the two surveys, Katan (2011) identifies repeated traits of a low-autonomy profession (LAP) in the respondents' perception of their professional roles and responsibilities. Key aspects of Katan's results are echoed in those of a 2017 Swiss survey of translation professionals reported in detail by Massey and Wieder (2019), who are among the few researchers to have broached the complex interplay between corporate communications, translation and translatorial agency. Indeed, the interviews mentioned in the previous section have been designed to follow up on the results of their initial research. Based on an online survey among translators and translation project managers (n=190), on the one hand, and organizational communication professionals (n= 59), on the other, their study focuses on the particular form of agency represented by the feed-forward and feedback flows between communications professionals, professional translators and translation project managers working in Switzerland. As such, it provides insights

into translators' own awareness of their agentic role as providers of feedback and advice from their position as experts in intercultural communication and mediation. The results showed that professional translators (and translation project managers, the vast majority of whom have been trained as translators) themselves provide very limited feedback to communications professionals on the (strategic) adequacy of the source-texts. The survey also included an item on how translators saw their professional role. Despite indications of a fundamentally assistive and adaptive role awareness, the aggregate responses ranked overt mediatory, co-creative and advisory roles lowest, whereas the less agentic categories of fidelity to source-text writers' intentions and meeting client requirements, document specifications and project-management standards scored highest.

The combined results of these surveys have been ascribed to the priority given to source-text fidelity found in a large number of ethical codes of practice among professional translation and interpreting associations worldwide (Katan 2016: 369-371; Schäffner 2020: 66). The situation is neatly summed up by Lambert (2018: 269, 284-285), who critiques the "fictional construction of the translator as a neutral conduit" that these unrealistic codes perpetuate and suggests that they should more properly be adapted to "proliferate an empowering image of translation as an active, multi-faceted activity that requires expert knowledge and judgement, while openly exploring its inevitably manipulative basis". As we have already seen, this mindset also pervades Organization Studies, where researchers explicitly express a fundamentally instrumentalist view of professional translation (e.g. Piekkari *et al.* 2020: 3013-3014). In so doing, they are thus themselves subscribing to the conceptualization of professional translators' roles and responsibilities that Venuti, Katan and others have taken such issue with.

The second factor is the linearity of prevailing models and standards to assure the quality of translation service provision. For example, the ISO 17100 (2015) quality standard for translation services, the "lynchpin document for the certification of translators and translation service providers" (Wright 2019: 31), lays down a strictly linear process of twelve components encompassing pre-production, production and post-production processes with little possibility of direct interactions between the translators, commissioners, authors, clients and end-users. This substantially restricts the agency of translators' linguistic and intercultural

expertise in organizational communication processes. Further results from Massey and Wieder's (2019) study throw the situation into sharp relief. They reveal that translators' and translation project managers' access to the communication strategy is very limited, that translators and translation project managers receive hardly any advice on how to contribute to the organization's communication objectives, and that communication specialists are to a large extent unaware of the strategic value and function of translation that organizations as a whole have now recognized for some time (Massardo *et al.* 2016. 10). It goes without saying that these impediments severely limit the effectiveness of translators as they work to implement an organization's communication strategy.

Closely related to the limitations imposed by the linear processes of translation service provision is the way that organizations model their communication processes, the third inhibitory factor. It comes as no surprise that the lack of consideration that Organization Studies has given to the productive value-adding agency of professional translation is matched by its almost total absence from corporate communications theory, research and practice (Massey and Wieder 2019, 2020). The monolithic organizational identity that corporate communications pursue, in which the parts are metonymic manifestations of the whole, and vice versa, give rise to a conduit-like linearity of communication models that have been convincingly critiqued by Christensen *et al.* (2008), Christensen *et al.* (2008) and Christensen and Cornelissen (2013). This appears to have cemented a concept of professional translation as a neutral, conduit-like process of transferring the invariant semantic core of a unified corporate brand across languages and cultures. It is because of such a mechanistic perception of communication design and an instrumentalist conceptualization of the translation process that organizations do not see the need to integrate translators and the competences they can bring to bear more fully into corporate communications. Instead, translators continue to be perceived as transcoders of pre-defined messages and are thus positioned at the very end of the planning and design chain.

The initial research by Massey and Wieder (2019: 2020) provides salient indicators of current restrictions, but also tentative ones of future possibilities. In follow-up interviews conducted just after their 2017 survey with three professionals working in Switzerland, an institutional staff translator, a commercial staff translator and a freelancer, the former

two stressed the constraints on their agency imposed by organizational structures, processes and the corporate communications mindset (cf. Christensen and Cornelissen 2013: 45-48). It was the freelancer who, when working directly with long-standing clients on a basis of trust rather than through a translation company or agency, exerted substantial agentic influence on the development and translation of messages, documents and campaigns by receiving systematic feed-forward and providing continuous feedback.

Indeed, her descriptions came closest to the iterative, interactional role of translators that forms the core of the user-centred translation (UCT) model recently developed in Finland (Koskinen 2020a; Suojanen *et al.* 2014), and which seeks to position the translator squarely as an expert interlingual, intercultural mediator able to develop, shape and deliver user-centred messages. The UCT model (Suojanen *et al.* 2014: 3-6) envisages a coalescence of translation and user-centered design processes derived from usability studies. It involves a non-linear, cyclical mode of operation whereby translators analyze the users of their texts and recursively evaluate the usability of their work through interactive stages of translation, revision and quality assessment. Approaches, strategies and solutions are continuously re-evaluated in the light of new knowledge and experience gleaned from information fed forward, mental modelling, heuristic evaluation and usability testing, systematic stakeholder feedback and follow-up reception research. In terms of iterativity, interaction, stakeholder involvement and knowledge exchange, it shares key aspects of process design with Massey and Wieder's (2019: 75-76) proposal, developed in part from Hofmann's business-process and quality-assurance model (2012), to position translation professionals closer to the strategic level and processes of corporate communications management and to integrate them, as experts in intercultural linguistic mediation, seamlessly and interactively in the design, development and co-creation of international corporate communications output.

4. A research agenda for professional translatorial agency

Massey and Wieder's (2019, 2020) pilot and follow-up research was designed as a first foray into the interface between translation and corporate communications in order to ascertain the viability and scope

of future interdisciplinary endeavours in what is a patently under-researched field. It has uncovered some of the factors that inhibit and promote professional translators' agency in delivering effective multilingual organizational and corporate communications for international companies and institutions. Parallel research from Organization Studies on agency among paraprofessional translators has enriched those initial insights. Extending the interdisciplinary scope of the research agenda to encompass frameworks, models and methods from this and other disciplines promises to reveal more about the actual and potential agentic roles of professional translators in the organizations that employ them.

From a Translation Studies perspective, the theory that has implicitly and explicitly framed the more productive lines of Organization Studies research into translatorial agency is CCO, an approach that is gaining increasing momentum in the broader field of organizational communication, though one which seems to have remained relatively unknown in the closely related branch of corporate communications. Broadly speaking, CCO provides an emergentist framework for organizational development that is predicated on the assumption, increasingly validated by empirical research, that organizational identities evolve and change through the polyphonic multiplicity of the voices that constitute them (Christensen and Cornelissen 2013: 63-66; Schoeneborn *et al.* 2019). Indeed, when identifying the shortcomings of the current corporate communications ideal, it is CCO that Christensen and Cornelissen (2013: 63-66) propose as the touchstone for re-examining and deconstructing the reification of organizational identity and prescriptive univocality inherent in the models that have until now dominated the way corporate communications specialists think and act.

In the international and multicultural contexts of organizational communication, the multiple voices constituting an organization include the paraprofessional translators that have, as a result, been the subject of the CCO-oriented research described in Section 2. But those voices also comprise the professional translators that organizations employ, be it as internal staff or externally contracted freelancers. In the increasingly open and participatory communicative ecology observable within the wider world of global social media, where traditional role distinctions between senders and receivers, stakeholders, target groups and cultures are blurring fast, the continued predominance of top-down, monolithic approaches to organizational and corporate communications must be

seriously questioned. The research done to date on paraprofessionals demonstrates that CCO provides a viable theoretical framework for exploring the agency of translators within the communicative ecologies of organizations. But given that, on the evidence of the researchers themselves, the exclusion of professional translators appears to be based on a fundamental misconception of what professional translation actually involves, that focus should logically be widened to embrace the professionals as well.

Various studies have been undertaken to investigate organizational roles and responsibilities of professional translators, though the particular question of their agency has yet to be specifically described, analyzed and evaluated. Pioneering examples of workplace-based ethnographic research, recently labelled “translatorial linguistic ethnography” by Koskinen (2020), are presented by Risku (2016), Koskinen (2008) and Pedersen (2016, 2019), focussing on a commercial translation agency, an institutional translation unit at the European Commission, and on transcreational processes, spaces and interactions at a marketing agency, respectively. These and other studies have adopted the traditional ethnographic methodology of following and observing the actors, asking them about their activities and experiences by interview and questionnaire, and recording the results in field notes, protocols, analyses, and so forth. The specifically translatorial and linguistic elements of the ethnography are generated by following, collecting and examining the textual and communicative data produced. It almost goes without saying that these observational and analytical methods can be equally fruitfully deployed to ascertain the forms, degrees, conditions and possibilities of translatorial agency in the communicative ecologies of organizations.

However, an agenda to research the reality and potential of professional translatorial agency in organizations also implies the ultimate goal of acting to realize the value it can add. For the research to have a transformative effect, descriptive observational and analytical ethnography needs to feed into a developmental cycle of participation, action and evaluation. It is here that the ethnography can and should be joined up with action research. The combination has already proven itself an effective methodology in sociologically oriented Communication Studies, from which workplace-based Translation Studies has a considerable amount to learn.

Guiding examples are reported in Tacchi *et al.* (2003) and Foth and Hearn (2007), where ethnographic methods used to research actions, interactions and effects in communicative ecologies are underpinned by the classic action research cycle of planning (to improve a practice), doing or acting (to implement it), observing (to describe its effects) and reflecting (to evaluate outcomes). Tacchi *et al.* (2003) develop and apply ethnographic action to research, understand and develop Information and Communications Technology (ICT) projects in India. The methods (Tacchi *et al.* 2003: 51-102) that were used to collect data cover the common ethnographic techniques of following, observing, asking, recording and analyzing: participant observation and field notes, in-depth and group interviews, participant diaries and self-documentation, questionnaire surveys, published information and documentary material on the locality where the project was situated. All along, participatory feedback mechanisms were built into the research process to gather richer information about the project and the organizations engaged in it. Building on this design, Foth and Hearn (2007) developed their own approach to what they call network action research. In their study of the communicative ecology in inner-city apartment buildings, individual residents and their immediate social clusters engaged with one another and the researchers in a peer-to-peer mode of exchange. They created a network of inquiry that at once generated research data and fed them back into the action research cycles of intervention and reflection (Foth and Hearn 2007: 752-753). Both groups of researchers applied three layers or focal points of analysis and interpretation to their data – the technological (the devices and connecting media that enable communication and interaction), the social (the people and the social modes of organizing them) and the discursive (the messages, ideas and themes constituting the conversations and narratives of the communicative ecology). All three of these can, of course, be effortlessly mapped, directly and consistently, to the organizational communicative ecologies in which the socio-technical activity of professional translation is situated, both physically – in the case of staff translators – and virtually – within agency and freelancer networks.

Communication Studies therefore provides a ready methodological template for taking the research on the organizational agency of professional translators a step beyond the preponderantly descriptive approaches hitherto applied by researchers from Translation and Organization Studies. It can inform an agenda that seeks not only to

investigate the factors that inhibit and promote translators' organizational agency, but also to act on the results in order to transform the profession in the best interests of the organizations it serves.

5. Concluding remarks

The melding of translatorial linguistic ethnography and (network) action research within a CCO framework has the power to alter the perceptions, processes, agency and roles of translation in organizations, both paraprofessional and professional. By pursuing a research agenda that traces the production of multilingual output in public and commercial organizations through the complex web of actor interactions to its reception by audiences and end-users, researchers and practitioners can come together to describe, analyze, evaluate and optimize organizational models, processes, practices and products. They thus have the opportunity to empower professional translators to make fuller use of their capacities and to adopt more visible, agentic roles in the service and best interests of the organizations that employ them. Preliminary but partial work on translation and international corporate communications has rendered some encouraging results (Massey and Wieder 2019, 2020). They suggest that, by ensuring that the structures, processes and incentives are in place to promote rather than constrain the agency of translators, organizations are likely to be able to shape the affordances that sustain the emergence of corporate identities and the adequacy of the way these are communicated across linguistic and cultural borders, not only operationally but also strategically.

Although more extensive research is self-evidently needed, the indicators at this early stage are that this can be achieved if certain conditions are met. In the first place, organizations need to overcome their simplistic view of translation as a mere transcoding process and see translators for what they can be: adaptive, creative linguistic and intercultural experts with the profoundly agentic potential to shape and convey not only operational textual material but also organizational identities and strategic messages for both internal and external target groups and markets. Second, the translation profession must break with a traditional instrumentalist conceptualization of itself and the "illusion of neutrality" (Lambert 2018) in which it shrouds the roles and responsibilities of its members. Finally, while organizational and

corporate communications should continue to embrace a CCO perspective that breaks up the univocal linearity of their current communications ideal, the linear processes governing translation service provision must also be remodelled to permit sustained, meaningful interactions and unmediated feed-forward and feedback flows. This will lay the basis for developing standards, structures and practices that allow professional translators to adopt an expanded role as active agents in an iterative, interactive process of multilingual text production, adding a visible plus to their strategic value for the organizations that employ their services.

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The value added of the translator in the financial services industry

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Abstract

Translators in the financial services industry provide a value-added service on many levels. Firstly, they must apply controls and pay close attention to the text to ensure accuracy in numbers and information, and that problems of logic and inconsistency are rectified. The translator has a responsibility to inform the author about errors so the target text and source text are corrected. If this is not done, the author may be liable for non-compliance of ethical and regulatory rules, resulting in sanctions or reputational damage. The data, text and format of the finished product must be checked thoroughly prior to publication. The translator may also rework texts that are unclear in their initial structure and advise the author about improving their quality. I will present two cases from my professional life to demonstrate the cleaning-up transediting and pragmatic translation strategies that can be applied to add value to the translation process. These authentic texts incorporate a range of situations the professional translator may face, notably number errors, or unclear source-text expression, format or construction. Translators are not passive participants in the process at the transference or broader communication level: their agency in providing value-added input in accomplishing the finished product is not only essential but also much appreciated.

1. Introduction

This paper is based on my professional translating experience in equity research firms in France, where I work with French mother tongue text-producers that have strong English-language competence in most cases. The translation process takes place in a quality-control environment such as the one presented below:

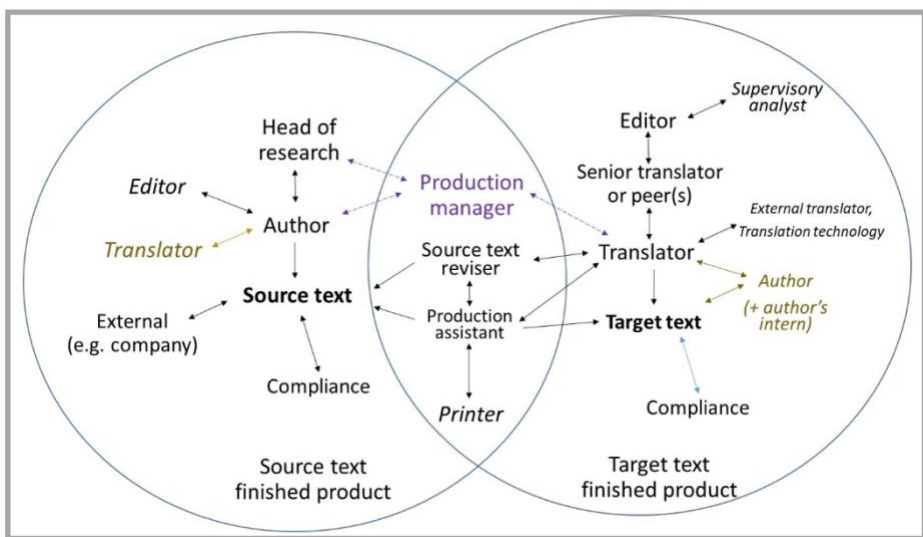


Figure 1: An ideal quality control organization

The translator also works closely with the text-producer on the quality of the source and target texts, ensuring in particular that the latter do not contain mistranslations, the numbers are accurate, and the terminology is correct. The translator ideally also has their work checked by the text-producer, peers or a senior translator, and in some cases an editor.

Justa Holz-Mänttari's translatorial action theory (1984) argues that the target situation is the most important for the translator, while "the source text is viewed as a mere tool" (Schäffner 2003: 3). Both texts are important in financial services, for compliance reasons notably, and the translator must help ensure that source and target text are consistent. He or she interrelates constantly with the production team to make sure content changes are incorporated, and corrections made to the layout (font size, line spacing, etc.) if needed. Lastly, the translator plays a key role in checking the source and target text documents before they go to print, and often picks up on crucial errors to be corrected.

Overall, the translator ensures the technical norms are respected notably, according to Andrew Chesterman's way of "classifying the main kind of norms" (Chesterman 2016: 49-82): 1) the product norm, i.e., what the readers expect the translation of this type should look like; and 2) the relation norm in which 'a relation of relevant similarity is established and maintained between the source text and the target text' (Chesterman 2016: 67).

Against this backdrop, I will look at the value added a translator can provide in the text-producer/translator relationship, and from a language and text structure standpoint. I then analyse two authentic cases in which the translator applied an approach that incorporates cleaning-up transediting and related translation strategies to demonstrate the agency a translator may have in adding value in the translatorial action.

Stetting's term of transediting refers to the combination of translating and editing; and cleaning-up transediting is one form of this composite term (Schrijver 2014: 47). Translators often have "to make minor and/or major textual changes" given the translation commission, text conventions in the target language, or the quality of texts (ibid). Regarding the latter, the financial services translator often has to clean up source texts of poor quality in order to: 1) optimise said text on a stand-alone basis, and 2) provide a foundation to ensure the expression and accuracy in the target language not only equals but also betters the source text level by systematically applying target language norms. They thus carry out transediting as an inherent part of their translating and the translatorial action, even if the boundaries between the two terms and competencies are a subject of debate (Schrijver 2014: 46-53).

Andrew Chesterman lists transediting in his classification of pragmatic translation 'strategies', but almost as a footnote at the end of his list in *Memes of Translation* (2016: 108). Indeed, this cleaning up can only be achieved with the application of other pragmatic procedures and syntactic translation approaches. Jungmin Hong focuses on transediting solely as if it concerns the source text. However, translators apply the underlying principles he presents, such as highlighting key information (Mossop *et al.* 2020: 87) to their reshaping of texts while they translate, not only in the revision of draft translations or post editing. Translators and revisers also engage in mental stylistic, structural and content editing as they work in order to tailor the target language to the target readers (Mossop *et al.* 2020: 56). Note also that Donald Kiraly's model of the cognitive processes involved in translation sets out that translators have a relatively uncontrolled processing centre (intuitive, less conscious) and a controlled processing centre (strategic, more conscious) (Kiraly 1995: 99-105). Both play a role in the aforementioned actions, as the latter considers any translation problems brought to light in the intuitive workspace and implements a strategy to deal with them (Kiraly 1995: 105), at all stages of the translating process. The value-added a translator can provide involves all such editing, combined with the

translating strategies as set out by Chesterman (2016: 89-108), provided the actor applies a commensurate level of attention, and critical thinking.

Transediting is thus a translation method, and an integral part of the strategy the translator applies to the text as a whole. The goal is to improve quality throughout the process, from accuracy of transfer, form of expression and text cohesion and coherence, to the result, be this for the translation or the source text.

2. Text-producer, texts and the translator

There are text-producers, who are often good source-text writers, who are very particular about the quality of the translation. They are generally strong bilingual English speakers i.e., “successful users of English” (Hewson 2009: 112). They will often correct, comment and improve the target text in terms of terminology and meaning, in collaboration with the translator. However, the text-producer may not be a good source-text writer, often for want of time. In this case, I am referring to writing that can create problems in interpreting the text in the source language or in composing the translation in the target language, more than texts that are intrinsically hard to understand (Mossop 1995). In many cases again, the writer, who may in this case be an “adequate user of English” (Hewson 2009: 112), will take a “laissez-faire” attitude, and say they “fully trust” the translation, without checking it. In this case, the onus falls on the translator to be vigilant as to the calibre of the translated product. They are in the front line with regard to quality, though the text-producer is ultimately accountable for the content of the text.

The translator often, therefore, notes micro-scale content errors in the source text (e.g. spelling of proper names, or errors in dates, figures or units quoted) and helps clean up and increase the accuracy of the original document. The translator may correct such errors in the translation and indicate them to the text-producer, diplomatically. This is important given the assumed error may not actually be an error but the result of an ambiguity in the source text. Following The Chartered Institute of Linguists (2017: 7) guidelines, it is the translator’s job to resolve the ambiguity by incorporating the more likely solution, and indicate their choice by highlighting the problematic part (my method) or explaining it briefly in a translator’s note for the text-producer to check. This is generally much appreciated by the latter, who is often writing under major time and organizational constraints,

and this procedure clearly enhances the credibility of both writer and organisation.

Moreover, text-producers in this industry often write opaque source texts because, given their own knowledge of the subject, they assume the reader already “knows” the content and thus do not explain the concepts sufficiently to a less informed audience. In some cases, the translator will lack the information needed to decipher the source text fully in order to produce an acceptable translation and will have to contact the text-producer to resolve any content questions. In other cases, the translator’s extralinguistic knowledge will enable him or her ‘to draw inferences from the source text to solve comprehension problems’ (Schrijver 2014: 17). Lastly, the translator may use online research sources. In the case of financial services this may mean checking annual reports, company or institutional websites and press releases to verify specific terms, job titles, and such like. Indeed, Risku (1998) argues that expert translators “consider research necessary in any case (even under time pressure)” (Schrijver 2014: 18). In some cases, after taking note of the source-text content, the translator might blend in textual content from outside sources rather than translating and reworking the source text directly if a) they deem that the content of primary source material (such as the minutes of central bank meetings, medical studies) will clarify the notions expressed in the source text, or b) the text-producer has translated content initially expressed in the target language and has included that content in the source text.

3. Language

The source language in financial services in France often includes terminology borrowed from the target language. An example of this is “*grâce à une bonne génération de CF*”/”thanks to good CF generation”: CF stands for cash flow, and the French equivalent acronym (MBA for *Marge Brute d'Autofinancement*) is almost never used. Moreover, the expression borrows style inspired by the target language (short words/sentences, no articles, often “+” and “-” symbols for percent trends, etc.) notably to gain textual space as French sentence structure tends to be longer. The translator converts this specific style fully to the target-language expression that agents in the industry recognize. This action falls somewhere between Mossop’s plain and reconstructive reporting definitions; the translator tries to convey all the meaning he or she attributes to the source text, and, in doing so,

repairs source text wording that “strikes him as not representing the intention of the writer” (Mossop 2010: 103). The purpose is to always implement a domestication strategy “in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text” (Shuttleworth and Cowie 2014: 44-45, 59). However, the translator also has to be an expert in the function of inter-cultural message transfer (Schäffner 2003: 4) and be able to deliver this message to an unequal target audience and culture. The readers may be located in financial centres such as Singapore or Hong Kong and thus come from differing cultural backgrounds but still have a common understanding of the target financial terms and concepts. The expression thus has to be crystal-clear so that target-language readers of all levels of competence can all draw on the information equally and reliably. This example relates to a debt covenant ratio definition in a credit research report. I clarified the initial French, as shown in an indicative (DeepL) translation as being: “the rate of interest coverage by the gross operating surplus (plus the share in the results of companies accounted for by the equity method)”. This wording expresses the concept but it is clumsy. Reshaping, additions, concision, and the use of commonly-accepted financial terminology made the definition more evident to the informed reader: “the interest coverage ratio (ICR) based on EBITDA plus the group’s share in profit/(loss) of equity-accounted companies”. This also served the purpose of giving the reader a definition of the ICR acronym used in corresponding tables.

The translator’s creativity is reined in by such professional constraints, in terms of stylistic expression and purpose. Choosing the title for a report is one case in mind, with the need to balance an inventive approach, which: make it a hook for the reader, with that of emphasising the factual content or purpose, hence the choice of *Nec mergitur* might be transformed by an editor or head of research to *Resilient. Buy on fundamentals*. However, the translator is aware that the writing matters and his/her ability to write with a high degree of naturalness is crucial. In reference to Gideon Toury’s approaches to translation, there are cases where time constraints and second-language interference means the translated product is more on the ‘adequate’ end of the spectrum with the source language structure predominating. However, the primary goal should be to produce a target-based or ‘acceptable’ translation to convey the meaning, increase readability and adapt the text to the language structures of the receiving culture. Indeed, good writing, combined with a keen attention to detail and quality,

can make a translation ‘more than acceptable’ and akin to a target text as written by a native-speaking financial services professional.

Non-native-speaking colleagues, who need to contribute but lack competence in the target language or knowledge of cultural factors, may also be involved in the translation process. In this case, the translator will engage in a dialogue with such colleagues to work out the best way to express their intention in the target language. The translator acts as a mediator by working closely together (orally sometimes) to take into consideration what they want to add to the target text, while reworking the input to firmly ensure the most natural target-language expression prevails.

In this respect, the translator has to be extra vigilant when considering meaning, “with regard to the speaker’s/writer’s linguistic choices in their relation to a wide-ranging socio-cultural context” (Bnini 2016: 3) and its three dimensions: communicative (register), pragmatic (intentionality) and semiotic (language embracing culture). The tone for informed investors has to be concise, clear and to the point (even ‘dry’) while that for marketing material for the general public needs to be engaging and ‘readable’, and a politician’s speech needs to reflect an oral style and be emphatic.

4. Structure

The better the source text is constructed and written, the easier it is to translate well. Text-producers in my environment are encouraged to apply a style commonly used in long reports, which develop and validate an investment proposition using a logical pyramid-writing framework. Namely a concise, systematic and scalable presentation of arguments. The author determines the apex statement for the first page, i.e., an introductory paragraph that acts as a “hook” to catch investors’ interest, which should, in brief, tell the whole story, followed by the pyramid’s legs, which become the main section headings (CLSA 2011). The translator adds value in cases where the author has not respected such a style and there is a poor sequencing of arguments and/or sections. The translator will then apply a pragmatic coherence change strategy i.e., work on textual cohesion and the “logical arrangement of information in the text at the ideational level” (Chesterman 2016: 107) by rearranging, combining or splitting paragraphs or larger sections of a text. He or she will work in parallel with the text-producer and source-text reviser by suggesting ways to rework the structure so the text is coherent, and the reader can clearly follow the argument. This

is part of the translator's text-productive competence, as reflected in the European Master's in Translation (2009) reference framework, in which he or she knows how to "restructure, condense, and post-edit rapidly and well" (Schrijver 2014: 22; EMT group 2009: 6). In some cases, the text-producer may have combined extracts from a number of sources (press releases, studies, reports, etc.) in the source text document. The translator acting as transeditor is tasked with reorganising and uniformizing this in terms of arguments and target-text house style to create a cohesive text.

5. Two case studies

I present below two authentic cases that demonstrate the procedures the translator might use to add value. The first example involves a freelance translator working with a translation agency on behalf of the latter's client, and the second concerns an in-house translation team in close contact with both text-producer and source-text reviser. The translator transedits while translating in the first case to meet a tight deadline and in order to provide the translation commissioner with a product with increased impact compared to the initial source text. He or she employs the same approach in the second case to pre-empt and aid the transediting being performed by the source text-reviser.

5.1 Structural and content transediting

This text concerns a performance report for a mutual fund invested in European large cap equities. It was written by a fund manager in the asset management department of the French subsidiary of a global bank and sent to a translation agency. A project manager at the latter sent it to the translator (myself) to translate it to a tight deadline. There was no other particular brief apart from the requirement of high quality. Nevertheless, the translator thinks it is important to add value by tailoring the target text to the intended audience: investors in the fund, who are informed retail or professional investors. The translator thus decides to reformat and restructure the text by relocating sentences "on the basis of the target readers' interests so as to attract their attention" (Mossop *et al.* 2020: 81), and fulfil the purpose more efficiently.

It is important to exploit all the layout potential of document writing (even if not used in the original document) – especially headlines, intro paragraphs and bullet points – intelligently to get the reader’s attention and tell them what the message is. Readers have limited time and patience, and the easier the translator can make the task of understanding the document, the better. In this case, the information is “not particularly clear (from an LCC [*low-context communication*] point of view” (Katan 2021: 321).

Firstly, I suggested a title for the text (“Fund performance in July”), as a hook for the reader. This meant extracting the salient information from the text and proposing an effective summary of the content. As shown in the extract in Figure 2 below, I also trans-edited the content in order to improve clarity and accuracy and in doing so, rearranged the order of the words and sentences in the introductory paragraph more coherently. The additions made concern the name of the month, which was not specified originally, and the exact index referred to. In the latter case, the translator consulted an online data provider to find out which index increased by the percentage mentioned in the given period.

This action is not compulsory and may even be risky, but providing such information helps the target reader assess the significance of the data. Wherever possible, “the trans-editor should focus on prompt delivery of the key information” (Mossop *et al.* 2020: 87). In all cases, I highlighted the additions in yellow, and mentioned this in the return email, so the translation commissioner could verify the data and decide whether to keep the changes.

I transferred the most relevant information for the investor to the start of the text. As can be seen from the extract below the reader can clearly read how well the fund has performed, why, and how it compared to a benchmark (changes highlighted in boldface).

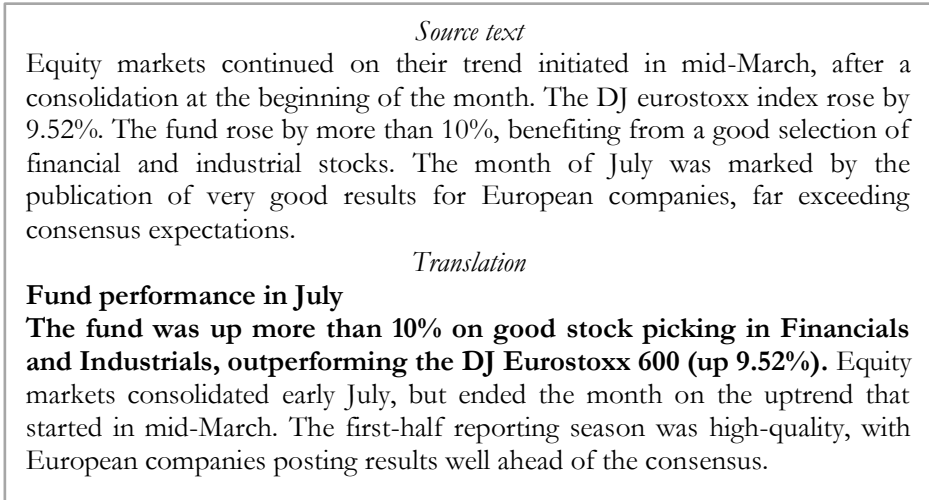


Figure 2: Transferral of salient information DeepL machine translation of source text for illustrative purposes

Emphasising these facts thus increases the impact and accomplishes the purpose more efficiently. In the subsequent paragraph, I performed the micro-scale syntactical task of clarifying an ambiguity based on the source-text pattern (my italics): the “underweighting of the energy sector (ENI decrease following the dividend cut) and utilities (*impact +34bps and +31bps*.)” becomes our “Underweight stances on Energy (ENI fell on a dividend cut) and Utilities, *which contributed a positive 34bp and 31bp, respectively*” to make it clear these figures refer to two sectors.

Finally, yet importantly, I increased clarity and readability at a macro structure level by changing the block text for the third paragraph onwards into bullet points, with each heading in boldface as shown by the extracts below.

Stock selection was strongly positive (+80bps). In the financials sector, we benefited from the takeover bid for Paris RE and the good performance of ING, Unibail and Aegon.

In technology we benefited from our underweight position in Nokia, which fell sharply following a margin warning in the second half of the year. In industrials, we benefited from the strong rebound of Deutsche Post and Philips following the publication of results well above expectations. On the other hand, our airlines (Lufthansa, Ryanair) underperformed over the month. In discretionary consumption we benefited from a position on Daimler but suffered from the announcement of the capital increase of Reed Elsevier. In Healthcare, Sanofi recovered strongly after its fall at the end of June, following the publication of results and reassuring data on Lantus.

In basic materials, we reduced the position on BASF which had been initiated at the end of last year, after a very good performance. On the other hand, we maintained our overweight position on Akzo Nobel, which published results well beyond expectations.

Figure 3: Mutual fund source text.

Our stock picking had a very positive effect (+80bp). By sector:

- **Financials:** We benefited from the takeover bid on Paris RE and strong performances by ING, Unibail-Rodamco and Aegon.
- **Information Technology:** The performance was underpinned by our Underweight recommendation on Nokia, which fell sharply after the company warned on H2 margins.
- **Industrials:** Strong rebound for Deutsche Post and Philips on results reports well ahead of expectations. Conversely, our airline picks (Lufthansa, Ryanair) underperformed.
- **Consumer Discretionary:** Our position on Daimler was positive, but we suffered from Reed Elsevier's announcement of a capital increase.
- **Healthcare:** Sanofi picked up strongly following its decline at end June, on the back of its results report and reassuring data on Lantus.
- **Materials:** We reduced our position on BASF (added at end 2014), following its very strong performance year-to-date. Conversely, we maintained our Overweight recommendation on Akzo Nobel, which reported results that beat expectations significantly.

Figure 4: Translation after structural transediting

The additional space enables the reader to “focus on the individual words, giving them individual weight”, heightening the White Space Quotient as set out by David Katan (2021: 298, 321-325), who is a proponent of the bullet-point approach, and making the message clear. I carried out micro-level editing of redundant words and repetition to further highlight the information presented for each sector and company mentioned so the investor could glean the key points rapidly. I did not change the overall

structure of the text, i.e., no macro-scale paragraph additions, deletions or relocation. At the same time, the structure is more evident.

5.2 Proactive transediting to meet the deadline

The second case study is based on a translation task carried out by a four-strong in-house translation team working in a French brokerage firm. The excerpted text is part of a three-page equity research document written on the best French companies to invest in regarding the recovery in China following the downturn during the Covid-crisis in early 2020. The team received the draft at 3pm with an early next morning deadline. However, it was not given a go-ahead on starting the text, as the text-producers were still amending the source text. The translators are working in a translatorial action simultaneously with the text-producer and source text reviser to produce “a particular product” to be completed by a deadline (Schäffner 2003: 4). They have to exercise their agency and to be an active participant in this process by anticipating the constraints.

The working day for the translation team in this French organisation ends at 5pm (evening work is only in highly exceptional circumstances such as for IPOs), so the translators decide to start on the text so it would be partially ready the next day. There were other translation tasks to do in the morning so this document could be subject to constraints on its production and delayed.

The question therefore is whether the initial draft text, which is very poor quality, should be translated as is or cleaned up to create a more intelligible text, prior to amendments being incorporated. Chesterman (2016: 108) notes that transediting is “a term suggested by Stetting (1989) to designate the sometimes radical re-editing” of a badly-written original text. This method is obviously required here to gain time in the translation process, and to more swiftly improve the quality of the source and target texts in conjunction with the reviser and text-producer.

Thus, as Mossop *et al.* (2020: 85) state, in this specific professional setting, the translator has to “perform content and structural trans-editing at the same time” as he or she is translating. This involves working on the organization of the information to improve cohesion and carrying out micro-level correction of factual, logical and morphological errors.

The text (abridged) is presented in Figure 5 below. There is notably (a) a factual reference omission related to a number, (b) repetition, (c) a lack of

logical structure, (d) a spelling error, (e) a terminology question, (f) a suspect figure to be checked, (g) an omission in terms of context, (h) text redundancy, and (i) a proper name error.

Air Liquide: 23% of 2019 sales in Asia-Pacific, including significant sales in Korea and Japan. **A)** 4000 employees, 90 sites, more than 40 cities. 2019 Asia Pacific 2019 revenue growth 10%. **B)** China 9% of turnover, of which Industrial Merchant <25%, remains mainly II and Electronics. **C)** Present in the Industrial Merchant **D)** (Cylinders), Large Industries and Electronics segments (H1 2019 growth > 15%). Activity is starting to pick up in China. In IM (<25% of Chinese turnover). Compared to a normal load of 100%, the bulk is at 60-80% of the load, and the gas in cylinders at 40-50%, rising. The Large Industries division (most of the turnover in China) operates very close to normal. Most of the time, Take or Pay contracts are in place. In 2009, another year of slowdown, **E)** no volume carried was less than **F)** 701% of contract volumes. Healthcare represents 2% of turnover in China and Air Liquide **G)** participated by making O2 available. Electronics could suffer a little from the **H)** closure of a factory in **I)** Hangzou, which has temporarily closed and is now restarted.

*Figure 5: Equity research initial source text.
DeepL machine translation provided for illustrative purposes*

The translator notably has to employ two of Chesterman's pragmatic strategies in order to improve this text (Chesterman 2016: 105-106). Firstly, information change by adding new (non-inferrable) information about the context (point g), as this is relevant but not present in the source text, and secondly, deleting the repetition (b) and text redundancy (h). Reducing text redundancy involves summarising factual details, within a larger process of reorganisation. Thirdly, the translator should employ an explicitness change strategy to deal with point (a) where the detail was lacking and thus misleading, which involves reworking and online research. However, in this case, the translator did not identify this ambiguity at the time, so the clarification was not made.

External research also enables point (i) to be checked swiftly, but contacting the text-producer for information and clarification with regard to the terminology question (e) and the suspect number (f) is a more efficient way to deal with these points. The translator drew a logical conclusion from reading the text that (f) is probably a typographical error: 701% appears too high and 70.1% too precise, given the context, so the

most likely number is either 70% or 71%, which is the question asked of the text-producer.

Figure 6 presents the draft translation after a reorganisation and clean up, and pending clarification from the text-producer about the terminology issue and the number. The source-text reviser and other text contributors are expected to make further changes to the text, so the initial approach was to create a working translation. In terms of format, the translator has to keep it as block text. In view of the information, and taken in isolation, it would be tempting to change the format to bullet points, but this is not the required style for this document.

Air Liquide: 23% of 2019 revenues were generated in the Asia-Pacific region, including substantial revenues in South Korea and Japan. **A) 4,000 employees,** 90 sites, plus 40 cities. 2019 revenues grew 10% in Asia Pacific. Large Industries and Electronics predominate in China (9% of revenues, of which Industrial Merchant <25%). Activity is beginning to recover in the region, where the group is active in Industrial Merchant (Cylinders), Large Industries and Electronics (H1 2019 growth >15%). IM: compared to a normal workload at 100%, bulk is operating at 60-80%, and bottled gas at 40-50%, in recovery mode. Large Industries (most of the revenues in China) is operating close to normal. Take or Pay contracts are in place most of the time. **E) No volumes taken out** were less than **F) 701%** of contract volumes in 2009, another slowdown year. Healthcare represents 2% of revenues in China and Air Liquide has participated in resolution of the health crisis by putting O₂ at the disposal of the authorities. Electronics could suffer somewhat from the temporary closure of a plant at Hangzhou.

Figure 6: Initial English version

The following morning, the translation team received the final version of the document after textual revision from the source-text reviser and further input from the text-producer, but the number error had not been corrected. However, the text-producer had communicated the correct number to the translator in the meantime. The latter was thus able to rectify this number in the target text and tell the reviser so this point was resolved in the source text. Lastly, the translator had to update the target text to match the source text content, and apply the house graphic charter in order to make the text ready for publication.

Figure 7 shows an extract from the final English version after full reorganisation and improvement in terms of format, accuracy and clarity. Points (e) and (f) are clarified, but the translator and the source-text reviser have not resolved the issue of the 4,000 employees (a). The reviser has made a factual addition and carried out syntactical reformulation, but the ‘country’ or ‘countries’ reference for the figure remains ambiguous: Asia Pacific (Figures 5 and 6), or South Korea, Japan and China (Figure 7).

Air Liquide (23% of 2019 revenues in Asia-Pacific)

The company generates substantial revenues in **A) South Korea, Japan and China**, and has 4,000 employees on 90 sites. Revenues grew 10% in Asia Pacific in 2019. China represents 9% of revenues. [...] Take or Pay contracts are in place most of the time. **E) No offtake** was less than **F) 70%** of contract volumes in 2009, another slowdown year. [...].

Figure 7: Final English version

In conclusion, the transediting increased the translator’s understanding of the source text and highlighted areas where improvement could be made, notably point (g) where the context was missing. This enabled the translator to gain time, in this specific case, by completing much of the preparatory work. There was minimal extra revision the following morning, bar taking into account additional information and clarification provided by the reviser and the text-producer, as well as reformatting the text in the template. This proactive transediting meant the translation was published on time and almost simultaneously to the source text (a compliance requirement).

6. Conclusion

Value-added translating involves constant interaction between the text-producer, the translator and all other parties in the production process. This entails constructive discussion aimed at improving the quality of the source and target texts, and ideally sets in motion a cycle of increased attention and continuous progress. The accurate transfer of pragmatic features is crucial, and both the target-language reader and the reputation of the company must be borne in mind at all times. The level of value that can be added is

determined by factors such as the participants' translating approaches, critical thinking, linguistic competence and technical skills, and more broadly the production approach and control set-up in the entity. The professional translator uses many of Chesterman's pragmatic strategies, which "tend to involve bigger changes from the source text" (Chesterman 2016, 104) especially textual and layout manipulation. It is also more advantageous, if not crucial, to engage in translating and transediting simultaneously in the intercultural message transfer, to enable the translatorial action to be carried out more efficiently. Transediting is not solely for the benefit of the source text but can be applied to create a higher calibre translation, with improvements made to the latter transferred to the source text. Lastly, producing and publishing documents in the financial services industry generates risks for the parties involved, especially financial and reputational risk. Translators serve a key but underestimated role in that their translation practice, and approach to quality, can help mitigate these risks in the source and translated product, while producing the required impact and more for the text-producer and the organisation.

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Hybridisation adds value in translation and interpreting

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Abstract

With machine translation and machine interpreting now providing unprecedented quality, translators and interpreters need to up their game to stay in business (Tomarenko 2019). We know that translators and interpreters do not just replace words – they use words to convey meanings from a source language to a target language. Only when they fully grasp the meanings, nuances and implications behind the words can they phrase the original idea in the way that best resonates with the target audience. And this only works when translators and interpreters truly are specialised by domain (Durban 2010). Yet added value can also be created through a more radical form of specialisation, which I call hybridisation. When translators and interpreters also possess skills that belong ‘on the other side of the fence’ and are willing to take risks (Katan 2016: 365-381; Pym 2015: 67-80), they step out of their traditional roles and perform tasks that are not limited to the rendition of a written or spoken text from a language to another. In fact, hybrid professionals provide a consulting service rather than a language service in the strict sense. Drawing on concrete examples from my own professional experience, I will show how two highly specialised services, namely the transcreation of TV advertisements and media interpreting for the music industry, can benefit enormously from professionals wearing more than one hat. E.g., a ‘translator plus’ (translator + copywriter) may also direct the voiceover recording session for a TV commercial, while an ‘interpreter plus’ (interpreter + journalist) may in practice become an additional and highly valued member of an artist’s PR team.

Keywords: translation; interpreting; transcreation

1. The game changer: Neural machine translation (NMT)

Whether written or oral, translation as an activity dates back to the dawn of civilization, but its evolution as a profession seems to go hand in hand with technological advancements. Without innovation, translators would still

write with pen and paper, and simultaneous interpretation simply would not exist. While translators and interpreters agree that technology has helped them work better and faster, not all of them seem to be enthusiastic about one of the latest developments in computational linguistics.

Machine translation (MT) has been around for decades and its poor output has long been derided by professional translators, who were confident they would never lose their jobs. Computers could never compete with human quality, or so they thought. Then came neural machine translation (NMT), the real game changer. A deep (machine) learning (DL) process based on neural networks, NMT provides unprecedented quality that may even pass for the work of a professional translator. A case in point is the neural-based translation system Charles University Block-Backtranslation-Improved Transformer Translation (CUBBITT), which claims to have “significantly outperformed professional-agency English-to-Czech news translation in preserving text meaning” (Popel *et al.* 2020: 1). Furthermore, in a sentence-level translation Turing test with 16 participants, “CUBBITT was not significantly distinguished from human translations by three professional translators, three MT researchers, and three other participants” (*ibidem.* 7-8). If most professionals did not notice it was MT, it is safe to assume that most clients would not be able to tell the difference either. So, the question arises: Why would they be willing to pay for human translation, when MT is much faster and, according to this study, even better than human quality?

Machine interpreting (MI) is a process which typically involves three steps, namely speech recognition to transcribe a speech (speech-to-text), MT to translate the resulting written text, and speech synthesis to convert the translated written text into speech (text-to-speech). Although MI is currently not the solution of choice in high-level contexts, it looks like this might change with the introduction of a ‘simultaneous written translation’ system by the European Parliament. Its purpose will be to help members access debates on screen, including hard of hearing people who currently have no direct access to the debates. A consortium formed by Cedat85, a provider of automatic speech recognition and speech-to-text technology, SDL (later acquired by RSW), a language and content company, and Bertin IT, a provider of software solutions in cybersecurity and in cyber and voice intelligence, ranked first in a tender to provide real-time, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered transcription and translation services for the

European Parliament plenary sessions¹. The solution involves speech recognition, transcription and transmission of the written text to the AI system that will then translate it into 24 languages. With its algorithms analysing the three to four previous and subsequent words in order to recognise and correctly translate the semantic use of a word, the system will learn from corrections and user feedback, improving its quality over time². The announcement raised the eyebrows of many professionals, as the interpreting services of the European Union are the world's largest employers of conference interpreters³. While EU institutions will surely continue to rely on human interpreters to translate their proceedings in real time, one is left to wonder how many of them will be used for such multilingual debates in the future, once this speech translation system is implemented.

2. Moving upmarket through specialisation

As MT quality continues to improve and translators risk losing their jobs to machines, they need to focus on the things where they can make a difference, because that is where machines are failing (Tomarenko 2019: 286).

Kevin Hendzel, award-winning translator, linguist, author, national media consultant and translation industry expert, distinguishes three different markets where a translator can operate:

- the bulk market, i.e. “the estimated 60% of commercial translation done ‘for informational purposes,’ or to ‘convey basic information’ where ‘good enough’ is the standard and price is the primary basis of selection, because GT [Google Translate] (free) is considered a serious option”;
- the added-value market, “where the translations are typically in a specialized subject-area that is sensitive enough for clients to pause at the thought of using GT or any machine translation at all”;

¹ https://www.wired.it/economia/business/2020/11/11/parlamento-europeo-traduzione-tempo-reale/?refresh_ce (last accessed 1 September 2021)

² *Ibidem*.

³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1c437dc0-49c5-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-70578119> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

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- the premium market, which “requires exceptional subject-area knowledge, exquisite writing skills, and a lifetime of collaboration with your most talented colleagues”⁴.

Although in this paper I use the term ‘value’ and related expressions like ‘added value’ or ‘create (more) value’ with regard to high-stakes contexts where MT and MI are totally out of the question – and which therefore would match Hendzel’s definition of “premium market” rather than “added-value market” – I agree with him that translators should move upmarket, or they will become obsolete. A prerequisite to access the most lucrative market is subject-matter expertise: “your level of specialization should be on a level equivalent to a practitioner in that field”⁵. In other words, translators should shift their focus from language to specialist knowledge of their clients’ industry (Durban 2010). When translations are done by subject-matter experts, they “tend to be more like paraphrase and adaptation, and are marked by greater individual freedom of expression” (Tomarenko 2019: 286). Translators who are specialised in a given domain understand all the meanings and implications of the source text beyond the words actually used by the author, which makes them more prone to ‘freedom’ when faced with the ‘fidelity vs freedom’ dilemma. Specialised translators have no fear of straying from the source text, because they know the ins and outs of their client’s industry, and they avoid ‘safe solutions’ because they want to make their translations truly fit for purpose. There is no guesswork on their part, and if they should have queries or comments, they would share them with their clients – the premium market values a collaborative relationship between translators and clients. In this respect, we can associate specialised translators with risk-takers (Katan 2016: 365-381; Pym 2015: 67-80).

3. A particular kind of specialisation: Hybridisation

While specialisation in translation implies deep knowledge of a subject-matter (Durban 2010; Hendzel 2017; Tomarenko 2019), with this paper I would like to propose a more radical form of specialisation, which I call hybridisation. Based on my own professional experience, I argue that

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ *Ibidem.*

possessing skills that belong ‘on the other side of the fence’ contributes to a risk-prone, versatile, premium professional profile that creates more value for clients.

I call myself an Italian communications all-rounder not only because I wear more than one hat (I provide several different services in the field of communications), but also because I have gained professional experience not only as adaptor/translator, but within exactly the same fields as creator/writer. I translate press releases, but when I used to be a freelance publicist, I would write press releases. I interpret for journalists at press conferences, but I first attended that kind of events as a journalist myself. I adapt advertising and marketing copy from English or German into my native Italian, but I also create copy in Italian from scratch.

I will here focus on two of the services I offer:

- Transcreation, with particular regard to television commercials (TVCs), in section 4
- Interpreting, with particular regard to media interpreting for the music industry, in section 5.

Hybridisation results from me being respectively:

- A copywriter (someone who creates a script for a TVC and knows how to choose and direct actors) + a translator (someone who translates a script written in a foreign language)
- A journalist (someone who attends a foreign music artist’s press conference and then uses the artist’s translated speech to write a feature) + an interpreter (someone who, at a press conference, translates the journalists’ questions to the artist as well as the artist’s answers to journalists).

Hybridisation not only defies traditional roles but, in my opinion, also suits my clients’ needs better.

4. Translator + copywriter: The transcreation of TV commercials

A portmanteau combining ‘translation’ and ‘creation’, the term ‘transcreation’ has been in use for over 60 years, but neither its definition nor its fields of application seem to be universally recognized.

In translation studies, the first attested occurrence of the word ‘transcreation’ is to be found within the field of literary translation. Purushottama Lal, an Indian poet and scholar, used it back in 1957 to refer to his Sanskrit to English rendition of classical Indian drama. Although he did not provide a formal definition of transcreation, he explained the approach he used to achieve such literary feat, stating that “the thing to do is to attempt to preserve not the Sanskrit language but the Hindu tradition which it enshrines” (Lal 1996: 43). The purpose of transcreation was to capture the spirit of the text and recreate it in a different language to engage the reader, “trying to reflect, somehow, the cultural source” (Sales Salvador 2005: 196). Along similar lines, within the field of literary translation, “transcreation can be said to be a target-oriented, aesthetic recreation” (Gopinathan 2000: 171).

However, from a functionalist perspective (Reiß and Vermeer 1984; Nord 1997), every translation in any domain must be fit for purpose, and method and strategy in the translation process must be chosen accordingly. Consequently, it could be argued that translators might as well manipulate the source text in order to produce a target text that performs its intended function, and yet the end result will still be called a ‘translation’, regardless of how much the target text strayed from the source text. For this reason, the very notion that transcreation is a practice worthy of a different name is not shared by all academics.

Among the scholars who do regard transcreation as something different from translation, Ira Torresi (2010) proposes that transcreation concerns promotional texts and takes place only when the whole source text is rebuilt so that it can resonate with the target language and culture. Viviana Gaballo (2012: 108) concludes that transcreation is a way to tackle texts in any domain, even legal, where the introduction of neologisms to fill semantic voids “fulfills the goal of transcreation in that it allows the translator to cross the borders of the ‘established’ terminology to depict the new rules of interpretation of a world of concurring powers”. David Katan (2015) also embraces the idea of transcreation as an approach that can be applied to different fields, rather than as a specific practice limited to specific genres. Based on the notion of translation as intercultural mediation and on survey results revealing that, when faced with the ‘fidelity vs freedom’ dilemma, translators seem to be more inclined towards the former, Katan suggests that the time may have come for translators to take the “transcreational turn”. The willingness to take risks (Katan 2016: 365-381; Pym 2015: 67-80) seems to be a decisive factor in this change of perspective. On the one hand,

globalization needs professionals who can facilitate communication by reducing the cultural distance, and only translators who take risks can do so. On the other hand, machine translation quality is improving dramatically, which endangers the survival of low-risk, faithful translators. For said scholars, transcreation can only be defined as such *ex post* (i.e. once work has been performed and a liberal approach has been taken to convey the source text), not *ex ante* – transcreation appears to be a translation strategy implemented to serve a purpose.

In the advertising industry, however, transcreation is identified with a specific type of service: the interlinguistic and intercultural adaptation of marketing and advertising copy. Traditionally, an advertising agency with a global reach would take care of both the origination of the master copy of a global campaign and the transcreation of such copy for local markets. The source copy would typically be created by the agency's headquarters (usually in English), and the local adaptations into target languages would be performed by the agency's copywriters working in offices in target-language countries. In an attempt to both cut costs and have more control over the transcreation outcomes so that messaging is not diluted when adapted for a number of different countries, many global brands have embraced the "smart centralization" model described by Simon Anholt (2000). Consequently, they have trusted centralized implementation agencies with the transcreation of their advertising materials and other services, most notably production. Such agencies usually receive the master from advertising agencies and then have it adapted by freelance in-market translators-copywriters worldwide. In this scenario, whoever delivers the transcreation performs a task that used to be a prerogative of an advertising agency copywriter. This aspect is crucial to understanding not only one of the key skills that transcreation requires (further described in this section), but also the role of the transcreation professional as "intervenient" and "risk-taker", to put it in Katan's (2016) and Pym's (2015) words.

I have called transcreation as "a hybrid practice/service halfway between translation and copywriting" (Benetello 2018: 29), and fellow practitioner Nina Sattler-Hovdar has more concisely proposed the equation "Transcreation = Translation + Copywriting" (Sattler-Hovdar 2019: 22). In my opinion, transcreation is "writing advertising or marketing copy for a specific market, starting from copy written in a source language, as if the target text had originated in the target language and culture" (Benetello 2018: 40-41). I for one regard transcreation as a service, not as an approach or strategy which only takes place when a literal translation is not possible.

On a case-by-case basis, the transcreation professional establishes whether a close rendition of the source text will have the desired impact on the target audience, or whether the text should be manipulated to some extent to fit the target market and culture. In some cases, rather than transposing a source text into a target language, they end up writing the copy from scratch based on a brief written in a foreign language, and thus create a new original (Benetello 2017). Therefore, in my opinion, a transcreation professional must possess copywriting skills, which are essential both to assess whether a close rendition of the copy will prove effective in the target language and to succeed in recreating the copy based on the brief, if deemed necessary. When a 1:1 transposition will do, there is no need to subvert the original copy, as long as a faithful approach is the result of a professional evaluation, not of a lack of writing skills. As a matter of fact, I have argued that a transcreation professional needs to have translation skills, copywriting skills, cultural sensitivity and local market understanding, which in turn make such professional a $\frac{1}{4}$ a translator, $\frac{1}{4}$ a copywriter, $\frac{1}{4}$ a ‘cultural anthropologist’ of sorts and $\frac{1}{4}$ a marketer (Benetello 2018: 41).

Transcreation therefore appears to be a fully-fledged consulting service rather than a language service in the strict sense, also because a transcreation professional may be required to perform tasks that are not limited to the rendition of a written text from a language to another. The transcreation of TVCs is an interesting case in point, because it usually entails additional services which are nonetheless part and parcel of transcreation as I intend it. What follows is an account of my own experience working on one particular TV campaign but, as far as I can see, the workflow I describe is rather common when performing transcreation for global campaigns in general.

4.1 Script transcreation

In a typical transcreation workflow, regardless of the type of text to work on (e.g. a print ad, a television commercial, a brochure etc.), the first thing a transcreation professional would do is establish whether the copy to be adapted, the visual used or any element of the advertising strategy chosen by the brand are suitable for the target market and culture, flagging any issues that may cause reputational damage to the brand. This phase may be part of a whole transcreation process or be required as a standalone service, as is often the case with brand name evaluation. When it comes to television

commercials, provided that there are no cultural issues to be flagged at a preliminary stage (e.g. when the storyboard of a film which still has to be shot is shared with the transcreation professional), the first step is adapting the script from one language to another.

In 2014, Ryanair launched its first pan-European advertising campaign to showcase three improved services – free second bag, allocated seating and new website – and I adapted the scripts of three 20-second TVCs from English to Italian. I provided multiple options in Italian, an English back translation of my options, as well as comments to explain the directions I took. These three practices are one of the elements which in my opinion contribute to making transcreation a consulting service. As personal sensitivity and taste play a major role in any text that is supposed to persuade the reader and reflect the brand identity, transcreation professionals – just like copywriters writing copy from scratch – are usually asked to provide variety in their creative output by presenting several different options. Transcreation professionals usually back-translate their transcreation options into the source language as closely as possible, and – again, just like copywriters – explain the rationale behind their creative and stylistic choices. The transcreation is first approved by the global client (i.e. the headquarters of a global brand), who can only assess the adaptations through the back translation and the comments provided. Once the global client gives their go-ahead, the local client (i.e. the target-country branch of the global brand) evaluates the transcreation in the target language. As is often the case with copywriters, transcreation professionals are usually expected to engage in an interactional relationship with the client, e.g. being willing to rework the transcreation options provided, validate amendments proposed by the client, or even join conference calls before, during, or after transcreation work is performed to make sure both parties are on the same wavelength. Although all of this may not happen with each and every client and project, I would argue that, in general, transcreation professionals are perceived as co-creators of marketing and advertising copy, which accounts for the active role that is required of them.

The approved Italian versions of the Ryanair scripts can be read in the following tables. It should be noted that the English scripts I received for adaptation – which fall under the definition of confidential information and therefore cannot be disclosed – were slightly different from the ones below, which however match the English-language TVCs publicly available on YouTube (linked in footnotes, alongside with the final Italian TVCs). Therefore, the copy provided in the English column should not be regarded

as the 100% exact source text I worked with. Based on the brief, for each and every line I established whether a faithful rendition of the source copy would sound natural, pack a punch and reflect the brand’s tone of voice, or whether I should move away from the source text and come up with something different. For voiceover lines, I had to also take into account synch points and therefore make sure the length of my Italian lines would tie in well with the different scenes in the film.

English⁶	Italian⁷	English back translation
<p>[Voiceover] Here’s two-bags Julia about to board her Ryanair flight. Perhaps they’ve loosened the rules? If not, she’ll be cramming that trolley bag of hers...</p>	<p>[Voiceover] Mmm... Giulia sta per imbarcarsi su un volo Ryanair con due bagagli a mano. Hanno chiuso un occhio sul regolamento, oppure dovrà ficcare la borsa nel trolley?</p>	<p>[Voiceover] Mmm... Giulia is about to board a Ryanair flight with two pieces of hand luggage. Have they turned a blind eye to the rules, or will she have to shove the bag into the trolley?</p>
<p>[Super] Size restrictions apply.</p>	<p>[Super] Trasporto in cabina soggetto a limiti di dimensioni.</p>	<p>[Super] Transport in the cabin subject to size limits.</p>

⁶ <https://youtu.be/DeWdCR9Cpeg> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

⁷ <https://youtu.be/L4wZ9lxQe5E> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

CULTUS

[Super] 2 ND CARRY-ON BAG FREE	[Super] SECONDO BAGAGLIO A MANO GRATIS	[Super] SECOND CARRY-ON BAG FOR FREE
[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW FARES. MADE SIMPLE.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST SENZA PENSIERI.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST WITHOUT WORRIES.

Table 1. Free second bag

English⁸	Italian⁹	English back translation
[Voiceover] So, here are the Johnsons about to board their Ryanair flight. Now, it could be the airline's relaxed things? Or there's a lot of elbow bashing ahead?	[Voiceover] Ma guarda... i Rossi che si imbarcano su un volo Ryanair. La compagnia aerea ha fatto uno strappo al regolamento... oppure li attende l'assalto al posto?	[Voiceover] Hey look... the Rossis boarding a Ryanair flight. Has the airline stretched the rules... or does a seat assault await them?

⁸ <https://youtu.be/IxhVgenmz5w> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

⁹ https://youtu.be/dhBJ5_eiTCY (last accessed 1 September 2021)

[Super] NEW ALLOCATED SEATS	[Super] DA ORA TUTTI POSTI ASSEGNATI	[Super] STARTING NOW ALL ALLOCATED SEATS
[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW FARES. MADE SIMPLE.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST SENZA PENSIERI.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST WITHOUT WORRIES.

Table 2. Allocated seating

English ¹⁰	Italian ¹¹	English back translation
[Voiceover] Now then, here's Dave, trying to book the family's Ryanair flights. He seems remarkably calm.	[Voiceover] Ma guarda... Davide che prenota un volo Ryanair per tutta la famiglia. Hanno snellito le procedure... oppure si è fatto una camomilla?	[Voiceover] Hey look... David booking a Ryanair flight for the whole family. Did they streamline procedures... or did he have a chamomile tea?

¹⁰ <https://youtu.be/0vY0HwFAu0A> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

¹¹ https://youtu.be/mW4ZKL_bvqM (last accessed 1 September 2021)

He must be on some form of muscle relaxant...		
[Super] NEW NO HASSLE WEBSITE	[Super] NUOVO SITO PIÙ FACILE DA USARE	[Super] NEW SITE EASIER TO USE
[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW FARES. MADE SIMPLE.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST SENZA PENSIERI.	[Tagline] RYANAIR LOW COST WITHOUT WORRIES.

Table 3. New website

4.2. Voice casting

I have argued that transcreation professionals are expected to provide guidance as to the best route to take with the local adaptation of their advertisements. Like copywriters do when they create original copy, transcreation professionals usually deliver multiple transcreation options as well as comments to support their choices, so that clients can make informed choices. This is why I regard transcreation as a consulting service rather than a language service *strictu sensu*. But transcreation is a consulting service also because, in the case of TV or radio commercials, it may also include services like voice casting and voiceover (VO) directions – the latter of which will be discussed in 4.3 – where the transcreation professional is expected to give advice by taking a stand and expressing their opinions.

When a TV or radio commercial is adapted from one language to another, i.e. when the script is the result of a transcreation from a source language to a target language, the role of a transcreation professional in

voice casting and also VO directions is no different than the role played by a copywriter in the production of a TV or radio commercial they have originated. When I, as a copywriter, write a script for a TV or a radio commercial from scratch, I also have some say in selecting the right actors for the ad. By the same token, once I had my Italian transcreation of the three Ryanair TVC scripts signed off by the client, I helped with voice casting. The recording studio sent me the demo reels of a shortlist of voice talents they considered suitable for these TVCs based on the brief received from the client, and I was asked to confirm which talents I preferred. My number one choice was Marisa Della Pasqua, a member of ADAP (*Associazione Italiana Attori Doppiatori Pubblicitari*, the Italian association of advertising actors dubbers) whom I believed would best deliver my Italian script with the tone the client had in mind for the three Ryanair TVCs. Marisa was eventually hired to dub the ads into Italian, which in my opinion is a striking example of how the transcreation professional, i.e. the ‘translator + copywriter’, is not ‘just the translator’, and is ‘listened to’ rather than simply ‘used’.

4.3. Voiceover direction

In a typical transcreation workflow for a TV or radio commercial, the final step would be voiceover direction. When the transcreation professional serves as VO director, their role is similar to a copywriter supervising the shooting of a TVC/the recording of a radio commercial.

When I, as a copywriter, write a script for a TV or a radio commercial, I also direct the actors to make sure they bring the script to life, delivering the lines the way I intended them. I carry out a similar task when the Italian script for a TV or radio commercial is not created from scratch, but is a transcreation instead.

After voice talent Marisa Della Pasqua was chosen for the three Ryanair TVCs, I served as VO director and supervised the recording session in the studio. In this role I took care of three main aspects:

- VO accuracy: I made sure the VO was recorded following the final version of the scripts approved by the client
- Synch points: I made sure the Italian VO lines started and finished at the right time to tie in with the different scenes in the film. Every time I adapt a TVC script, I obviously consider the length of the

original English VO lines and also read my transcreation aloud to ensure it fits the synch points. However, a script which has already been approved by the client may turn out to need some tweaking at recording stage if the VO talent realises some lines are too long to be delivered properly and may compromise the synch points. This is the reason why it is commonplace to have the transcreation professional attend the VO recording session, so they can tweak the script on the spot, if necessary. Although this was not the case with these specific Ryanair scripts, which were recorded exactly as approved by the client, tweaking the scripts in the recording studio in my capacity as a VO director has happened to me on a few occasions, also with scripts adapted by other transcreation professionals or by the client themselves.

- **Delivery:** While in the studio, I briefed Marisa on the intonation she was meant to achieve and provided feedback on her delivery. Subtle irony is a defining element of these three TVCs and the actress's voice had to convey it effectively. Voice talents usually provide multiple renditions of the same line, so that the client can pick their favourite. Therefore, once the session was over and I received the edits, I also made sure they contained the client's approved take for each line.

Although this example shows that the mixture of translation and copywriting I call transcreation truly is a consulting service, it goes without saying that familiarity with TVCs as a particular form of advertising is crucial to providing the full package (script transcreation + voice casting + VO direction) described above. That said, I am not suggesting that transcreation professionals with VO direction skills are hired to provide the full package for each and every Italian-version TV ad being broadcasted in my country. I am simply pointing out that it is rather common for transcreation agencies – not to mention direct clients – to hire me and fellow hybrid professionals (translators + copywriters) with such skills to perform such tasks. While it may be a relatively small niche, it certainly is a high-stakes one if we consider the great production and broadcast costs involved, and therefore should not be dismissed.

5. Interpreter + Journalist: Media interpreting for the music industry

Media interpreting is an umbrella term covering many different settings, from TV and radio shows to press conferences and face-to-face interviews. Academic literature has mainly focused on television interpreting (Mack 2002, Straniero 2007 and Castillo 2015, among others), and it has been noted that “there seems to be an increasing tendency towards a hybridisation of roles, with leading journalists and showmen/women acting (also) as interpreters, and professional interpreters becoming (also) primary communications partners” (Mack 2002: 205).

In this paper I will be covering consecutive interpreting performed in settings like press conferences/round tables and interviews with international music artists. The hybridisation described by Mack (2002) is clear in my line work, first and foremost because I myself am a hybrid: an interpreter who is also a journalist. Having attended that same kind of media meetings ‘on the other side of the fence’, i.e. as a music contributor, not only am I on familiar terms with many of the journalists attending the conferences I translate at, but I fully understand their workflows and expectations. This helps me provide an interpreting service that better suits their needs, as well as create a friendlier, more informal and more interactive environment. In my opinion, stepping outside of my role as an interpreter and performing tasks that traditionally are not the interpreter’s responsibility is essential to provide added value in this industry.

When an international music artist is about to release a new album, their PR team may want to promote it by organising a press conference or a round table (which is a smaller, more informal kind of meeting) as well as interviews (radio interviews, TV interviews, one-to-one interviews with the press etc). In these settings there are three different stakeholders: journalists/hosts, the artist and their PR team. In theory, they all work towards a common goal – great, compelling interviews. In practice, there are a number of factors affecting the chances of that happening.

In my experience, most journalists come to the interview, press conference or round table well prepared. However, not all of them may be experts on that particular artist or music genre. Moreover, while journalists writing for periodicals usually go through their notes, listen to the recording (a number of journalists record the meeting) and/or do further research before writing their articles, journalists writing for daily newspapers or news agencies do not have the luxury of time. Sometimes they have to submit

their pieces shortly after the interview or press conference/round table is over.

For journalists to write a proper article, the artist must be exhaustive and provide newsworthy material, but this is not always the case. Firstly, some artists may not be very articulate and great at speaking in public. If they are not able to express their thoughts in a clear and thorough way, journalists may have a hard time writing long, interesting features about them. An Italian music contributor once revealed to me that if an artist provides no ‘juice’, journalists resort to taking statements from previous English-language interviews publicly available online and integrating them into the articles they are writing – as if the artist had said those things during that very interview or press conference in Italy. Secondly, promoting an album in Italy often boils down to giving interviews non-stop for a couple of days, which results in the artist being tired and bored of answering the same questions over and over again. This means that the journalists whose interviews are scheduled later in the day may be somewhat penalised, as the artist may answer their questions listlessly. Thirdly, less seasoned artists may be somewhat intimidated by the scores of journalists surrounding them and not feel at ease during a press conference or round table. Again, this may influence their ability to come across as interesting and personable.

Another typical setting for me is radio shows, which in some ways pose different challenges compared to a press conference or a press interview. In my experience with commercial, non-all-news stations, radio shows are very fast-paced and hosts expect interpreters to translate very quickly, without following the usual turn-taking mechanism peculiar to consecutive interpreting as we know it. Moreover, in these situations, interpreters are often an integral part of the show – they are treated as co-stars and expected to not just translate, but to play the part as well.

Being a journalist myself and having also worked as a promotion manager at a concert agency before going freelance, I know how journalists, radio hosts, artists and PR teams work and feel. My knowledge of their modus operandi ultimately informs the choices I make when I interpret. In fact, I strongly believe I am hired not only to translate, but also to perform the tasks outlined in the next sections.

5.1. Facilitate a fruitful exchange between journalists and the artist

If I, ‘wearing my journalist hat’, feel that the answers given by the artist are not exhaustive enough, I may ask them to clarify or further elaborate. In

one particular case, when a young artist gave what I thought was too succinct a reply to a legitimate question, I asked him whether the answer was by any chance connected with something he had said earlier, during another interview. He confirmed and asked me to elaborate on his answer myself. In addition, there are cases where, if I notice the question asked by a journalist contains a factual error, I may politely let them know. This way they can rephrase it and give me the opportunity to translate the correct question into English for the artist. Although this behaviour of mine certainly is not desirable in all settings (think diplomatic interpreting), I am under the impression that journalists appreciate it, because it not only saves them a faux pas with the artist – who is usually a global superstar that can leave anyone in awe – but also allows them to obtain a more relevant and immediate answer from the artist and therefore saves precious time.

5.2. Provide newsworthy material

Because they are celebrities and/or because they are simply tired after many interviews, music artists tend to assume that journalists know everything about them (which, as mentioned earlier, may not always be the case). For this reason, their answers may not be fully understood unless I explicitly mention links between their utterances and the implied information and meanings. Especially if the artist is not very articulate, I might even go so far as to add tiny bits of information which pertain to such statements.

It is rather obvious that this requires in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. While I do have a background as a music journalist, I also tend to spend a considerable amount of time preparing for an interpreting assignment, striving to be on a par with the best-informed journalists in attendance. The artist's PR team is fully aware of this and in fact tends to treat me like an 'authority on the matter', telling journalists they can count on me for any information about the star. Besides, as a group of journalists and I were once waiting for Scottish singer-songwriter Lewis Capaldi to show up for a round table that would be shorter than originally announced, his publicist asked me to share anything interesting that had come up during the interviews I had translated in the morning. I decided to disclose the meaning behind the album title, and my role in unveiling it was acknowledged in one of the interviews that came out, although I was referred to as 'translator' instead of 'interpreter': "(...) *Divinely Uninspired To a Hellish Extent* è difficile anche solo da pronunciare – e da comprendere, se

a sillabarlo è il forte accento dei dintorni di Glasgow di Capaldi. Ad addentrarsi è la traduttrice che lo accompagna (...)”¹².

5.3. Act as a gatekeeper

In some cases, journalists may be explicitly asked not to pose certain questions, and I as an interpreter may be instructed not to translate such questions, if they are posed nonetheless. Because I am also a journalist, however, I tend to honour this obligation within reason.

Before a round table with an artist promoting a solo project, his publicist told me not to translate any questions about the band he is a leader of. The rationale was clear to me: the artist was there to talk about his own album, not to reveal indiscretions about the one he would release with his group in the future. Although journalists were expressly asked to refrain from asking questions about the band right from the start, one of them mentioned one of the band’s albums, which was partly recorded in Italy, and asked him about the difference between creating a solo album and creating an album with his band. I felt that, phrased in those terms, it was a legitimate question, so I translated it and the artist happily replied. During an interview I later witnessed but was not requested to translate, another journalist reminisced about the last time the artist and his band had played at San Siro stadium. They repeatedly asked the artist about that very special night with his band, which caused the artist to angrily snap, and drive home the point that he was there to talk about his own album. This goes to show that not all ‘questions about the band’ are the same, and that acting as a gatekeeper as requested by clients must, in my humble opinion, be done in a mindful way.

5.4. Act as a ‘show-woman’ of sorts

In my experience, during a live radio show the interpreter is expected to come across as a real member of the team and not some outsider brought into the studio to translate. Before working on a show that featured three hosts and one artist, for example, I was literally instructed to ‘butt in’, because the pace would be so fast that hosts would not even let me speak. By speaking very quickly, I imitated the hosts’ delivery and therefore

¹² <https://www.rockol.it/news-706977/lewis-capaldi-fabrique-milano-concerti-intervista-someone-you-loved> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

blended in better with the show. Moreover, in my experience, the interpreter needs to be ready to crack jokes with hosts and guests, as well as be comfortable with becoming the butt of their jokes. A case in point is me being introduced as “the special needs teacher” (*l’insegnante di sostegno*) and being asked to not only translate the artist into Italian, but also to imitate the artist’s voice, just to make the show more fun¹³. The role shift from interpreter to multivariate mediator I experienced first-hand during that radio show seems to be a defining element of TV talkshow interpreting (Katan and Straniero Sergio 2001). As a matter of fact, a professional interpreter hired to translate *The Incredible Hulk* was also asked to mime the guest’s voice and gestures (*ibidem*).

To some extent, the need to ‘put on a great show’ also concerns press conferences and round tables. On the one hand, music artists understand that I am there to make them sound interesting and pleasant in my native language. This will ultimately impact their reputation and sales, therefore the more we appear to be a great team, the better. On the other hand, journalists love to see the person behind the persona, so they enjoy the moments when the artist interacts with me, because they can get a glimpse of his/her personality. British artist Noel Gallagher, for example, commented on my Italian rendition of his answers with a “Yes!” or “That’s it, correct!” for comic effect, as he obviously does not understand my language; this induced laughter among the journalists attending his press conference¹⁴. Similarly, Lewis Capaldi, who in spite of his origins does not understand my language either, praised my Italian rendition with a high-five that also amused the journalists¹⁵.

More recently, I was asked to be both the interpreter and the moderator at a round table with Essex band Nothing But Thieves, which was held online because of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was literally asked to perform a ‘one-woman show’ – I hosted a bilingual talkshow of sorts, with a dozen journalists as the audience. Three band members joined the Zoom meeting from three different locations, while Italian journalists had their webcams on but their microphones off. During this media conference:

- I introduced the band, first in Italian and then in English
- I broke the ice by asking the band a few preliminary questions (which the band’s PR team had shared with me before the meeting)

¹³ <https://youtu.be/p-uWvCvhMpo> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

¹⁴ <https://youtu.be/cXWIvVZ999E> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

¹⁵ <https://youtu.be/AXKCKsSckWqM> (last accessed 1 September 2021)

- first in Italian and then in English, subsequently translating the band's answers from English into Italian
- I asked the band the questions that journalists had submitted to the PR team before the meeting, again first in Italian and then in English, subsequently translating the band's answers from English into Italian.

I cannot emphasise enough that these dynamics are unlikely to apply to other fields. Far be it from me to advise fellow interpreters to behave in the way I have described when they are interpreting for, say, a presidential candidate at a press conference or a virologist on a radio show – not least because those kinds of speakers would never behave like music artists in the first place. With this contribution I only mean to point out that, based on my experience so far, what I described is not ‘unorthodox’ in the music industry, and stakeholders seem to appreciate it because it helps them all. On closer observation, however, my behaviour appears to be peculiar to talkshow interpreting in general, where the interpreter is expected to manage or mediate between partners and take on a multivariate role (Katan and Straniero Sergio 2001). In a face-to-face meeting like a TV show, the traditional, clear-cut role of the consecutive interpreter pledging absolute loyalty to the source text is challenged by the ethics of entertainment. In this context, success is only possible if the interpreter works within their comfort zone, is able to perform in public, comfortable with being in the spotlight and respected as a professional participant, and behaves consistently with the specific context of television and national culture (*ibidem*).

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown how a particular form of specialisation, which I call hybridisation, creates more value for clients than machines can.

Transcreation is a convention-defying practice because, in this field, breaking accepted norms provides added value, rather than something that should be sanctioned. While translation quality can be evaluated using traditional error categories such as omission, addition, wrong term etc., transcreation quality cannot be assessed based on objective criteria (Benetello 2018). CUBBITT may have made “significantly fewer errors in addition of meaning, omission of meaning, shift of meaning, other adequacy

errors, grammar and spelling” (Popel *et al.* 2020: 5) compared to human translation, but it takes a talented human to think outside the box and produce a target copy that truly resonates with the intended audience, as well as pick the right voice talent for a TVC and direct them in the recording studio.

In media interpreting for the music industry, “hybridisation forces me to become so visible that I become invisible as an interpreter and end up becoming something else – almost a co-host when interpreting for radio shows and a journalist/moderator when interpreting for press conferences and round tables”¹⁶. In my opinion, interpreters are not neutral, invisible conduits, but rather active, visible players essential to the success of an event (Downie 2016). Therefore, only by delivering a service that goes beyond interpreting as we know it can they serve stakeholders’ needs in a way no machine ever will.

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¹⁶ Benetello, C. 2017. “A hybrid within a hybrid: the interpreter-journalist for the music industry: a professional’s perspective”, in *ICIQ: Third International Conference on Interpreting Quality, Granada 5-7 October 2017. Book of Abstracts*, p. 33-34 http://qinv.ugr.es/iciq3_boa.pdf (last accessed 1 September 2021)

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Author as the Other Translator: From cooperation to collaboration through competition and compromise

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Abstract

This contribution proposes a theoretical model of translation as collaboration for analysing and guiding a translator's decision-making. Collaboration is achieved via translator-author mutual identification as the final aim of translating, with a shared and further-developed version produced. From cooperation to collaboration, competition and compromise are identified as two developmental milestones, implying two counterbalancing dynamics that propel the evolution of translatorship and authorship and the progress of mutual identification. Through competition, a translator's voice is heard and then through compromise, the voice is listened to. Mutual identification as the final aim of translating constructs a translator's professional identity, and also makes an author the "other translator" the translator collaborates with, highlighting their shared credit and status. It is therefore argued that the added value of translating fundamentally lies in the enrichment of both translatorship and authorship. Two representative cases are analysed based on self-reflection to explore the interactive and dialectical process in a translator's decision-making towards translator-author collaboration, towards their mutual identification, as an ethical final aim of translating.

1. A Translating Model of Collaboration as Mutual Identification

In this digital age featuring a proliferation of machine translation and amateur translation, we are faced with increasing doubts about the future of professional human translators. A burning question to answer against this backdrop is about the *added* value of (professional human) translators. What

makes professional human translators valuable in this era of existential crisis? This leads us back to a core question concerning ethics in translating: what is it that makes translatorial selves professional (true, ideal or ethical) subjects who are more than mechanical machines and can be clearly distinguished from barely qualified or even unqualified practitioners?

Socially, translating as a decision-making process involves translators' interaction with other stakeholders, such as authors, readers, clients, etc. Of these significant participants, the source text (ST) author is undoubtedly the most significant other with whom a translator encounters and interacts. As commented by Pym (2012: 4), "[...] regardless of form, translation is exchanged for something one way or another". Through translating, the translator relates herself to other stakeholders, and these stakeholders to each other; or she relates her 'self' to the others, and the others to each other. Arguably, *translating is trans-relating*—a translator is an agent forming and formed in a matrix or community of exchange. It is through exchanging her produced version(s) with the stakeholders involved as "significant symbols" (Mead 1934: 223) that the translator's professional identity or self is socially and interactively constructed (Elliot 2020: 29-30). The portraits of a translator's professional identity or translatorship, shaped by and translated into the stances, positions or ethics of a translator in translating (or symbolic exchange), are fundamental in shaping and analysing the translating process and result. In this light, an investigation into the construction of a translator's professional identity warrants an examination of the translating process, especially the interactive procedures of identification involved in the process.

Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage theory", from a psychoanalytic perspective, sheds light on the nature of identity and identification. The concept of "mirror stage" is derived from Lacan's reflection on the performance of a child at the infant stage in front of a mirror. The "mirror stage" is defined by Lacan (2001: 1-2) as "an identification", "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" in contrast with the "I [...] precipitated in a primordial form before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject". Such an identificational relationship between a self and an other can best describe that between a translator and her author. A translator, situated in a micro contingent community composed of herself and an author as the other, would be in a chaotic "primordial form" (a state of uncertainty despite the possible existence of knowledge or translation experience accumulated in

her previous translatorial or professional identity construction) until the translator perceives an idealised virtual image projected by the linguistic symbols (ST) of the author. Translating actually takes place with identification with the author.

However, Lacan also warns that such an identification process might involve occasions of deviance along the way, because “the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as Gestalt [...] in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him” (*ibid.* 18). The presence of an author’s linguistic symbols or signifiers on the other side of the mirror, as the other’s expectations distant and alien to the translatorial self or subject, initiates the project of translating and presumes the translator’s identification with the author. However, the alienation or the otherness of such symbols to the translatorial self—metaphorically the distance across the mirror—may also leave room for occasions where the translator challenges the (initial) mirrored self, propelled by the “irreducible” (*ibid.* 2), “turbulent” dispositions inside the “true” self of the translator. Such occasions may initiate a reverse process where the translator endeavours to facilitate a process where the authorship (author’s identity or status) is redefined or re-identified by the symbols produced by the translator on the other side of the translating mirror, a process of the authorship’s identification with the translator’s own identity or status (translatorship). After all, authors are judged by their new readers generally on the symbols created by their translators only, instead of their own original symbols (versions). One extreme example is the translation of poems: a foreign author’s identity as a poet is appreciated (normally) according to the poetics of the translations, or rather of the translator.

Throughout the process of translating, a translator is metaphorically an infant exposed to a mirror for the first time. She is first astounded by this break from her previous experience, but later manipulates the mirage while simultaneously and constantly referring to it (like an infant would wave its hand while looking at it in the mirror), before a mutual identification is achieved between the infant and its mirrored mirage. Just imagine a case where a translator is constantly comparing (in mind or in practice) a literal representation of the ST and possible versions in her decision-making to produce a finished translation. It follows that in the ideal situation, once this identification process is formally completed, the translatorial self and its other(s) are mutually mirrored. In this sense, mutual identification is a dynamic and dialectical process of restructuring of both the self and other.

This entails a process that begins with an imbalance of power hierarchy induced by the pre-presence of the author's symbols or ST as expectations for the translator, even though a translation commission or contract is formally an agreement of cooperation. Propelled by the dynamics and procedures of mutual identification, this process will end when a balanced situation is reached. This is the *final aim* (meaning both completion and destination) of translating. There is nevertheless no way to concretise or specify affirmatively the completion of this aim, because from a Lacanian perspective, the mirage in the mirror is forever a mirage however simultaneously it accords with the figure on the other side of the mirror, *vice versa*. For example, from a historical perspective, a work may be re-translated many times, with no specific or particular state of end. However, what is affirmative is that towards this indescribable or "unnameable" end, mutual identification remains an ethical process that promises the completion of constructing a professional translatorial self.

Similarly, according to Badiou (2001: 67), composing of such a subject as a translator entails "immanent and continuing breaks", "under the imperative of events". Badiou advocates an ethic of truths, highlighting an ethical position of being faithful to an "event", defined as "something other than the situation, [...] a hazardous, unpredictable supplement, which vanishes as soon as it appears" (*ibid.*). Consequently, "truth", for Badiou is "not adequacy to reality or illumination" (Venuti 2011: 239), but fidelity to an event. Truth is what "the fidelity constructs, bit by bit, [...] what the fidelity gathers together and produces" (Badiou 2001: 68). A subject is induced by a process of truth through *encountering* an event as a supplement (an addition of something new for improvement and completion) to the existing situation where a void is situated.

For example, by being faithful to an amorous encounter as an event or a break from the previous situation, one enters into the composition of the subject of love induced by this truth-process. Or, by being faithful to an encounter with an author, understood as a break from the previous situation, such as before a translation commission or before completion, a potential practitioner grows to be a translatorial self or subject. Of course, translating as an event may also contain multiple micro-occasions or encounters or micro-events in the process. Just consider the toing and froing, the constant "breaks", in a translator's decision-making process. It is through these truth-processes (processes of being faithful to these events) that a translatorial subject is continuously composed, *bit by bit*, unlike the programmed production of a text by a machine-translator.

Events fill the voids in the previous situations of a subject, thus supplementing and enriching it constantly and continuously. Owing to the addition by events, an individual continuously exceeds herself in the composition of a subject, and the excess is what precisely makes that subject ideal or *immortal* (*ibid.* 43). In the case of translating, such excess is accomplished by a translator through being faithful to the events that may happen to her or as a result of the efforts a translator makes to survive the breaks. This is also precisely the value invented or added to the translatorial self, and the mirrored others, such as its author. To facilitate becoming “immortal”, Badiou proposes one simple maxim as an ethical principle for a truth-process: “Keep going!” (*ibid.* 91), meaning “Do all that you can to persevere in that which exceeds your perseverance. Persevere in the interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you” (*ibid.* 47). To construct a translatorial self, an ideal professional subject, an “immortal” that highlights the glory of human potentialities made possible by a human translator means transcending the stereotyped “subhumanity” of translatorship, the “belle infidèle” and so on. And to do this, a translator has to persevere in or survive breaks in truth-processes.

The self-reflection in this study presented here helps identify the break-inducing events to which translators are faithful for constructing professional translatorial identities. Partly inspired by Steiner’s (1975) four hermeneutic moves, four categories of breaks can be identified: cooperation, competition, compromise, and collaboration.

Cooperation takes place when a translation is commissioned but has yet to start. The commission formally initiates a translator’s encounter with an author. A commission often comes with a contract as an agreement of cooperation, which assumes obligations on both sides. A translator is obliged to work and her commissioner to pay, which suggests a “cooperative” relationship. Equal as it sounds, the contract offered by the commissioner (normally as Party A, who sets goals) dictates explicitly or implicitly a hierarchical imbalance that is likely in practice to place the translator (normally as Party B, who finishes the goals set by Party A) in a relatively passive position. In this sense, technically, “cooperation” is never equal co-operation, and can thus be defined as “actions of someone who is being helpful by doing what is wanted for or asked for” (January 13, 2021, online Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Because of the contractual logic, and more importantly, because of the author’s pre-presence (see the discussion above), a translator is obliged by the event of cooperation to work *for* (instead of *with*) an author with “initial trust”, which underpins an inequality

and imbalance between authorship and translatorship. This is a break from a previous situation where the translator was still a potential practitioner. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is the following equation: $\frac{A}{T}$. “A” is for authorship, the author’s identity and status, while “T” stands for translatorship, the translator’s identity and status (the same below). Authorship is above translatorship at this stage, in contrast with the previous situation where A and T were about to be connected by the event of translating (metaphorically, “T (translating) A”), whose relationship was horizontal, symbolising their equal independence or autonomy before their encounter and follow-up interaction.

Competition takes place as a break from the previous stage when “aggression” is committed by the translator through her very act of translating, intervening, appropriating or incorporating the ST, propelled by a disruptive *yang*, “masculine”, force, that intrudes into the author’s established domain and overturns the author’s dictatorship in the previous situation. The “masculine”/“feminine” analogy is used advisedly. In part, the terms are in keeping with Steiner’s analogy between translation and sexuality, but more importantly the terms are literal translations of *yang* and *yin*, the two counter-balancing Chinese philosophical concepts. The gendered terms also fit with the discussion on change from a Daoist perspective, discussed later in this section. Through the (micro) event of competition, the translator unavoidably “offends” the author and thus potentially threatens her own credibility in the author’s eyes. At the same time, though, naturally she makes her voice heard. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is $\frac{T}{A}$, with translatorship over authorship, reversing the previous $\frac{A}{T}$.

Compromise serves as a break from Competition, through consolidating, restoring and compensating for the “authorship” damaged in the previous stage, propelled by an opposite feminine (*yin*) counter-disruptive force to repair and rebuild the author’s influence on the newly created target linguistic symbols. Through compromise, the translator makes necessary concessions turning hostile tension into friendly “Cooperation”, so that her work is implicitly or explicitly acknowledged depending on the author’s **active or inactive** response. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is $\frac{A}{T}$, with authorship above translatorship, a break from previous $\frac{T}{A}$.

Competition and Compromise as two micro events in the entire event of translating ($\langle \frac{T}{A} \rangle$ and $\langle \frac{A}{T} \rangle$) are contradictory and complementary. They help construct the translatorial subject (as well as the mirrored authorship) bit by bit, through the breaks they are capable of creating which help supplement and enrich the previous situations, as the translating process proceeds. Competition ($\langle \frac{T}{A} \rangle$) is potentially a break which will (re-)occur if Compromise ($\langle \frac{A}{T} \rangle$) results in a new void; so will Compromise potentially (re-)occur if the break induced by Competition results in another new void. For example, Competition and Compromise will keep recurring alternately with each toing and froing in the translator's mind and with her constant reforming of ideas. This interaction can also be seen within the historical process of re-translation of a book, each version leaving a new void to be (continuously) filled, a process of continuous self-negating. As long as the status of the translator and her author remains unequal, and as long as the two parties are not mutually identified, there will always be a void in the situation of translating, and thus opposing dynamics between the two events. In this sense, mutual identification may be the final aim, or at least a truce to avoid the continuous conflict between Competition and Compromise. Technically, though, this is never possible, just like the insurmountable distance between a self and its mirage across the Lacanian mirror, however synchronised or resembling they might be. Such impossibility instead promises infinite possibilities for the (truth-)processes and the actualised ends (or Badiouian truths) such processes may produce. In this sense, consistent with my previous discussion, it is argued that mutual identification is an ideal, the final aim; but while the end may well be identified affirmatively it cannot be specifically described or concretised. It is from this point of the discussion that another "end" event needs to be identified as a break from all the previous events.

Collaboration is the name of this final aim or end event. This is achieved via the (constant) interaction between Competition and Compromise, with reciprocity producing a finished translation as a result of (re-)establishing and balancing translatorship and authorship through mutual identification. This is a "subject-point" (Badiou 2001: 44), like the points where art works help construct artistic subjects. Also, as Steiner (1975: 300) argues, such "enactment of reciprocity" at this point is "the crux of the *métier* and morals of translation". In other words, this is the "final aim" of translating—what translating itself is meant to be in the end—in line with the implication of the mirroring (identifying) process discussed

above. Behind this translator-author mutual identification is a “shared product” provided by “people with complementary skills” working *with* each other (Dolmaya and Sánchez Ramos 2019: 131), with a collective ownership and responsibility (Buckley and Trocky 2019: 441). Consequently, Collaboration, entails shared status with a restructured and balanced, and importantly, *enriched* translatorship and/or authorship.

The added value of translating lies in its enriching the identity of the translator, and of the author as her “mirage in the mirror”, as “a dynamic and multi-layered cultural construct” (Sela-Sheffy 2011: 2). Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is like “A/T (translating) T/A”, with authorship and translatorship mutually identified (symbolised by the slash, meaning “or”, or symbolising an oblique mirror that separates while connecting the two). Compared with the initial situation (symbolised by “T (translating) A”) where the two were about to be connected by the event of translating, this stage of completion or perfection highlights the author’s and the translator’s renewed independence or autonomy as (re-)constructed subjects that are *additionally* interdependent. This addition or enrichment symbolises how value is added by translating, by the hard work of a human translator to facilitate the truth-processes, for which she should be valued, and also of course fairly remunerated.

A formula is presented below as a summary of the dialectical evolution of identity (re-)construction:

$$T \text{ (translating) } A \rightarrow \frac{A}{T} \rightarrow \frac{T}{A} \leftrightarrow \frac{A}{T} \rightarrow A/T \text{ (translating) } T/A$$

or in general:

$$\text{Translating} \rightarrow \text{Cooperation} \rightarrow \text{Competition} \leftrightarrow \text{Compromise} \rightarrow \text{Collaboration}$$

The flow of change (symbolised by the arrows in the formulas above) can find theoretical support in *Dao De Jing*, a Chinese philosophical classic closely related to the masterpiece *I-Ching* or *Book of Changes*. Laozi (2020: 97), author of *Dao De Jing* and founder of Daoism, summarises the law of change as follows:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物，萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

[The Dao is the underlying principle behind the creation of the many and varied things of the world. The order of the process giving rise to things begins with the Dao producing a kind of generative force. This force gives rise to the two forces of the *yin* and *yang*. The

interaction of *yin* and *yang* leads to a state of dynamic balance, from which things issue forth.] (Chapter 42)

Laozi emphasises the importance of following this law of nature—towards balance or harmony between the two opposing forces involved in a being or subject. If translatorship is seen as a subject to be continuously constructed or analysed, then the law of nature dictates that Competition (*yang*) and Compromise (*yin*) representing two counterbalancing forces in translating would bring the initial ethical imbalance termed as Cooperation resulting from the pre-presence of authorship to a state of dynamic balance. Collaboration, featuring such a balance, is the ultimate ethics or end of translating.

Based on the framework proposed above, I will now explain translator-author collaboration (at a micro level) through a self-reflective study of two representative cases involving two types of author: an active and engaging author, and an inactive or silent author.

2. Nature and ethics of self-reflective study

As a researcher-translator, I consider self-reflective study a valuable form of research, a special type of ethnographic translation/translator study and translation archive study. The core method of ethnography is participant observation, consisting of participation and observation (Yu 2019b: 167). In a self-reflective study, I am an ethnographer who has participated in and observes in retrospection some past translating experiences, writing down my “confession” (Yu 2020) to the questions raised to myself. Also, I am the translator who has privileged access to the translation archives under examination. In such a study, disclosure of a researcher's identity before participation although normally considered necessary (Yu 2019b), is impossible. However, self-reflective case study is still valid, for it is based on real-world professional experiences.¹

The two following commissioned translation projects are considered valuable experiences from which derives my epiphany about the

¹ Still, to ensure that this research is carried out following best ethical practice, I have gained formal consent from the relevant stakeholders (including my commissioner and the active author whose discursive feedback is used as supporting data) and formal ethical approval and publication recommendation from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the university with which I am affiliated.

significance of collaboration in translating. In one project, the active or engaging author was not only an animal protection activist, but also had proactively participated in my translating her autobiography. She offered feedback on my draft and even supplied me with alternative versions (or interpretations) for my consideration. Her active involvement in translating made it tempting to view her literally as “the other translator” I collaborated with to seek a mutually-recognised translation. This inspired me retrospectively to view this side of (collaborative) translating as translator-author mutual identification.

In the second project, the silent or inactive author was invisible throughout the process, as in most “normal” projects I had participated in before. Interestingly, I felt this second author, who had written about her own TV show, shared a translatorial identity with me. I found it tempting to view this book, composed of the programme’s interview transcripts and so on, as a discursive re-presentation or intersemiotic “translation” of the original audio-visual product. In a way, as the book’s author, she was like a translator retelling her previously-aired TV shows. As the translator of this book, I was like a translator retelling her retellings. This, too, inspired me retrospectively to view her as a collaborative translator, a partner, with whom mutual identification was tacitly achieved during this translation project.

In both cases, as a commissioned translator, I had a clear sense that authorship was closely connected to, yet prevailed over, translatorship. However, in finalising the translations, I began to develop a strong “love”, similar to what Spivak (1992/2012: 313) advocates as “an ethical end”, for the authors, and viewed the STs and my translations as one. The “initial trust” in the authors developed into a “mutual trust” between the authors and the translator. To me, these two experiences were extremely important, for I sensed something was urging me to deepen my reflection on the ethics of translating, and on the value of human translators in an age of “existential crisis” within the translating profession. Introspectively, out of a sense of strengthened dignity and enjoyment, I was more conscious of my existence or significance as a translator. I owed such an enriched, consolidated and developed translatorial identity to my collaborative (direct and indirect) encounters with the two authors. I should also add the pivotal role of my commissioner, who had helped make the encounters possible and facilitated the two projects. The entire picture of the decision-making process has been reduced in the following sections to the key moments, or the milestones of competition and compromise, that signposted the process. In both

encounters I will unveil how translatorial or professional identities were constructed through mutual identification, and how a translator's voices were accordingly not only heard but also listened to.

3. Encountering the active author

The active or “engaging” author, Zhang, wrote her autobiography² on her experience as an animal protection activist and on her knowledge of animal protection in China. In encountering Zhang, I first provided a translation draft (T^Td); then received a version with the author's feedback (T^Ta) via my commissioner. In response to the T^Ta, I sent back a revised version (T^Tr); and finally received the approved final version (T^Tf) from my commissioner.

The following examples highlight the challenges of and the solutions to the stages of competition and compromise, to facilitate the truth-processes. Efforts were made to first appropriate the ST as a version prior to, yet parallel with, the TT. This was to encourage the author to acknowledge and identify with the translator, to let the translator's voice heard; and then to re-build the ST/TT towards a shared yet further-developed version by encouraging the translator to acknowledge and identify with the author, to make the translator's voice listened to, before a balance or mutual identification was achieved.

Example 1

ST_z: ...人貓共同“看到了一絲希望之光，看到了更遠、更美好的未來之光”（湯瑪斯·卡萊爾，蘇格蘭哲學家與作家）。

[Literal Translation: ...man and cat together “see a gleam of hope and light of a further and better future” (as said by Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher and writer)]

In my translating, I found myself challenged by the ambiguity of the quotation source, for I discovered that although this quotation in Chinese was available on a number of Chinese websites, no “original” English quotation could be found. So, I ventured to make an “aggression” by changing the direct quotation in the source text into an indirect quotation

² Zhang, Dan. 2020. *Animal Protection: A Lifelong Dream*. Translated by Wenhao Yao. Beijing: New World Press.

by adding the words “as adapted from”, highlighting my position and my voice. Seeking to help make my voice listened to, I also compromised by translating the original Chinese literally, as a way of retaining (part of) the authenticity pre-established by the author in the ST. I also added an annotation to my draft explaining the reason for my decision-making:

TTd/TTf: ...man and cat together “see a gleam of hope and light of a further and better future” (as adapted from Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher and writer).

Annotation provided together with TTd: 暫時無法查證到這句話的英文出處

[Literal translation: I'm unable to trace the English source of this quotation for the moment.]

Comment: As it turned out, this voice was not only listened to by the author (no feedback or TTA in this case) and by my commissioner as the editor (accepted as the final version). Through collaboration, a balance was reached.

Example 2

ST: 我給他起了個中文名——史德維。我把三個字德意思逐一解釋給他聽，他非常喜歡。

[Literal Translation: I gave him a Chinese name - Shi Dewei. I explained the meaning of the three characters one by one to him. He liked it very much.]

Comment: As the literal translation following the ST shows, this version is difficult for a non-Chinese reader. Challenged by this, I ventured to reorganise the sentence, mainly by adding a part explaining the meaning of the three characters in the Chinese name. Compromise was made by transliterating the Chinese name, so that my efforts in altering the ST version would more likely to be accepted:

TTd/TTf: I gave him a Chinese name—Shi Dewei. Hearing my explanation of the meaning of each character of his new Chinese name (“Shi” meaning “history”, “De” meaning “morality”, and “Wei” meaning “to protect and sustain”), he was very happy.

Comment: This voice was listened to, and my creative version was accepted as the final one, which implies that mutual identification was achieved.

Example 3

ST_z: 張家喵星人俱樂部的成員目前已經多達二位數。

[Literal translation: The population of Zhang's Cat Club Members is now a "double-digit" number.]

Comment: In the first draft I attempted to appropriate and concretise the expression "double-digit" while preserving its originally intended meaning:

T_{Td}: The cat club in my family now has over 10 members.

Comment: The author challenged me, explaining clearly the meaning in the context and her true intention, and by urging me to remain faithful to her "double-digit" term:

TT_a (with the author's annotation): 不是十幾隻而是幾十隻，我不想把真實數字寫出來嚇著讀者，故請譯為“double-digit”。

[Literal Translation: Not over ten, but tens of them. I don't want the number to intimidate the readers. Therefore, please translate it into "double-digit"]

Comment: This led to another round of competition and compromise. As a result, I accepted her proposal to revise the draft but rejected her proposed revision. Her proposal to retain the literal meaning or form of the original ST was also a symbol of her attempt to restore her authorship that had been challenged. On the one hand, the expression chosen for the revised version and accepted for the final version was a sign of competing with the author's proposed version (the awkward sounding "double-digit" in this context). On the other, it symbolised my goodwill to facilitate a compromise. "Dozens of" was meant to refer to an ambiguous quantity, clearly over 20, but less than 100. This version, by preserving the vagueness of the original "double-digit", rendered her true intention: to keep a low profile about her adopting so many stray cats:

TTr/TTf: The cat club in my family now has dozens of members.

Comment: The collaborative efforts thus made the new (translated) version a further-developed version, “truer” to the author’s intended meaning than the literal translation of the original ST (or the original “version”) and the first draft. The translator’s voice was listened to and additional value was created in this process.

Example 4

STz: 每只貓都是一隻“特別的貓”。——桃莉絲·萊辛

[Literal translation: Every cat is a “special cat”. —Dorris Lessing]

Comment: As in Example 1, I provided a verified version for the quotation in my first draft, despite its partial deviance from the form of the source version:

TTd: Particularly cats. —Dorris Lessing

Comment: The author replied with another attempt to restore her original version by questioning the authenticity of my first version. This could also be seen as her attempt to compensate me with an explanation for her challenging move and offering a literal translation of her Chinese text (version):

TTa (with the author’s annotation): 這是原文嗎？若不是，則大約應譯為：Every cat is a “special cat”.

[Literal Translation: Is this the original? If not, I guess the translation should be “Every cat is a ‘special cat’”.]

Comment: After a further round of reflection, I competed with the author rejecting her proposed original version and argued to retain the version in my first draft. A compromise was reached when I formally explained my reasoning underlining my cautious attitude towards the project. I also reassured her with further translation-related knowledge as proof of my professionalism:

TTr/TTf: Particularly cats. —Dorris Lessing

Annotation (in TTr) then provided in response to TTa: 我特地把這個人的書搜過了（見原文的下批註，只有這一處符合。中文的翻譯的回譯無法與原文對等，作者所有的引言我都找過了出處。但是這些中文譯文本就是會有紋飾，下同，見詳細批註。

[Literal Translation: I have specially checked through her book (please see the annotation below about this book). Only this line shares the meaning with the quotation in Chinese. The back translation of the Chinese version cannot be equal to the original. I have tried to trace the sources of all the quotations in this book. The Chinese versions of the original quotations are normally modified in translating. This is also true for the rest of the translated quotations, all with annotations provided for your reference.]

Comment: As in the last example, two major rounds of interaction took place, before a balance or mutual identification was achieved.

4. Encountering the inactive author

The inactive or “silent” author, Dong, had based her book³ on a popular TV programme she hosted. It is a collection of stories read by the programme guests together with the host/author’s introductions to the guests, their reading materials and her interviews with the guests. For the inactive author, as in almost all conventional commissioned translation scenarios, I provided a translation draft (TTd) and later received an approved final version (TTf) from the commissioner.

Highlighted in the examples below are the challenges and the solutions concerning, as with Zhang, the stages of competition and compromise before a balance or mutual identification was achieved. As no author’s feedback was involved in this project, I will focus on the interaction that took place in my own mental world, on my own “confession”.

However, it should be noted that although only two examples have been selected here, scenarios such as these generally end with mutual identification, and a collaborative result. The reason is simple. Arguably, every translating manoeuvre is naturally an intruding move by which the

³ Source text from: Dong, Qing. 2017. *Readers 1*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.

translator or TT competes with the author or ST through the new version in a different language. Naturally, a compromise is inevitable as (at least part of) the meaning signified by the source signifiers will normally be preserved in the translated version, as a counter-balancing dynamic to make the translated identify with the original.

Example 5

ST_b: 我今天要朗讀一個很特別的章節，是作家劉瑜的《願你慢慢長大》的一個片段。

[Literal Translation: I want to read a very special chapter, a part from *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu.]

Comment: As in my encounter with the active author, in encountering the inactive author, I was challenged by situations where I had to evaluate the validity of the source version. What was special about the extract above was that it was originally what an interviewee had said in the programme, a “re-narration” of the original speech, which made it rather an inaccurate version to refer to than a truth to follow. I decided to compete with the source version by only translating what was in line with the original programme, instead of the ST signifiers. Yet I confess: after this intrusive move, I felt insecure and incomplete, as if what I had dismissed was a part of myself. It concerned me that such a slight alteration might not be enough to make my voice listened to (by the imagined author or my commissioner—or rather by a part of myself that was obliging me to identify with the author). As a result, I offered an annotation as part of my translation to compensate for the unavailable part of authorship, assuming or imagining that a tacit agreement on the reconstructed version had been reached, a version that had been mutually recognised:

TTd/TTf: I want to read *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu.

Annotation provided together with TTd: 《願你慢慢長大》這本書是2018年出的。2017年錄節目的時候只有2014年出版的《成長請帶上這封信》。另外：這句內容和原視頻不符合（“是劉瑜的《願你慢慢長大》”）。

[Literal Translation: The book entitled *Take Your Time to Grow Up* was published in 2018. When the program was made in 2017, what was available was only the book entitled *Please Take the Letter as You Grow Up* (2014) by Liu Yu, of which *Take Your Time to Grow Up* was the title

of a chapter. Besides, in the subtitles of the original program video, this line should be “(I will read today) *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu”]

Comment: The ST read rather ambiguously, as if *Take Your Time to Grow up* was a book from which a chapter had been selected for reading. In reality, this is not the case, nor was the original TV programme subtitle cited correctly. My decision to challenge the ST and provide an annotation to explain this alteration was accepted in the final version. My voice was listened to.

Example 6

ST_b: “要不能到了你們老史家來?”奶奶又歎氣。“我不姓屎!我姓方!”我喊起來。“方”是奶奶的姓。

[Literal Translation: “Otherwise, how could I marry into the Shi family of yours?” “No! I’m not a Shi! My surname is Fang!” I shouted. Fang was my grandma’s surname.]

Comment: This is a conversation between a grandma and her grandson, an excerpt from a long story read firstly by a guest in the programme and then included in the book. In the Chinese ST, the interaction between “史” (a surname pronounced as “shi”) and “屎” (a homophone of “史”, but meaning “shit”) contributed not only to the humorous effect but also to the conversation. I confess that I thought the source version (the literal translation of the Chinese source text in English) was incompetent and ineffective in maintaining the humorous effect or conversational coherence. I then decided to rewrite this part, instead of choosing to add notes in brackets to explain the meaning of the second “Shi”:

TT_d/TT_f: “Otherwise, how could I marry into the Shi family of yours?” “No, it sounds like ‘shit.’ My family name is Fang!” I shouted. Fang was my grandma’s family name.

Comment: As this altered version also preserved the exact implication of the ST, it highlighted both competition and compromise. A balance (also a win-win result) was immediately achieved; a further-developed version had been produced, and my voice had indeed been listened to through this creative effort.

5. Concluding remarks

To conclude, the proposed model and the self-reflective study of the two cases affirm the (added) value of human translators. It is argued that the ethics of translating entail translator-author collaboration as the final aim, with mutual identification achieved. Translating thus not only makes a translator a translator, but also makes the author become “the other translator”, a translator who collaborates to provide a shared version that evolves from the author’s original text version. This ethics obliges the human translator to play a proactive role in the process of decision-making, instead of mechanically copying that original text. The very value that a human translator adds in translating lies in the constantly restructured power hierarchy towards a balanced end. The final reestablished version and the (re-)established and enriched identities of both the translator and author are made possible by virtue of the translator’s devotion and creativity.

The model has implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this model helps categorise the dynamic stages in the intricate decision-making process, identifying an ethical end as a benchmark for generating more critical analysis, and two counter-balancing dynamics for developing more in-depth explanation. From an identificational perspective, it also helps differentiate a machine translator, which identifies statically with the author, from a human translator, who is capable of working hard towards mutual identification with the author. Besides, barely qualified or unqualified human translators are those who fail to be (fully) faithful to the (micro-)events defined by the model. They will embrace little or no addition induced by these events and thus add little or no value in practice. As a result of such an interaction or exchange, they will be unlikely to be constructed as “immortals”.

Practically, the model urges professional translators to view their authors as the other translator with whom they collaborate for a shared and further-developed version, to actively seek occasions to facilitate the progress or truth-processes towards a collaborative end. For example, a translator may ask the author to clarify ambiguous details and ask for feedback, where possible; or to take the initiative to make the author an active partner in translating. If the author is physically absent or just inactive throughout the translating process, a translator can still have an active interaction with the author’s textual presence (ST signifiers), towards a collaborative end.

Besides its endorsement for a translator's creativity in translating, this model informs the stakeholders involved in decision-making including the translator herself that there is no reason to consider a translation innately inferior to an original. An original text is but a version to be further developed—to be continuously unveiled by the very event of (re-)translating. In light of the model, evaluation or judgement of a translator's performance should be based on an in-depth investigation into the interactive process (whether at a micro or macro level) rather than simply into a finished product. What is ethical is a translator's commitment to persevering in "that which exceeds your perseverance". Simply put, evidence of wanting to be good, as Chesterman (2001) advocates, may matter more than mere linguistic resemblance. As suggested by Badiou (2001: 91) this requires discernment (of void in the situation), courage (to embrace the breaks) and moderation (of opposing extremes).

More self-reflective studies in the future may help consolidate the generality of the proposed model. An author is arguably the closest collaborator a translator can have in translating or decision-making, to construct a translatorial identity. For future research, interaction with other significant agents (so long as they also exert significant impact on translators' decision-making in specific cases), such as readers should be pursued. In other scenarios, such as self-translation where authors are literally the translators, or fansubbing where consumers or readers are simultaneously the producers, these self-translators or fansubbers themselves can also be analysed from a similar (identificational) perspective, so as to better understand translating as a social event and human translators as social beings.

Finally, the four-stage model can also be applied to investigate a broader picture—beyond individual experiences, inside a translation institution or industry. For example, the interaction between professional and non-professional subtitlers could be investigated thus—identifying and examining the evidence of the existing truth-process events and the counterbalancing dynamics involved in the subtitling industry, so as to critically analyse the existing collaboration or even predict forthcoming collaboration in this digital age.

Acknowledgements

I thank Prof. Katan for his very insightful and enlightening feedback and advice, the anonymous referees for their constructive suggestions for

improving this study, my friend and mentor Editor Ms. Shasha Li for her strong support for my professional and academic career, and Ms. Dan Zhang for her generous support for this research project.

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‘Dear Kimon’: Gatekeeping and politics in a translator’s correspondence.

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Kimon Friar’s (1911-1993) voluminous translation work of Modern Greek literature in English has been lauded by fellow translators (Keeley 2000), poets and reviewers alike. The annual Kimon Friar lectures, delivering talks on Greek literature and translation, have become a testament to his extensive contribution, adding credence to his life-long occupation as literary translator (1949-1993). And yet, his multifaceted, and pivotal, role in selecting, translating, editing, circulating, and championing the authors and works he translated is far more complex and deems further exploration. Friar was not only a prolific translator but also an outspoken proponent of the rights of literary translators, particularly regarding royalties and the translator’s moral right for attribution. At the same time, Friar, in conjunction with some of the Greek poets he translated, performed a gatekeeping, regulatory role regarding the authors and works selected for English translation. Finally, Friar was vocal in his correspondence with editors and publishers regarding other potential translators of Modern Greek into English, which he did not deem as good practitioners. This case study draws data from Friar’s correspondence, located at Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, which offers key insights into the motives and rationale behind some of Friar’s attitudes and decisions. As a result, the motives behind the selection, production, circulation, and promotion of translated Modern Greek poetry are exposed. The study provides evidence of the potential difference a single translator may make, particularly when translating a literature of lesser diffusion into a more dominant language. The paper also proposes an expanded definition of the translator/gatekeeper.

Keywords: translator/gatekeeper; Modern Greek; archival research; correspondence; gatekeeping.

1. Introduction

Historically, translators have appropriated and introduced new ideas encountered in source texts, have been responsible for shaping or invigorating entire national literatures, and have among other things, acted

as political activists (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). Translators' often-profound impact on their social, cultural, economic, and political environments are gradually gaining recognition through the increasing amount of scholarship focused on examining their multiple roles and the wide-ranging implications of their work (see, for instance, Voinova and Shlesinger 2013; Sela-Sheffy 2016).

Yet despite the already existing studies exploring the repercussions of translatorial work in terms of its variety, scope and impact, there is much uncharted territory. Crucially, the existing often-intriguing case studies of individual translators can serve as evidence towards the construction of broader, more generalizable theorisations regarding the role and professional identity of past and current translators. The current paper takes a step in that direction by exploring the correspondence of a translator, Kimon Friar, and discussing it within the broader theoretical framework of the terms 'gatekeeping' and 'gatekeeper' which within Translation Studies (TS) have been only loosely defined, as will be discussed in Section 4. Friar's actions as translator and the emerging professional identity gleaned, when viewed through the concept of 'gatekeeping', allow for broader theorisations of his role, which may in turn be applied to other translators.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly introduces Friar. Sections 3 and 4 contain the literature reviews regarding the origin of the terms 'gatekeepers' and 'gatekeeping', along with a brief review of their application within TS. Section 5 presents the method used and in Sections 6 and 7 the archival material used is first presented and then discussed. In Section 8 some thoughts conclude the paper.

2. Who was Kimon Friar?

Kimon Friar, given name Kalogeropoulos¹, was a writer, scholar, literary critic, playwright and director, teacher and literary magazine editor. Above all else, though, Friar was a prolific, and self-confessed, translator of Modern Greek poetry into English who also acted as cultural agent and loyal proponent of the literary merit of Modern Greek literature.

Friar was born to Greek parents in current-day Turkey in 1911 but the family migrated to Chicago in 1915, thus sowing the seed for Friar's

¹ Friar's chosen surname is a translation of his family name: Kalogeropoulos means 'child of a monk'.

diasporic and diglossic identity. Friar graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison with a BA in English Literature and Drama in 1934, also receiving an MA in English Literature in 1940. He visited Greece for the first time in 1946 and developed a profound and often life-long connection with the Greek poets he met in Athens during that first visit. His correspondence attests to meetings with several eminent poets, such as those with the later Nobel Laureates George Seferis and Odysseas Elytis. These encounters were clearly paramount for Friar. He finally moved to Greece in 1948 where he lived, with brief interludes, for the rest of his life. As a member of a wide and diverse diasporic community of writers, artists and publishing agents, Friar used his connections to gain funding and support for his translations and to give talks on Modern Greek poetry elsewhere, such as in New York and Chicago, particularly with the help of the Greek Orthodox Church. In recognition of his work, in 1978 Friar received the Greek World Award.

Friar in his lifetime was regarded both by others (and by himself) as translator first and foremost, as is evidenced by the biographical notes included in his anthologies, in the obituaries composed after his death and also in his private, unpublished correspondence (Saxon 1993; Kazantzakis 1985). At the same time, Friar is the example par excellence of a translator who acts in many different capacities. He was also editor, and public disseminator of Modern Greek poetry as well as ambassador and ‘gatekeeper’, as will be shown in the next sections.

3. Gatekeepers and Gatekeeping

The concept of gatekeeper was coined within Social Psychology by Lewin (1951). His theory of channels, gates and gatekeepers describes pivotal points in societal changes and the actors who engaged in them. His empirical research on consumers, which focused on their decision-making processes, showed how decision-making depended on social influences from specific agents he termed gatekeepers. The theory was visualised with the metaphor of entering a channel through a ‘gate’, an ‘in’ or ‘out’ decision point (Shoemaker 1991).

In this paper, I will use the definition developed in Journalism Studies, which views gatekeepers as “the filters for either inclusion or exclusion of information from a given system” (Zelizer and Allan 2010, 50). This view sees gatekeepers as controlling the flow of information while often being influenced by internalised notions of professionalism (ibid 2010: 51).

Translators' notions of professionalism are determined by their specialized habitus (Bourdieu 1990), developed before (and often as a prerequisite for) their entry into the field and is constantly reshaped during their careers. This is a significant point for the definition and one I will be addressing in relation to the archival material discussed in the paper.

Zelizer and Allan (2010: 50-51) also note the standard critique against studies on gatekeepers and gatekeeping, as they tend to "favour individual selection over organisational or institutional constraints", and often isolate one stage of a complex process while exaggerating its significance (2010: 51). Barzilai-Nahon (2008) addresses that critique by introducing 'network gatekeeping' as a useful framework, which offers a nuanced approach that acknowledges the relationships between various gatekeepers and the hierarchies of institutional gatekeeping mechanisms.

4. Gatekeepers and Gatekeeping in TS

There is limited literature on gatekeeping and translation, despite the term being used loosely in several studies. A first point to note is that the gatekeeping role of translators is often paired with the far more frequent description of translators as cultural ambassadors (Jones 2009), cultural brokers (Sela-Sheffy 2016), or guardians of domestic culture/language (Sela-Sheffy 2008; Solum 2017). A translator/gatekeeper (T/G) is portrayed as the other side of the Janus-faced practitioner: the ambassadorial role complementing the gatekeeping role of the translator. This intrinsic complementarity, a fascinating aspect of the translatorial practice, will be discussed further in relation to the Friar material presented in this paper.

The most comprehensive study involving the terms was conducted by Vuorinen (1997) in the context of news translators serving as filters and facilitators in the knowledge transfer process of news reporting. Vuorinen (1997: 169) states that "translation which takes place in an institutional setting cannot be examined as isolated from the whole individual, institutional, social and cultural framework surrounding it". Jones (2009), discussing the networked nature of the translator's ambassadorial role, also recognizes that poetry translating takes place over a 'distributed' space, either physical or digital, created by the network of agents involved in a translation project. Jones also recognizes that the poetry translator's role is often less significant than the role of the poets themselves or of that of

anthology/journal editors, as shall be seen in the material discussed in Section 7.

What does the concept of the T/G involve? For Jones (2001; 2009), the most basic function of the T/G is that “by translating or refusing to translate, she has the power to decide which writers and which ideas can be heard in the target culture” (Jones 2001, 263). This approach, however idealized it may seem, certainly holds true for literatures of lesser diffusion, such as Modern Greek, or experimental/marginal writers who may not easily appeal to a wide audience whether in their own language or in any prospective target language. Jones’ view is also echoed by Chitnis *et. al* (2020). They discuss the “ambassadorial-gatekeeping logic” or inclusion and exclusion of texts and writers, particularly regarding issues of the translator’s supposed impartiality towards the socio-political conditions of the source culture, which is an issue also encountered in Friar’s selection of poems/poets.

Sela-Sheffy (2016) describes a “restricted circle of elite literary translators”, who determine the hierarchies and professionalisation of the entire field through their sense of occupational identity and actions. This is echoed in Tekgül (2017), who notes the contradictory powers of competition and cooperation among literary translators within the field of Turkish literary translation. Sela-Sheffy and Tekgül do not label these translators as gatekeepers. In my view, however, the definition of a T/G should include this function of peer monitoring, since, as Simeoni (1998: 26) observes “the real proof of belonging to the field is found when the relevant decisions made by the stakeholders are taken with an eye on what their peers are doing, either to go along with them, or to oppose them”.

This final point demonstrates how questions of gatekeeping are linked to the issue of professionalism in translation. For Shoemaker (1991: 74), one of the characteristics that affects gatekeeping is the individual gatekeeper’s conceptions of their role. The interlinked relationship between gatekeeping and professionalism in translation is further discussed in Section 7.

The discussion of Friar’s gatekeeping role and its implications are explored via three main attributes of gatekeeping, gleaned from the studies discussed above.

These attributes are:

- selecting poets/poems to be translated, thus exercising some control over what and who gets translated,

- peer monitoring of the translation field, thus exercising some control over who may translate,
- guarding the translator's moral right to attribution, the right to approve or refuse permissions and to receive recompense when their works are used, thus establishing agency in their professional translatorial identity.

5. Method and material

The collected papers of Kimon Friar were viewed at the Rare Books and Special Collections department at Princeton University Library². The document created by the curator of the Kimon Friar papers (Finding Aid) details the collection's contents, which include 158 boxes, a substantial amount of material particularly considering the sparsity of translator-created material in archives around the world. The main type of archival material examined was correspondence, most of which was in English with Greek words/phrases appearing throughout. Intriguingly, the letters in the archive are mainly the carbon copies of the typewritten letters sent to his correspondents. This detail demonstrates that Friar kept a detailed record of his own letters as well as of his correspondents' responses which gives us an insight into Friar's professional attitude.

Reading archival material, following Connors (2016: 55), is to "browse with directed intention" and it entails keeping in mind the key concepts the researcher is interested in. In my case these key concepts were the translation process, the poet-translator relationships, translator networks, translator agency, and the translator's professional identity. Connors (2016: 57) warns that since the archival records we find are all written by humans, "they are necessarily filled with self-justification, optimistic delusion, pessimistic distortion, partisan argument". This facet of archival research added an element of surprise and complicity in the reading of the material and greatly enhanced my understanding of the realities of literary translation.

This largely unpublished material offers the opportunity to glean important, and otherwise unknown, information regarding the mechanics of the translatorial practice. Significant questions, such as how Friar selected who to translate and why, reveal how political affiliations, ideological

² I am grateful to have been awarded a library travel grant from the Friends of Princeton Library in order to conduct this trip in spring 2017.

beliefs, and aesthetic hierarchies, can and often do shape the production of translated literature. The role of the editors of poetry anthologies and the source culture poets is revealed, while Friar's gatekeeping role is exposed, defined and its significance discussed.

6. Presentation of material³

This section presents excerpts from Friar's correspondence with Editors-in-Chief, publishers and administrative staff in publishing houses. Excerpts from letters Friar wrote have been included, as it is his opinions, processes and gatekeeping role that are the focus of this paper.

1. Selecting poets/poems to be translated.

Regarding the poems/poets to be included in anthologies and selected works, Friar's selection process, and his motives, are clear in his statements (I have underlined the parts that Friar himself emphasised).

I have asked many poets to send me a list of about 35 living poets they would like to see represented in this anthology. [...] because I wish to be fair and impartial. Those who have complied have given me invaluable assistance. Indeed, it is surprising to see how uniform their opinions are.

K. Friar to C. Athanasoules, July 25th, 1960

The correspondence demonstrates that Friar was constantly battling against his publishers, but some issues were outside his control. Note the language used, which shows Friar's frustration, as well as the warning regarding bad publicity.

My own reputation as a scholar and critic is at stake here: I could not possibly defend the omission of four or five who rank among the ten best poets of Greece. On what basis were omissions made? Altogether, a very deplorable and unethical act. [...] And you can imagine what the Greek press will make of all this?

³ The unpublished archival material presented here appears under fair dealing, an exception to British Copyright Law, which allows the lawful use or reproduction of a work without having to seek permission from the copyright owner(s) or creator(s) or infringing their interest if the work is used for the purposes of research, and/or criticism, review or quotation (Sections 29 and 30 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988).

K. Friar to Bantam Books, January 29th, 1966

Interesting insights, regarding the poems selected for publication, indicate that the length of a work is directly relevant to costs of publication, which were significant, particularly for University presses. The *Modern Greek Poetry* anthology, if it were to be published as it stood in February 1970 would have run to about 900 pages and would have been sold at \$20, well over \$100 today, so the Editor-in-Chief wanted to reduce its size.

Most of the poets are living, and with all of them I have worked in translating their poems. They all know what poems have been chosen to represent them—indeed, they and I chose the poems together—and I don't know how I could possibly tell them that I would now have to cut [...]. I don't want to jeopardize my standing with the poets here; I find it somewhat of a miracle that I have worked with them for so many years in harmony.

K. Friar to Mike Korda, Editor-in-Chief of Simon and Schuster, February 10th, 1970.

2. Peer monitoring: Other translators of Modern Greek into English

A manifestation of Friar's gatekeeping role as surveyor of the field was the expression of his opinions regarding other translators of Modern Greek into English.

I think you did wrong in the first place to entrust the translation of Kazantzakis' plays to Athena Dallas, for his rhetoric needs the sure hand of a poet [...]

K. Friar to Mike Korda, February 10, 1970.

Friar's peer monitoring is two-fold in the following instance: he provides a critique of Dalven's book, while requesting a copy in order to peruse and perhaps review it.

You have probably heard that a Modern Greek Poetry has been brought out by Rae Dalven. It's her old book brought somewhat up to date. If the first and main part is a reprint, then it is utterly useless and filled with ten or more errors to a page. [...] Can you have it sent to me promptly?

K. Friar to Mike Korda, August 26th, 1971.

Friar exercised his gatekeeping role by refusing to comment on another translator's English version of a poem by Yannis Ritsos, thus refusing to publicly endorse the translator's work. Friar, in the same letter, offered to

write to the translator and explain his refusal. The translator's name here has been omitted for reasons of anonymity.

I wish [...] had sent me his translation before he had sent you his final draft. His version of the 'Lady of the Vineyards' is an excellent second draft, but it is not, in my opinion, a final draft. [...] is capable of becoming a superb translator. [...] he has deliberately chosen to translate in this manner, and it all boils down to your principles of translation. He is aware of what he is doing and has made a deliberate choice.

K. Friar to Peter Pappas, Editor-in-Chief of Pella Publishing Company Inc, June 20th, 1978.

Friar was vocal regarding his own views on the principles guiding the translation process. A pertinent example is Friar's narrative about a surrealist poem by Andreas Embiricos, which Friar translated. Friar observed that "one should not [...] try to extract a meaning from such poems, nor perhaps even a theme, but note simply, perhaps, the situation" (Friar 1983, 16). Friar focused on the effect that the sounds of the poem would have on the Anglophone audience and went to great lengths to come up with alliterations which would recreate in the mind of the reader/listener the images of waters falling and of the passing of time (which is the theme of the Greek poem).

3. The translator's right of attribution.

The final attribute of Friar's gatekeeping role is his safeguarding his moral right to attribution as translator. The first excerpt refers to the poetry anthology *Modern European Poetry* (1966).

And may I wryly point out that among the translators listed on the cover my name and that of Mr. Reavey might have been included since we not only edited but also translated entire sections?

K. Friar to Bantam Book, January 29th, 1966.

Referring to the same anthology, Friar highlights the absence of his name from the cover.

But I should like to lodge a very serious complaint. Neither in the old edition, nor in the new one, on the cover, is my name mentioned among the translators. [...] Since we were not paid much, at least we should like proper acknowledgement.

K. Friar to Bantam Books, May 9th, 1970.

The translated book Friar is referring to in the second and in the last excerpt is *The Odyssey* by Nikos Kazantzakis. Since the translation by Friar was the first and only one at the time, and the subject matter of Kazantzakis' *Odyssey* is different to Homer's *Odyssey*, any adaptation of that work for stage, radio or television would require the translator's explicit permission before it was broadcast in accordance with US Copyright Law. Adaptations of translated classical works are very common; however, the translator's name is seldom acknowledged. Friar appears adamant in his demand to be informed about any adaptation of his translated work for reasons of attribution but also (in the hope of) some financial return.

I have complained several times of not having received letters which were written to me in care of your firm, some of them having to do with permissions for mounting or using sections of the *Odyssey* for stage, radio, or television. [...] You recall I never did receive a letter from Claribel Baird of the University of Michigan, asking my permission to mount parts of the *Odyssey* as a dramatic production and offering fees.

K. Friar to Mike Korda, August 26th, 1971.

The archival material is discussed in the following section, as is the literature regarding gatekeepers and gatekeeping presented in Sections 3 and 4.

7. Politics and (re)defining the translator/gatekeeper

The literary polysystem within which Friar functioned allowed him to perform and expand his role into that of a regulatory agent. The functions of the T/G, as performed by Friar and evidenced in his correspondence, demonstrate that he had a degree of control over which poems/poets were translated. Friar also expressed a definitive opinion regarding who was worthy of translating Modern Greek poetry, according to his own aesthetic principles for translating. At the same time, Friar was also adamant in demanding what was due to him as translator, regarding acknowledgement and royalties. Through his translatorial practice, and his insistence on being recognized and credited for his work, Friar embodies the attributes of a T/G.

Translators often offer little insight into their rationale for selecting texts for translation or their translation process, except in scattered and passing comments in peritexts. Friar is the exception to that, having dedicated introductory notes as well as entire papers discussing his translation process,

approaching it from not just linguistic but also cultural and sociological perspectives (1972; 1982; 1983).

A significant insight into his process of selection and the criteria employed is found in his letter to the poet Criton Athanasoules, cited in Section 6, in which Friar asks for a list of poets, a request he had made to other poets. This practice exposes the significant input of the source-culture poets themselves regarding who and what was to be translated. On a related note, Friar admits that the poets knew which of their poems were to be included in the anthology and if any poems were omitted, which the poets themselves had selected alongside Friar, the omission would not go unnoticed.

When Modern Greek poetry started being translated into English in the mid-20th century, the Greek poets selected for translation were often those whose poetry most resembled what was considered canonical in the receptor language, in this case English. In a letter from Christianopoulos, whom Friar met in the late 1940s, the poet observes that Friar had only met a very select group of Greek poets during his initial visit to Athens in 1946, mainly those grouped under the umbrella term ‘The 30s generation’. As Friar notes, he met most of those poets socially in small cafes around Syntagma Square in central Athens, where they used to congregate in the years after WWII. His decision to translate the poets followed a somewhat predictable path. As Hersant (2017: 96) notes “friendships are at once the cause and effect of some collaborative translations”.

Friar’s comment of how uniform the recommendations of the poets included in the anthology are exposes a certain naiveté on his part as he seems to disregard that poets often form groupings with similar aesthetic and ideological predispositions. Friar’s desire for fairness and impartiality later grew to embrace other poets who were newer or considered more minor, as his selection of poets/poems in his *Modern Greek Poetry* (1982) testifies.

Friar’s correspondence reveals the complexity of the question: “how were the poets/poems selected?” Initially, driven by the circumstances of his meetings with the poets as explained above, Friar read and translated the poets within whose circle he had found himself and who were acting as mediators and gatekeepers by introducing him to their peers. Friar’s initial visit coincides with the Greek Civil War (1946-9), a direct consequence of which was that several important poets, such as Yannis Ritsos, Manolis Anagnostakis and Tasos Livaditis, who were exiled in 1948 for their involvement in the Communist Party, were absent from the Athenian

literary scene. In this instance, external, as in non-literary, political forces conspired towards an initially skewed representation of what Modern Greek poetry had to offer in the late 1940s. Friar may seem to lose part of his agency in this instance, subjected to the whims of history. However, his gatekeeping role is solidified in the long-term as he continuously renegotiated who and what got translated.

Despite Friar's actions, forces within the publishing industry, as seen in the Bantam anthology excerpt in Section 6, testify that Friar as translator was one of several gatekeepers. The editor of the anthology, Willis Barnstone, was another in addition to the marketing agents and the publisher, whose decisions affected the representation of Modern Greek poetry in that anthology. The more comprehensive concept of network gatekeeping (Barzilai-Nahon 2008) would likely capture the complexity of the phenomenon more accurately. This concept is similar to Jones' embassy networks, which highlight how "agency lies not so much in individual actors as in the network as a whole – in the cooperation between technical operators and translators" (2009: 320), particularly in the context of translated poetry from minor to major languages.

Regarding the second aspect of the T/G, Friar criticized freely the quality of work done by other translators of Modern Greek into English. The recipients of his criticisms were key agents in the field, such as editors-in-chief and publishers, potentially leading to unfavourable impressions of the translators in question.

As discussed in Section 4, Sela-Sheffy cautions that translators may act as competitors against less qualified practitioners who wish to enter the field (2008, 2016). Tekgül's study (2017) presents a more nuanced picture which reflects the situation viewed in Friar's correspondence: a dynamic of simultaneous competition and cooperation may be observed among literary translators with the same working languages. This dual approach is also observed by Voinova and Shlesinger in accounts of individuals who stress their exclusivity and block the entry of newcomers whom they consider amateurish or mercenary, while collegial support is also present in these accounts (2013: 45-6).

Athena Dallas and Rae Dalven, the two translators that Friar maligned, were both part of the same extensive Greek diaspora based in the US that Friar belonged to. Friar's objections were two-fold: Friar protested the two translators' incomplete knowledge of Modern Greek, who, according to him, did not have the occasion or inclination to improve, unlike him. This led them to mistakes and misinterpretations that Friar itemised. Friar also

objected to the stylistic choices particularly of Athena Dallas who translated Kazantzakis' plays into English. Kazantzakis was a writer with whom Friar shared a particular literary and personal bond, and whose epic poem *The Odyssey: A Sequel* he had translated into English. In Friar's article (1972) about their unique collaboration, as he termed it, Friar's admiration, verging on awe, towards the Greek author is evident, as is Friar's attitude of a mentee and disciple to Kazantzakis. Dallas was a journalist by profession and Friar found the style of her prose unsuitable for the philosophical and poetic peregrinations of Kazantzakis' work.

Friar corresponded with both Dallas and Rae Dalven, as the Princeton archive demonstrates. His dislike for Dalven is expressed in correspondence with other translators (e.g., Andonis Decavalles). It is also revealing that the Friar-Dalven correspondence contains just a single letter, from Dalven asking for a meeting. There is no copy of Friar's response. The correspondence between Friar and Dallas, in which Friar expresses his view towards some of Dallas' stylistic choices in her translation of Kazantzakis is more extensive. The tone of the exchange is amicable, and Friar is diplomatic in his criticism.

Not everything Friar has to say about fellow translators is negative, however. The excerpt regarding the translation of Ritsos' poem showcases Friar's aesthetic criteria for judging the quality of translations. In the letter Friar gives specific examples of mistranslations and of the translator's own overall principle of 'tidying up' Ritsos' unruly syntax and punctuation, which Friar did not agree with. This letter demonstrates his clear vision of his own translation practice and the principles governing it; while simultaneously displaying his ability to differentiate between routine linguistic errors and purposeful translation choices. Friar's appreciation of the translator's approach is evident, as is the didactic character of Friar's comments.

It is significant at this point to differentiate between the intended effect that Friar wished to have as a T/G and the actual impact of his intervention. The true effects of Friar's regulatory role are not easy to trace; however, the fact that he felt obliged and even justified in his critique suggests that Friar considered this peer monitoring function part of his translatorial role. Indeed, as an established and committed translator of Modern Greek poetry he felt that he was acting as a custodian, in other words a gatekeeper, of the quality of Modern Greek poetry in translation.

The final aspect of the T/G to be noted in Friar's correspondence relates to his safeguarding his rights of attribution as translator. As he wryly notes in the letter to Bantam Books, since adequate payment for his translations

in the anthology was a non-issue for the publisher, at least acknowledgement of his contribution was necessary. Friar demonstrates a sense of professional self-esteem, and a proactive attitude regarding his dues, which he requests should be commensurate to his contribution. As Robinson (2012: 26) notes “for the translator or interpreter a higher consideration than money or continued employability is professional pride, professional integrity, professional self-esteem”.

At the same time, Friar, in one more manifestation of his professional approach to translation, demands to be notified of all adaptations of his translated work. The rationale behind this demand is likely the desire to be acknowledged as the co-creator of the work.

Friar saw gatekeeping as an integral part of being a professional translator in his insistence that he be visible as a co-creator of the work, thus carving a space for himself as a recognizable figure of Modern Greek letters translated into English. By actively demanding his rights of attribution, Friar was among those 20th century literary translators whose attitude predated current voices within the profession. Friar set an example by attempting to determine the unwritten rules of the profession, define some of its premises that were more pertinent to the field of poetry translating and establish some of the principles that ought to govern it, according to his experience and expertise as poetry translator.

8. Conclusions

Friar, in his role as poetry translator, performed a pivotal function as a key agent in a peer monitoring and regulatory system. One of the objectives was the promotion of Modern Greek poetry in English translation. Simultaneously, Friar’s professional identity was displayed through his decision-making process regarding the inclusion/exclusion of both the source poets to be translated and his fellow translators, and making sure that his work was properly attributed to him. This system included other agents in the translation process, from the poets re-working the English versions with the translator, to editors negotiating the number of pages (and thus, the number of poets/poems to be represented) in an anthology, to the publishers facing prohibitive costs that guided their publishing decisions.

Friar’s practice and the conclusions drawn from tracing his regulatory behaviour may be generalized into an expanded definition of the translator as gatekeeper. The definition would recognize the T/G as a filter for the

inclusion/exclusion of information, ideas or people from the system the translator belongs to.

Three fundamental aspects of the proposed definition would recognise the translator/gatekeeper as:

1. exercising control over what and who gets translated,
2. acting in a peer monitoring capacity of the translation field,
3. guarding the translator's right to attribution; the right to approve or refuse permissions and to receive recompense when their works are used.

The definition aims at recognizing the roles translators perform within their multiple gatekeeping networks, as well as working towards measuring the potential impact of these individuals – thus defining translator agency and its remit in the process.

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Creativity in Media Accessibility: A Political Issue¹

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Abstract

The tension between source-text oriented translation and target-text oriented translation has traditionally been the driver of many of the key discussions that have permeated throughout the history of translation studies: literal vs free translation, formal vs dynamic equivalence, foreignization vs domestication, etc. (Nida and Taber 1969, Venuti 1965). On the free and/or target-text oriented end of the spectrum is the notion of transcreation, which foregrounds the creativity involved in translation (Bernal-Merino, 2006). In audiovisual translation and more specifically media accessibility, the focus has traditionally been placed on comprehension and on compensating for the content that the users miss due to their impairment. The priority of SDH has often been to provide viewers with hearing loss with the information that is available to hearing viewers, whereas AD normally aims to convey to blind and partially sighted users what is being seen by fully sighted viewers.

However, recent developments in media accessibility, such as Greco's three shifts (2019) (from a particularist, maker-centred and reactive to a universalist, user-centred and proactive view of media access) and accessible filmmaking (Romero-Fresco, 2019) (the consideration of accessibility/translation in the production of audiovisual content through the collaboration between creators and translators/media access experts) are pointing to a different way to look at media accessibility. This new approach aims to facilitate the viewers' (multisensory) engagement with the film and focuses on their abilities rather than on their impairments (Romero-Fresco, 2020a, 2020b, Fryer and Cavallo, forthcoming). This is leading to creative practices where accessibility is a crucial artistic element of the film and where the different accessible versions are being treated as original versions rather than as target texts (Branson, 2019). In this sense, creative media

¹ This research has been conducted within the framework and with the support of the Spanish-government-funded project "The Quality of Live Subtitling (QuaLiSub): A regional, national and international study" (PID2020-117738RB-I00).

accessibility may be regarded as a form of transcreation, which in this case is applied to different versions for audiences that may not be in a position to access sound and/or image.

This paper aims to map out the different ways in which creative media accessibility is being applied in both films and theatre plays, almost invariably in collaboration with the creative teams. This includes subtitled versions that are originally designed to reinforce the visuals instead of making up for lost audio content in the subtitles, audio described films/plays that build in key audio content in production to avoid including it in the description and finally “all for all” productions that are designed to include both subtitles and audio description for everyone in a way that is not redundant for any target group.

1. Introduction

Creativity has always played a central role in discussions about translation, given the impossibility of conceiving translation as a mere act of reproduction of an original text without “creative interference” (Boase-Beier, 2011, p. 53). This has been explored most significantly in relation to literary translation, including the role of the translator as writer (Bassnett and Bush, 2006), the so-called creative turn in literary translation (Loffredo and Perteghella, 2006) and the overlaps between literary translation and creative writing (Rossi, 2018).

Audiovisual translation (AVT) and media accessibility (MA) are no strangers to this debate, which in this area has often been linked to the notion of transcreation, understood in the localization industry as the adjustments needed to make an audiovisual product work in all target markets, while remaining loyal to the original creative intent (Pedersen, 2014). Companies offering transcreation services in the localization industry highlight the creative component involved in transcreation and steer clear of traditional translation, which is presented as a more literal, word-for-word service (Bernal-Merino, 2015). Many professional translators and translation studies scholars often see this as a rather narrow and simplistic view of translation (Gambier and Munday, 2014), at odds with a reality of intercultural, interlinguistic and intersemiotic communication in which translation is concerned with “all possible ways of rewriting” (Zabalbeascoa Terran, 2012, p. 197).

While this debate has been going on for long in the areas of AVT and MA, it seems to have become a particularly hot topic lately. This is evidenced by its inclusion in conferences such as *Media for All, Unlimited!* and “The Translator’s Visibility: Exploring Creative AVT” and special issues in academic journals such as this one, *Intralinea* (Di Giovanni and Raffi, 2021) and *Jostrans* (Greco and Romero-Fresco, 2021). Further

evidence from outside academia can be found in lively debates in social media involving professionals and scholars (Sokoli and Pedersen, 2021) and in art exhibitions on creative MA such as “Activating Captions”, held at ARGOS (the leading national centre for art film and video in Belgium) and featuring work from some of the artists discussed in this article. Although it may be early to identify all the reasons for this renewed interest in the creative side of AVT and MA, a few factors stand out. Firstly, as more strict accessibility legislation is put in place and as leading streaming platforms such as Netflix, HBO and Disney+ catch up on their translation and accessibility duties, attention is shifting from quantity to quality, with the latter focusing not only on fulfilling guidelines but also on adding creatively to them.

Secondly, as described by Greco (2018), MA is currently undergoing a significant transformation, as it shifts from a particularist account of access to a universalist account (which concerns users with and without disabilities that do not have access to original audiovisual productions), from reactive to proactive models (access from inception rather than as an afterthought) and from a maker-centered to a user-centered approach (the users as contributors to MA). These shifts have materialised in the model known as accessible filmmaking, which considers translation and/or accessibility during the production of audiovisual media, normally through the collaboration between the creative team and the translator (Romero-Fresco, 2019: 5–6). This collaboration between creators and translators (the “translation plus” mentioned in the call for papers of the present issue of *Cultus*) is likely to lead to creative practices in this area.

However, a distinction may be required here between MA and AVT, which are sometimes conflated. As seen in Figure 1, Greco (2019) positions MA within the larger field of accessibility studies and AVT within translation studies:

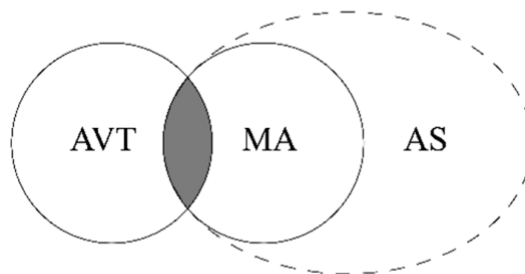


Figure 1. Adaptation of Greco’s schematisation of the three accounts of the area of MA (2019)

From this perspective, Greco and Jankowska (2020) distinguish between translation-based MA services (audio description, dubbing, subtitling, sign language interpreting, etc.) and non translation-based MA services (audio introductions audio subtitles, clean audio screen reading, tactile reproductions, etc.). There is, therefore, a great deal of crossover between MA and AVT, but also some key differences in terms of perspective:

[AVT and MA] look at the world through different lenses. They are guided by different questions, each of which influence the ways they investigate a problem, the explanations they formulate, and, ultimately, the solutions they devise. As a subfield of translation studies, AVT is concerned with translation, and when it observes the world it frames it in terms of translation problems. As a subdomain of AS, MA is concerned with accessibility, and when it observes the world it frames it in terms of access problems. (...) Clearly distinguishing between MA (and AS too) and other fields is eventually critical for how one addresses and responds to those concerns. Otherwise, one may run the risk of curing a cold with a hammer (Greco, 2019, p. 23).

This article aims to identify and analyse current practices of creative and artistic MA but, before that, it proposes a distinction between creativity considered through the lens of AVT and through an accessibility standpoint.

2. Creativity through a translational lens

In AVT, and with the exception of some accessible filmmaking practices applied to translation (Romero-Fresco, 2019), creativity has been analysed mostly after production, that is, as part of the localisation process of an already completed audiovisual piece an involving no collaboration with the creative team. It is not easy to ascertain, however, what is and what is not creative in this process, not least because creativity is routinely used by many of the leading localisation stakeholders (HBO, Netflix, etc.) to describe their practices regardless of the approach they adopt.

Chaume (2021) ventures the following working definition as a starting point to think of creative media localisation: “all forms of non-canonical solutions to localization problems, in other words, a deviation from standard translation solutions and from current guidelines”. Even before delving into the definition, though, the first issue arises with the terminology used, as creative media localization stands alongside alternative terms such as transcreation, adaptation and transadaptation, all of which, as explained by Chaume, risk being used simply as a synonym of AVT.

In the specific case of subtitling², scholars have referred to integrated subtitles (Fox, 2018) and especially creative subtitles (Foerster, 2010; McClarty, 2012). However, as shown in a recent Twitter discussion involving practitioners and researchers (Sokoli and Pedersen, 2021), the use of creative may be seen by some as contentious and even offensive, as it seems to imply there is no creativity in standard, by-the-guidelines subtitling. This has opened the door to other terms such as alternative, non-standard, unconventional and even free-form subtitling (ibid).

A valuable contribution to this “terminological conundrum” is provided by Díaz-Cintas (2018), who refers to the unconventional and often creative subtitles used on the Internet as cybersubtitles (see Figure 2). These include fan subs (subtitles made by some fans for all viewers), guerrilla subtitles (subtitles aiming to challenge hegemonic practices in society) and altruist subtitles (subtitles made to promote a worthy cause), some of which can also turn into fake subs when the aim is to openly offer false information in order to entertain the viewer.

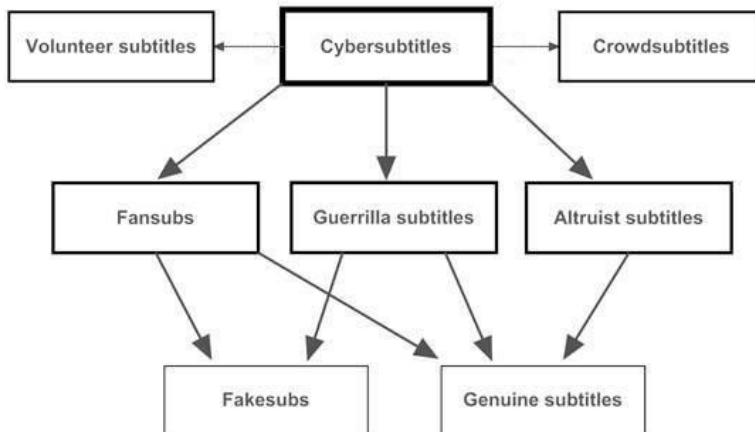


Figure 2. Subtitling activity on the cyberspace (Díaz Cintas, 2018)

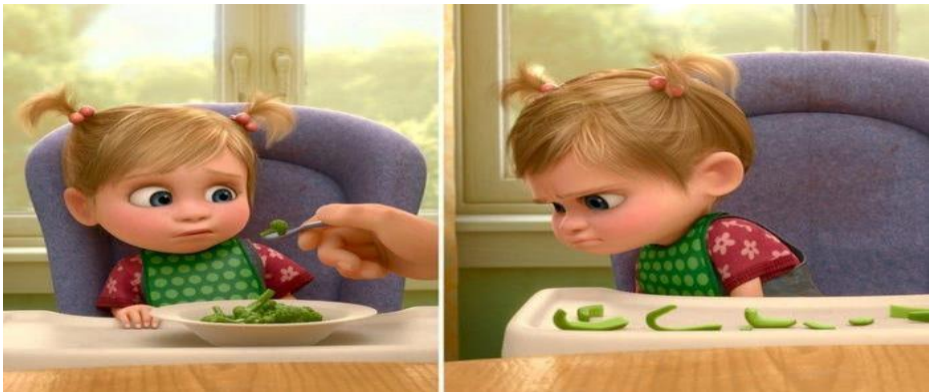
² In the US and Canada, “captions” is the term used for subtitles traditionally designed for viewers with hearing loss, which are often, although not always, intralingual. When they are interlingual (and thus translate foreign content) they are called subtitles. In Europe, the terms used to make this distinction are “subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing” and “subtitles”, respectively. In this article, the terms used are the ones chosen by the authors discussed.

What they all have in common is that they are made by users “outside the commercial imperatives that regulate professional practice” (Díaz Cintas, 2018, p. 141) and subverting standard subtitling conventions with creativity. Of the different creative features used in fan subs one of the most quintessential ones is arguably the incorporation of topnotes or headnotes to explain concepts that may not be straightforward for the viewers, as in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Use of topnotes by fansubbers (Díaz Cintas, 2018)

Zooming out to include other AVT modalities, examples abound of films, such as *Austin Powers* or *Shrek*, whose dubbed versions are domesticated through unconventional and creative translation solutions to eliminate elements that may seem too alien or foreign to target viewers. A similar objective lies behind the alteration of images from the original to the foreign versions of films such as *Inside Out*. These may be seen as examples of creative (image-based) translation or localisation, performed in this case during the post-production phase, to cater for a global audience. Figures 4-5 include an illustrative example, as the image of the protagonist refusing to eat broccoli was replaced for the Japanese audience by another one where she refuses to eat green peppers, which are apparently more disliked by Japanese children than broccoli (Acuna, 2015).



Figures 4 and 5. Alteration of images in the postproduction and distribution of the film *Inside Out*

For Chaume (2018, 2021), these creative practices contribute to building audiovisual cultural capital via creative AVT and are closely linked to the concepts of travelling texts (ideas, values and genres that travel over cultural and linguistic borders in translation) and transmedia storytelling (the process whereby fictional stories get dispersed across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified entertainment experience). Drawing on these ideas, Chaume (2021) defines creative AVT as

Those media localization and adaptation practices that, on the one hand, provide linguistic and cultural access to the media for all, and, on the other hand, claim to become an artistic, imaginative and creative contribution to the audiovisual text, so that they elicit a new experience in the audience and, finally, vindicate the translator's or filmmaker's visibility.

In sum, seen through the lens of (audiovisual) translation, creativity is firstly a terminological conundrum, as it pits the term “creative” (which may imply that there is no creativity in AVT in general) against other terms such as “alternative” or “non-standard” that are likely to have their pros and cons. If creativity (rather than alternativeness or unconventionality) is what needs to be explored, it may make sense to stick to this term but also to propose a spectrum or continuum ranging from less to more creative AVT solutions, thus avoiding a binary approach while recognising the creative element inherent to all translations.

Secondly, creative media localisation is regarded here as a result of recognised globalisation processes such as travelling texts, transmedia storytelling and adaptation practices that bring audiovisual texts closer to

the cultural and linguistic reality of the viewers while eliminating some of the foreignness of the original versions. When produced by fans, these creative practices can provide added information, innovative features not normally included in standard guidelines and even parodic or subversive elements that disrupt the original audiovisual product.

Valuable as it may be, the notion of creativity as seen from the standpoint of AVT is often presented as a bonus, an icing on the cake that makes theoretical sense in a world of globalised storytelling and that is innovative and desirable in terms of professional practice. There is, however, no sense of urgency here. No indication of creativity being a vital element from the point of view of ideology, identity or social equity. It will be welcome if and when it comes, but it is not expected or demanded. This may partly explain why creative practices in AVT and MA have taken so long to develop and why this issue is so different when approached from the standpoint of accessibility.

3. Creativity through an accessibility lens

Over the past years, artists and scholars working in a wide range of areas including film, theatre and other visual arts, AVT and MA, rhetorics and technical and professional communication have shown reservations about some of the official guidelines that are currently being used to provide MA services such as captioning, audio description and sign language translation. As noted by Kleege (2016) and Thompson (2018), while these guidelines may be useful in ensuring a certain degree of consistency and professionalism, they often fail to acknowledge the creative and transformative potential of MA. For Kleege, it is important to “unsettle the notion that when such standards are properly followed they create straightforward, unmediated, and wholly effective translations of visual art and film” (in Chandler, 2018).

For some of these scholars, guidelines are often built on problematic assumptions and they privilege able experiences based on an idea of objectivity that is neither possible nor desirable:

While a scholarly treatment of a text, painting or film may be scrupulous in sticking to a neutral description, the reader can ascribe the particular word choices to the subjectivity of the author. With audio description, the illusion of objectivity is reinforced because the description is delivered without authorship, as if it represents some unassailable truth (Kleege, 2018: 101).

This insistence on objectivity has been criticised for leading to standards that are too focused on comprehension, too compensatory and relying mainly on one sense, that is, designed almost exclusively to provide visually- and hearing-impaired users with information about of what they cannot see and hear, respectively (Fryer, 2018; Romero-Fresco, 2021). AVT and MA scholars have long been advocating for alternative approaches that value subjectivity and engagement (Remael, 2021; Szarkowska, 2013), often from the standpoint of AVT and MA. However, in order to consider a different perspective, it is useful to draw on other scholars who have recently looked at this issue from areas such as disability studies, cultural studies and technical and professional communication, using a disability/accessibility lens rather than a translational one.

A case in point is Sean Zdenek, scholar in technical and professional communication and expert in captioning whose work will be analysed in the following section of this article. Zdenek (2018) expresses frustration at the objective, apolitical and acultural manner in which studies on technical and professional communication have been approached until now, often focused on solving problems. Interestingly, this may share some common traits with a great deal of the research conducted so far in the area of MA, which has probably paid more attention to practical issues related to audio description and captioning than to engaging with theoretical principles from areas as closely related as disability studies. As a reaction to this approach, Zdenek proposes to draw on crip theory (McRuer, 2006) to question deep-rooted assumptions regarding captioning and to imagine a more accessible future for viewers with hearing loss. Situated at the crossroads between critical disability studies and queer theory, crip theory is a multifaceted analytical tool for approaching culture from a perspective that centres disabled experiences, embodiments and movements. For McRuer, crip theory is to disability studies what queer theory is to lesbian and gay studies. Both crip theory and queer theory are central to disability studies and lesbian and gay studies, respectively, but while the latter affirm disability and lesbian and gay identities, crip theory and queer theory simultaneously affirm and resist identities in order to forge coalitions across multiple identities. Crip theory and queer theory scrutinize mainstream representations to uncover dominant assumptions and experiences of exclusion (Lewis, 2015). Like disability studies, they take a "radical stance toward concepts of normalcy", fighting against "the compulsion to observe norms of all kinds (corporeal, mental, sexual, social, cultural, subcultural, etc.)" (Sandahl, 2003: 26). They also react against ableism, understood as a type of discrimination against

people with disabilities that is not only manifested through individual opinions, but also through forms of exclusion that get codified and naturalised in various systems of power because they are built into the structure of our societies (Elmén, 2016). Zdenek (2018) proposes to “dance on crip theory's radical edge” and politicise the study of captioning and MA, questioning their values and norms and framing them in the wider picture of inclusion and social justice. Here, the notions of embodiment, multisensory experience and disability gain are key.

Moving away from the notion of the disabled body as an object of medicalisation (the basis of the medical model of disability), embodiment is concerned with how our bodies influence the way we interpret the world (Butler, 2018). In a multimodal context, this refers to the relationship between physical experience, multimodal resources, media practices and social spaces, where meaning making is grounded in physical experience, through bodily form, gaze, gesture, body posture, facial expression, movement and, crucially, through the engagement with the different senses (MODE, 2012).

In Zdenek's view (2018), current captioning guidelines³ have remained unchanged for too long and are characterised by an alarming lack of innovation as compared to the progress experienced by digital technologies since the turn of the century. Captioned speech, for instance, despite providing access to the dialogue for viewers with hearing loss, is normally stripped of voice and embodiment. Mood/ tone descriptions are sometimes added with labels such as “slurred speech” or “ironic”, but they become so recurrent that they can no longer depict the idiosyncrasy of a character. All voices look the same in the captions, where speech is “distilled down to the bare essentials—i.e., the uttered words themselves—and presented through the prism of grammatical formalization and the well-worn conventions of standard spelling”.

Authors such as Thompson, Kleege and Zdenek see the integration of accessibility into the production process (through the collaboration between the creative team and media access experts) as a necessary step towards a move away from traditional guidelines. However, this step, which is fully in line with the accessible filmmaking model (Romero-Fresco, 2019), is not sufficient, as it can still lead to the application of those guidelines. Here is where a creative approach to MA plays a critical role, as it can produce

³ He's referring to US guidelines, but much can be extrapolated to guidelines in other countries.

embodied and multisensory meaning and underscore the transformative/generative potential of MA (Butler, 2018). Drawing on studies on rhetorics and technical and professional communication, Butler proposes the use of integral captions, which are characterised by being considered in production, by being placed strategically so that they provide access to the meaningful content of the video and by using different devices (typography, effects, images, etc.) to enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic quality of the video (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Integral caption used in [Gallaudet: The Film](#)

Integral captions are designed to embody multidimensional meaning. “As a Deaf woman who communicates through body language and eye contact”, Butler (2018, p. 288) explains that sign languages are embodied languages created through the movement and interpretation of coordinated gestures and facial expressions. For her, the body of the sign language interpreter or user embodies the rhetorics of the message. In audiovisual content, it is therefore key to maintain eye contact and connection with the speakers on screen, which is not always possible with traditional, bottom-placed captions. Integral captions allow Deaf viewers to have an embodied response to the images –to feel connected and included (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Integral caption used in [Gallaudet: The Film](#)

This leads to the notion of Deaf Space, a concept created in 2005 by the architect Hansel Bauman (Bauman and Murray, 2015) to refer to a new approach to architecture and design that is primarily informed by the unique ways in which Deaf people perceive and inhabit space. Conceived as a reaction to a world built by and for hearing people, the notion of Deaf Space was applied in Gallaudet University by and for deaf individuals and led to the design of buildings and other physical spaces that enable embodied and visual-spatial communication. This included u-shaped lecture rooms to allow all students to be visually connected, wide walkways and ramps to allow people to walk and sign at the same time and a heavily visible environment (transparent elevators, diffuse lighting and abundance of mirrors) to increase visual awareness and communication. In contrast with the idea of “hearing loss” (which would not apply to, say, babies who are born deaf, as you cannot lose something that you never had), Deaf Space is seen as a Deaf Gain, that is, an example of what can be gained by being Deaf and how the wider hearing world can benefit from it. For Butler (2018), unlike standard captions, often added at the bottom of the screen as an afterthought, integral captions reclaim a more central (Deaf) space both on the screen, so that viewers can access their embodied meaning, and in the design of the film, which can benefit all viewers.

Whereas creativity as seen through a translational perspective is connected to ideas of transmedia storytelling, adaptation practices and questions of terminology and originality, when considered through an accessibility lens it becomes a way to fight exclusion and to reclaim a more central position for people with disabilities not only in the audiovisual

industry, but in society as a whole. This is illustrated in the following section, which includes a brief definition of creative MA and an analysis of work conducted by scholars and artists who have resorted to creativity in order to imagine a more accessible future for people with hearing and sight loss.

4. Creative and artistic MA

Although, as explained in section 1, when looking at the role played by creativity in MA, the terminological debate seems to have taken a back seat to more important considerations, there is still no consensus. In AD, alternative approaches or those not based on current guidelines have received different terms that are not exactly synonyms, although they are in the same realm. Drawing on Fels *et al.* (2006) and Udo and Fels (2009), Szarkowska (2013) proposes the idea of auteur description, which uses the screenplay to convey the point of view and creative vision of the director, often departing from the notion of objective description and embracing vivid and emotional language. Related to this is the notion of intradiegetic AD (Thompson, 2018) and the more widely used term integrated AD, which for Fryer (2018) encompasses the following five features: non-neutral (creative and /or subjective); collaborative so as to reflect the director's vision (auteur); considered a priori; and open and inclusive (available to be heard by all). More in line with the focus of this article (which centres around creativity rather than the collaborative, integrated or open nature of alternative MA) is the term creative AD, now commonly used by scholars (Walczak and Fryer, 2017; Zabrocka, 2018), artists (Cox, 2017) and professionals (Elbourne, 2019). A case in point are the “Guidelines for creative audio description” drafted by arts curator Gill Crawshaw (2018), which include pointers that reinforce the ideas of subjectivity, engagement and multisensory experience mentioned in the previous section:

Don't worry about objectivity – an interesting, enthusiastic description is much better. Feel free to use poetry, sound, story-telling. Tell us why you've chosen this piece. Evoke the senses and engage the audience.

A wide range of terms has also been used for non-conventional subtitles and captions, including alternative, aesthetic, enhanced, kinetic, embodied, integral, integrated, dynamic, and animated captioning (Butler, 2018; Zdenek, 2018). As in the case of AD, they each highlight a different aspect of subtitles/captions that do not conform to traditional guidelines and that

are also often referred to as creative subtitles/captions both in academia and the industry (Butler, 2020).

However, seeing as the use of creativity in MA is part of an overall movement that encompasses all modalities (AD, subtitling, captioning, sign language, etc.) and that works in itself as a means to achieve the wider inclusion of people with disabilities in society, it makes sense to use an umbrella term for this approach. In the UK, the Graeae Theatre Company has been working since 1997 in what they call “the aesthetics of access”, which address “the ways in which accessibility concerns are not simply last-minute add-ons but actually influence and shape the work in wonderful, unexpected ways” (Cockburn, 2017). The aesthetics of access go beyond the idea of universal design in that they do not only allow more people to enjoy the show but also enhance the product aesthetically and creatively for everybody (British Council Arts, 2014). As mentioned in the previous section, the implications go beyond aesthetic considerations and touch upon issues of identity and power:

Although it can take different forms, an Aesthetics of Access always takes the different conditions of perception of a mixed audience into account. The respective performances result from intercultural (Deaf and hearing) productions, which do not only consider the physical and linguistic differences between the spectators, but also the power structures that can be found in theatre and society. Thus, an Aesthetics of Access can involve the demarginalisation and appreciation of sign language and/or serve a didactic, inclusive or political function by reflecting and challenging present hierarchical structures and cultural norms (Ugarte Chacón, 2014: 2).

UK theatre companies such as Fingersmiths and Extant adhere to the creative approach envisaged by the aesthetics of access as one more action in their ongoing fight for a more inclusive and diverse society, one of whose goals is to have more disabled artists on stage. As a matter of fact, just as disability is increasingly being included in the overall framework of diversity, so is the crucial role played by creativity. This is illustrated by the “[Creative Case for Diversity](#)”, an initiative launched by the Arts Council England in 2011 as a way to engage the arts and culture sector nationally to reinforce the importance of diversity and equality in the arts and all of its forms to reflect the whole of society. All production companies funded by this scheme are asked to show how they contribute to the Creative Case for

Diversity by demonstrating how their work is accessible and relevant to their local communities.

Based on the different initiatives mentioned so far, it seems that there is a growing interest in what may be called “creative media accessibility”, which encompasses those practices that do not only attempt to provide access for the users of a film or a play, but also seek to become an artistic contribution in their own right and to enhance user experience in a creative or imaginative way. This is an alternative approach to MA (as it stands in opposition to many of the current guidelines) that is often considered during production (as per the principles of accessible filmmaking or integrated theatre access) and that is anchored in a wider fight for inclusion and diversity in the arts and in society as a whole. Admittedly, some may argue that there is creativity involved in the production of AD or SDH as per current guidelines. In that case, and although there is a noticeable difference between the examples included below and conventional MA, it may be possible to talk about a spectrum of creativity in MA, ranging from inconspicuous practices (those that blend in the style of the film/play) to more conspicuous practices (those that aim to draw the audience’s attention).

The practices included here are considerably conspicuous, not least because some of the captions analysed reclaim a Deaf Space both on screen and in society. Some of them go a step further and constitute examples of what may be called artistic media access, that is, the use of media access⁴ not as an artistic contribution in its own right but rather as the very material with which art is made. Here, media access (and its generative and transformational potential) is the very *raison d’être* of the piece.

4.1 Creative MA

This section includes examples of creative captions added as an afterthought (Simon Zdenek) and others who design was built into the production of the films (*Gallaudet: The Film* and *Dear Hearing World*).

⁴ A term suggested by AVT and MA scholar Aline Remael in personal communication.

4.1.1. *Simon Zdenek's dynamic captions*

In his ground-breaking webtext "[Designing Captions: Disruptive experiments with typography, color, icons, and effects](#)", Zdenek (2018) draws on disability studies and creep theory to disrupt norms and propose "radical alternatives to the taken-for-granted landscape of captioning and sonic accessibility". In 2016, Zdenek received a grant from The Humanities Center at Texas Tech University to produce forty examples of creative captions for popular clips from films and television shows. His aim was to challenge existing norms and trigger a larger conversation about the future of captioning with producers and viewers. Of the different research questions posed by Zdenek, the following two seem particularly relevant for this article:

- "How can we create a closer connection between visual and verbal meaning in closed captioning?"
- "Can we use animation, text effects, typography, screen placement, color, graphics/icons, and dimensionality to convey meaning not only through words and content but also through formal features of visual design?"

Zdenek designed his creative captions to address practical captioning issues that are hard to solve with traditional captions, such as the identification of multiple speakers in the same scene. He proposes the notion of character profiles, which are "composites of type, size, and color selections that are associated with and, ideally, embody each character" (2018). Ideally designed by captioners in collaboration with producers, these profiles are specific to each character, but they can also have the flexibility to adjust to changing identities. This is the case of [the following video](#), in which a human is revealed to be a humanoid robot.



Figure 8. Example of creative caption produced by Sean Zdenek (2018) to indicate a character profile

Drawing on this example, Zdenek urges captioners and producers to explore the potential of typefaces to evoke feelings, reinforce meanings, distinguish speakers and shape characters' personas.

In his captions, Zdenek addresses two examples of overlapping speech by multiple speakers, a very recurrent captioning challenge. [In the first one](#), as the screen splits into two parts divided by a blue rift reminiscent of an energy wave, all three characters speak at once. While the official captions remain at the bottom, making it very difficult for the viewers to know who is speaking, Zdenek uses the rift to place the captions close to the speakers and with a colour that matches their clothes. The reading speed remains too fast to be read by most viewers but, unlike the official captions, these creative captions manage to convey the point of the scene, which is to know who is speaking and to give access to some of their speech.



Figure 9. Example of creative caption produced by Sean Zdenek (2018) to subtitle overlapping speech

[In the next example](#), filmmaker Kevin Smith is telling a story on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* about a text message conversation with his daughter. Traditional captions would resort to a combination of direct and indirect speech to make a distinction between his description of the story and his conversation with his daughter. Zdenek disambiguates this by using text-based images to show (rather than tell) the dialogue between Smith and his daughter:

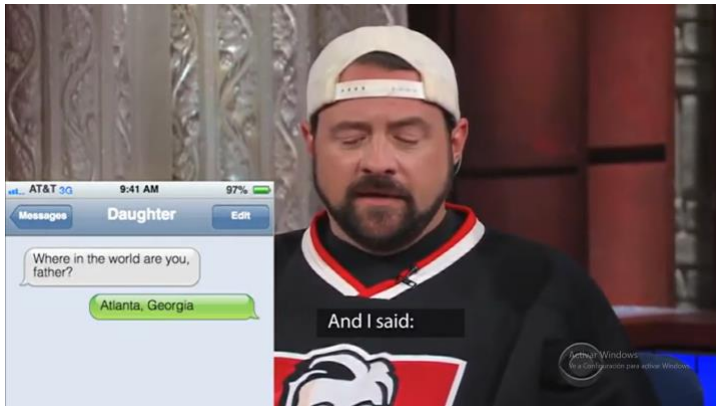


Figure 10. Creative captions produced by Sean Zdenek (2018) to combine direct and indirect speech

In Zdenek’s view (2018), captioning has been characterised from its inception by “an unexamined logophilia”, the belief that “full meaning can be read off the surfaces of sounds and their contexts, and that words can adequately account for those meanings with little or no remainder, even under constraints of space and time”. In some of his creative examples, he proposes the use of icons, symbols and other visual elements to convey sound. This also applies to music, which is often poorly served by traditional captions that often resort to stock phrases and have limited potential to convey melodic nuances. [In the following example](#), the simple and repetitive melody heard by the protagonist is conveyed through images, rather than words, in keeping with the old cinematic principle of “show, don’t tell” and the visual way in which many viewers with hearing loss experience life:



Figure 11. Creative captions produced by Sean Zdenek (2018) to subtitle music

Zdenek offers [a final example](#) that may resonate with scholars in AVT and MA, who are often engaged in the analysis of subtitling and captioning reading speeds. A critical aspect when considering the viewers' experience, reading speed is often inevitably presented through a quantitative lens, with figures of average reading speeds per film or programme. Zdenek puts a creative and qualitative spin on this by projecting a reading speed line over the speaker as he sings, thus providing viewers with an embodied experience of a concept that is often presented in a much colder and disembodied manner.

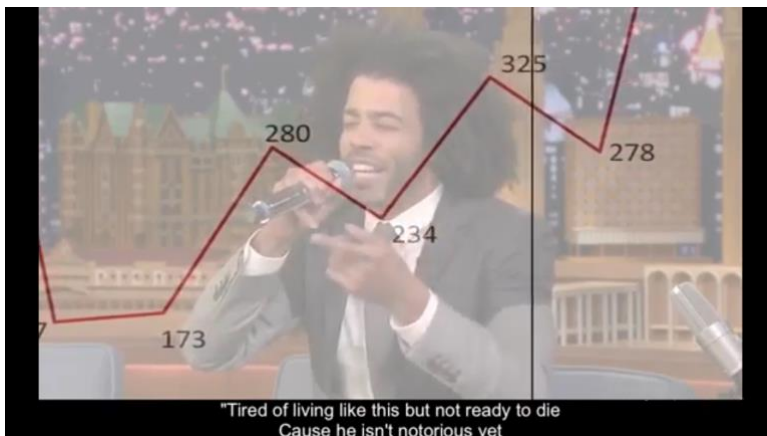


Figure 12. Creative captions produced by Sean Zdenek (2018) to show reading speed

Zdenek admits the limitations of these creative captions. Ideally, they would need to be considered in production and in a way that can account for the time, expertise and cost they require; they can potentially alter the meaning of a film and compromise the viewers' reading speed; and at present, they need to be burned on to the images, as many of the effects used cannot be presented in closed captions. Despite all this, Zdenek believes it is time to make room for captions (both on the screen and in the production process), to experiment with them, to question the "hegemony of the word" and to imagine a different future for this type of access. The final words of his article offer an apt summary of his stance and aim:

This webtext is an invitation to composition and technical communication instructors to fold captioning into the creative process, to center the needs of viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing, to design for more diverse audiences by questioning the entrenched notion of the default hearing user, and to consider how our understanding of audio accessibility might be expanded to include non-linguistic signs (Zdenek, 2018).

4.1.2. *Gallaudet: The Film*

[*Gallaudet: the film*](#) is an 8-minute short film about life at Gallaudet University (Washington, D.C.), the leading university for the education of deaf and hard of hearing students in the US. Directed by Ryan Commerson, Jules Dameron, Dirksen Bauman and Wayne Betts Jr, the film is an artistic journey into the life of the Deaf community at Gallaudet. It was released on the Internet on 1 June 2010 and it gathered 35,000 views in over 40 countries in only one week. The film opens with a black and white drawing on a sketchpad. The viewers are then drawn closer and closer until they fall into the rabbit hole to discover a new world. This includes a poetic SL depiction of the architecture of a tree, a presentation on the notion of Deaf Space, a re-imagining of the Sixth Street market outside the Gallaudet walls, flashes of Gallaudet history and glimpses of classroom discussions and student life.



Figure 13. *Gallaudet: The Film*

The film ticks some of the boxes that may be expected in this type of “about us” promotional university video, including an inspirational tone and a carefully selected choice of protagonists to show the diversity and vibrancy of the teacher and student life at Gallaudet. However, the film stands out for its determination to use what has come to be called a Deaf lens (Betts, 2010), a cinematic approach used by Deaf filmmakers to show life as experienced by Deaf people from their visual-oriented perspective and their visual-spatial language. In this film, this involves the absence of any kind of sound, as explained by Wayne Betts (2010), one of its directors:

Film language had a box around it, and I felt trapped in this box. I struggled to get out of the box by rearranging the rules. Then I realized I should just put the box aside. This box had a set of rules developed over time. Everybody else worked with sound as an essential part of their film. This influenced the editing of the movie -- sound was tied up in all of this. I'm a deaf person. I'm very visual. I didn't even think about sound at all. This realization led me to look within. My world, and how I perceived it.

Some of the main challenges faced by Betts were how to avoid relying on words to plan the film (including the scriptwriting process), how to communicate sound through editing and camera movements instead of

through audio, and how to find a tool to make the film accessible in keeping with the Deaf lens used for the film.

Betts created an ASL script, made up of video footage describing every shot in the film. As for the visual style, he wanted to avoid a fast-paced editing style with many cuts, which he did not consider representative of the Deaf experience. For him, Deaf people are constantly connected through their conversations, maintaining eye contact even when they move. The camera movement had to be fluid and constant, which led to the decision of making the film as a single continuous shot, often resorting to Steadicams that allowed the camera operators to film and walk and the viewers to be more attuned to the action. Finally, the subtitles had to be part of this experience. Traditional subtitles would force the viewers to “cut” their attention down to the bottom of the screen, thus losing the rhythm created by the movement of the camera and the participants:

Those captions feel just like an abrupt break in the edit. My eyes are drawn to the bottom of the screen. Just as I'm making eye contact with the actor, I have to look away to read the captions. I want that eye contact! I wanted to maintain eye contact, so I had the captions appear around the actors (Betts, 2010).

The subtitles were designed with different fonts and effects to blend in the style and content of the film. As the participants talk about Deaf Space and changing notions of beauty, the subtitles (and the tags identifying the participants) seem to come out of the movements of the speakers, rather than pushing their way into the images. They provide viewers with a translation of the SL used but they also contribute to the rhythm of the visuals and the music created by the movement of the camera and the speakers, thus providing an embodied experience.

Now my eyes are able to follow the captions as they appear. My eyes can still feel the flow in the sequence. I feel connected to what's going on. And that's my world. That's it.

The subtitles used in this film are thus a good example of creative MA as per the definition included above. They move away from current guidelines and are carefully designed during production so as to not only give access to the viewers but also enhance their experience with an artistic contribution that is in line with the vision of the film and its fight for a more diverse and inclusive society.

4.1.3. *Dear Hearing World*⁵

Dear Hearing World is a short film directed by Adam Docker in 2019 and based on [Raymond Antrobus' poem](#) by the same name. The poem, included in Antrobus' award-winning debut poetry collection *The Perseverance*, is an adaptation of Danez Smith's popular 2014 poem [Dear White America](#), an indictment of the racism built in the American society. *Dear Hearing World* combines Raymond's spoken delivery of his poem with deaf actress Vilma Jackson's performance in British Sign Language against urban London scenes.

Like *Gallaudet: The Film*, *Dear Hearing World* is made from a deaf perspective, although the “Deaf lens” used here is very different. *Gallaudet* presents a university that may be regarded as a bubble designed by and for Deaf people (although valid for hearing people too) –and does so without sound. Many of the teachers and students with hearing loss at Gallaudet may have some hearing, but the film chooses a homogeneous silent scenario to simplify this. In contrast, *Dear Hearing World* does not take place in a bubble, but in the hearing world, where many Deaf people have a complicated relationship with sound⁶. The film is an angry indictment of the attitude of the hearing society towards deaf people. This is very much related to the way in which scholars and artists working on blindness and accessibility denounce ocularcentrism, the longstanding bias toward vision in Western thought and culture that conflates seeing and knowing, and thus blindness and ignorance (Cachia, 2013; Kleege, 2018). The equivalent in *Dear Hearing World* would be the notion of “audio supremacy”, which triggers the protagonist's defiant indignation at how the hearing world treats deaf people and especially deaf children.

The creative subtitles used in the film, all in capital letters, share the above-mentioned features identified by Butler (2018). They are not an afterthought, they have been placed strategically so that they provide embodied and multidimensional access to the content of the video and they use several devices (different fonts, effects such as fade in and fade out,

⁵ I'm indebted to Kate Dangerfield for pointing me to this film and for her insights (amongst other aspects) into how it compares to *Gallaudet: The Film* and to the issue of intersectionality.

⁶ As explained by Ilya Kaminsky in *Deaf Republic* (2019), “the deaf don't believe in silence. Silence is the invention of the hearing.”

rhythm to follow the delivery of the poem, etc.) to enhance the rhetorical and aesthetic quality of the film.



Figure 14. Poster of *Dear Hearing World*

As in many of the examples included in this article, the creative subtitles in the film are just a tool used in the fight against the discrimination of deaf people in society. True to the notion of intersectionality⁷, this is in turn related to a more general fight against ableism (hence its above-mentioned relationship with the work by blind scholars and artists) and other forms of exclusion (which explains why the original poem is inspired by a piece against racism).

4.2. Artistic MA

This section includes an example of artistic AD and another one of artistic captioning. Here, MA is not an artistic contribution but rather the very

⁷ Intersectionality is defined by Crenshaw (1991) as a tool for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities (gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance) compound themselves to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

raison d'être of the pieces, which tap into the generative and transformational potential of accessibility.

4.2.1. Flipping and biased ADs

According to Simon Hayhoe (2018), AD is on the brink of a cultural revolution. Since it was first introduced in the US in the 1980s and then more widely in other countries at the turn of the century, it has found its way on TV, streaming platforms and live events all around the world. Hayhoe notes that this significant development has been mostly technical and linguistic (AD are increasingly publicised, technically accomplished and well-researched), but it has not offered “a revolution of attitudes”. This may now be possible with the emergence of what he calls “flipping descriptions”, a cultural revolution consisting of “taking the description out of the hands of the sighted person and handing it to the audiences it was designed to support”, as well as “making description part of the art work or making description its own form of performative art”. Whereas making the AD part of art work falls within the scope of creative MA as described in the previous section, handing over the AD to people with visual impairments and especially making description its own form of performative art leads to the notion of artistic MA or in this case artistic AD.

A good example of this is the British play *The Importance of Being Described... Earnestly?* (2018), produced by Elbow Room and directed by Chloë Clarke, a visually impaired Cardiff-based theatre-maker and AD consultant. The play was conceived out of Clarke's frustration at traditional theatre AD: its conspicuous nature (having to wear headsets makes her feel isolated rather than included), its availability (described shows only running at certain times) and its style (descriptions that attempt to be objective when they are always going to be one person's subjective impression of the play). To counter this, Clarke opted for a subjective and polyphonic AD, that is, multiple subjective descriptions working together to give a rounded picture and to give the audience the choice of what to go with. More importantly, Clarke made AD the very focus of the play.

The Importance of Being Described... Earnestly? is an improvised and interactive/participatory comedy in which director Tobias St. Michael III invites the audience to an open rehearsal of the Oscar Wilde classic *The Importance of Being Earnest* reinterpreted using AD to make it more inclusive. The rehearsing actors attempt to provide their own description of the events that unfold during the play, leading to a comedy of errors. The

show includes songs, physical comedy and the use of AD as a dramatic device that lets the audience interpret the action in a number of ways. As per the advertising line by Elbow Room (“In earnest, throw away those headsets – we’re all in this together), the play is designed for a mixed audience of sighted and visually impaired audience, the latter having their needs fully integrated into the performance.

[The trailer of the play](#) features images of a high tea in the late 19th century. The female audio description is interrupted by a male describer, who shows his preference for more modern and messier food, which, as the screen goes black, finds its way into the images, accompanied by his description. It is a clear example of generative and transformative MA, as the description generates and transforms the images, and provides the content of the play.

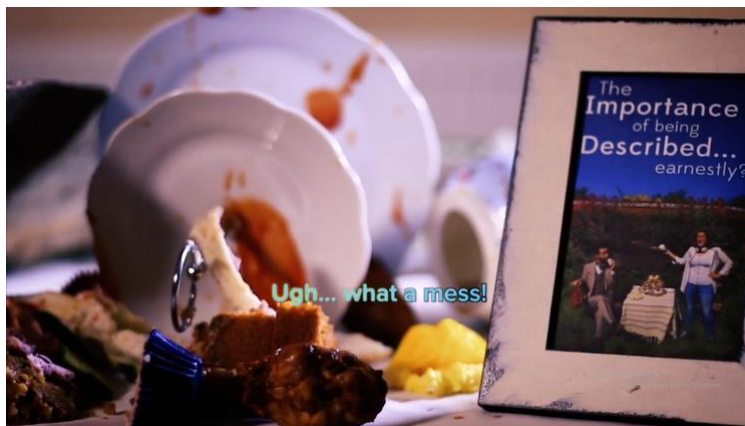


Figure 15. Trailer of *The Importance of Being Described... Earnestly?*

The experience of making this play leads Clark to believe that attitudes towards accessibility are gradually changing and that more and more artists are beginning to see AD as another tool in their toolbox. Her intention is to incorporate creative access from the very beginning in all her productions as a way to provide a platform for, and a true representation of, disabled and other marginalised groups of people. This resonates with much of what was discussed in the previous sections and is fully in line with Hayhoe’s view of AD as a participatory art form with multi-sensorial references, a discourse, a window into each other’s cultural experiences and ultimately an instrument of emancipation:

Audio description has moved from being a presentation of largely non-visual information to a participatory art form with multi-sensorial references. Through this art form, audio description has also become a discourse between all audience members, sighted and visually impaired alike. (...) Discourse and description can address issues of politics, well-being, emotion and sexuality. More importantly, this discourse can provide people with sight and visual impairment alike a glimpse into each other's cultural experiences and develop a greater understanding of perceptual experience. In this respect, audio description is now less of a support act and is now becoming an instrument of emancipation for the visually impaired community (Hayhoe, 2018).

4.2.2. Christine Sun Kim's *Closer Captions*

Christine Sun Kim is an American artist who works with drawing, painting, performance and video to explore the physicality of sound and to consider how it operates in society. Profoundly deaf since birth and raised by hearing parents, Kim quickly learnt what she calls "sound etiquette", that is, the expected behaviour regarding sound and noise –not to slam a door or make noise when eating. Abiding by these norms enabled her to be considerate but also made her feel a foreigner in a country that was not hers. Following a trip to Berlin, where she is now based, she learnt how other artists worked with sound and decided that instead of allowing sound to disempower her, she would reclaim it through art (Robinson, 2015). Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Arts and the Whitney Biennial and she has been named a TED Fellow, a Director's Fellow at MIT Media Lab and a Ford Foundation Disability Futures Fellow.

Kim communicates through ASL and uses captions to access audiovisual material. Unsurprisingly, the way sound is conveyed by captions has often featured in her work. She is very conscious of the fact that her understanding of sound in film relies entirely on a hearing captioner who does not share her world. For her, this entails three phases that are not always perfectly aligned: the sound that is produced, the captioner's interpretation of the sound and the viewer's interpretation.

In her video *Closer Captions*, Kim turns the normally hearing-centric experience of producing captions into a deaf-centric one. Similarly, to artists such as Liza Sylvestre and Carolyn Lazard, Kim reclaims her (Deaf) space in the captioning process. In order to do this, she produces what may be described as flipping captions, which take captioning out of the hands of the sighted person and hands it to the audiences it was designed to support, turning it into its own form of art. Whereas Sylvestre uses captions to

provide an account of her exclusion from audiovisual media and society as a whole (Romero-Fresco, 2021a), Kim (2020) imagines what it would be like to have captions that are closer to her experience:

I place a lot of trust in the people who write captions. But those people have a different relationship with sound and the world than I do. So I started to wonder... What would it look like if I wrote the captions myself?

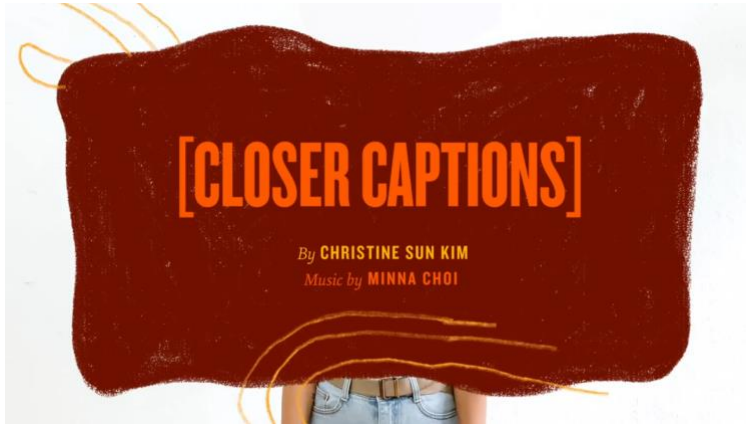


Figure 16. Christine Sun Kim's *Closer Captions*

Kim pours her interpretations and her creativity in *Closer Captions* to stretch the limits of captioning. By answering the question “Can sound be a feeling?”, she moves away from the objectivity normally found in guidelines and turns her captions into a poem. Kim's *Closer Captions* sometimes describe sounds...

[clicks of a stirring spoon]
[phone wakes up too]
[feet slapping onto bathroom tiles]
[water in rhythmic drops, drops get bigger, louder]

...other times they describe images...

[sweetness of orange sunlight]
[the sound of skin waking up]
[glitter flirting with my eyeballs]

...and sometimes they fall somewhere in between, describing neither images nor sound:

[the sound of hurt feelings scabbing over]
[the sound of temperature slowly dropping]
[the sound of stars having a conversation with each other]

Just as many of the captions produced by Liza Sylvestre in *Captioned Series* could be played out as a highly subjective AD for users with visual impairments, could the content included by Kim in some of her captions (for instance, “glitter flirting with my eyeballs” or “stars having a conversation with each other”) work as both an AD and captions? Traditionally, AD and captions are worlds apart, as one describes images for those who cannot see and the other one describes sound for those who cannot hear. Can a poetic approach to MA use the same content for both? Is poetry the meeting point between the experiences of AD and caption users?

As explained by Kim, this does not mean that she would like to have poetic captions for every film, but since these captions are possible, she would like to have the choice to opt for them. The same goes for the captioner. Just as Kim chooses the sign language interpreter she is going to be working with (and who will effectively be her voice), she would like to choose captioners depending on the approach she thinks is best for a particular film (Antrobus, 2021). Although this is not feasible at the moment, it is the future that, like Zdenek, she is imagining for MA.

Yet, as was the case of the rest of the artists included in this section, Kim’s use of poetic captions and her lobbying for more creative MA are only a means to what Kim describes ultimately as a political aim:

A lot of us, by default, become activists because we've spent a lot of our lives fighting to get and ensure our basic rights. Whereas hearing people don't even question that right. (...) They are the ones who are looking and creating history and we are just pushed to the side. Being Deaf has always been a political thing. I don't know if it will ever stop being political (in Martirosyan, 2020).

5. A sense of urgency

Creativity is becoming an important topic in AVT and MA, which may be explained by different factors. The increase in the provision of AVT and

MA services not only on TV but also on streaming platforms may be shifting attention to creativity as a differentiating element. Likewise, the growing interest by filmmakers and especially theatre directors in integrating accessibility into the production process is also resulting in creative approaches. However as stressed in this article, it is important to make a distinction between creativity from a translational viewpoint and creativity through an accessibility lens.

Over the past years, and riding on the wave of universal design and Greco's universalist account of accessibility, many scholars have advocated for a consideration of MA as a service that concerns people with and without disabilities. I have supported this wide notion of MA, arguing that having blind and deaf audiences join forces with foreign viewers and other audiences can only lead to a win-win scenario, given that they are all "in the same boat" (Romero-Fresco, 2018: 194):

Foreign viewers can benefit from the legitimacy and impact obtained by MA through legislation and human rights debates, whereas the traditional groups included within MA (deaf and blind) will finally enlarge their size and get the strength in numbers that they need.

Bringing together the quantitative strength of AVT and the legitimacy of MA has certainly proved useful to raise awareness and to increase the provision of these services but, as noted by Ellcesor (2015), it has also brought about complications. Firstly, appealing to users that are not disabled may contribute to reinforcing "social hierarchies in which what really matters are the benefits that universal design brings to other (normative, able-bodied) people". Secondly, Ellcesor mentions the common argument put forward under the principles of universal design that everyone is or will be disabled in one way or another, which is heavily criticised by the above-discussed *Dear Hearing World* ("I am equal parts sick of your "oh, I'm hard of hearing too, just because you've been on an airplane or suffered head colds"). For Ellcesor, this argument denies the "lived experiences of disability and the importance of a disability identity or culture for many people". In her view, this may perpetuate ableist attitudes by failing to question, change or destroy them. Thirdly, amalgamating MA and AVT (and their users) may result in the consideration of accessibility measures as "options" or "customizations", that is, a matter of consumer choice rather than an issue of civil rights and political participation.

This article may help to add one more argument to the case made by Ellcessor. When it comes to the introduction and use of creative approaches, conflating AVT and MA or using a translational lens may slow down the process. From a translational viewpoint, creative practices that move beyond traditional guidelines trigger questions about terminology (what is the right term to refer to these practices?), transmedia adaptations (is a creative accessible version one more element in the transmedia storyverse that characterises contemporary multimedia productions?) and originality (is a very creative accessible version still a version of the original or does it become a new original?). These are interesting questions, but they are not pressing in society. It is hard to see how they can persuade the industry to embrace creative practices because they are presented as a bonus, an icing on the cake that may interest directors and producers who are willing to experiment and test new approaches.

In contrast, as seen in the examples included in this article, creative MA is a critical matter when considered from the standpoint of disability studies and crip theory and through the eyes of disabled artists. There is a sense of urgency derived from the belief that current MA provision does not always yield a fully embodied and multisensory experience and that creative accessibility is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the wider and political goals of inclusion and participation in a society that is still designed by and for able people. The work the artists included in this article and of many others question my (inadvertently ableist) assumption. We may be navigating the same mediascape and using the same access services, but we are not in the same boat.

Here's hoping that the use of creativity in MA can soon be adopted widely as a necessary step in the path towards a more equal and just society.

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Acknowledgements

The 14th issue of *Cultus* in 2021 has been published successfully. We would like to thank the following people who kindly acted as referees who have certainly ensured the high quality of the volume.

Alexa Alfer – University of Westminster

Adele D’Arcangelo – Università di Bologna

Elisa Fina – Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia

Viviana Gaballo – Università di Macerata

Yves Gambier – Emeritus University of Turku

Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk – University of Łódź

David Limon – University of Ljubljana

Teresa Musacchio – Università di Padova

Giuseppe Palumbo – Università di Trieste

Loredana Polezzi – Stony Brook University

Irene Ranzato – Università Sapienza

Alessandra Rossetti – University of Antwerp

Francesca Seracini – Università Cattolica Milano

Serenella Zanotti – Università Roma Tre