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Special Issue: Translation and Money

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATION AND MONEY – A MEANINGFUL SYMBIOSIS

Translation and money are deeply imbricated in many different ways. From the financial underpinnings of translation practice, and the interlingual operations involved in the transmission of business information throughout the globalized economy, to the theoretical roots of the concept of “translation” in the notion of exchange and equivalence, it is difficult to completely dissociate the two. At both the material and the metaphoric levels, they remain deeply entwined, testimony to the human need to transact across linguistic, cultural and, of course, currency borders.

However, most of the discussions that have taken place till now in Translation Studies about monetary matters have been partial and circumscribed. We have books and special issues about financial and economic translation as a specialized field of practice;¹ manuals designed to help the professional translator negotiate the financial aspects of their profession;² case studies about the translations of classic works of economic theory;³ and also theoretical articles applying to translation ideas from the economic forum, such as risk theory and complexity thinking.⁴ But there have been few attempts to bring all of these aspects together in a more wide-ranging survey of the relationship, and this is the lacuna that this special issue seeks to fill.

When we put out the call for the special issue, we explicitly covered all of the above aspects and were gratified to receive a diverse range of articles in response. In fact, the diversity is such that the challenge has been discover links between them and to unite them all into a coherent whole.

Hence, the decision was taken to organize them in a broad spectrum running from theoretical to practical and back again, focusing in turn on the abstract and the concrete, the general and the particular, the historical and the contemporary. Following an Epigraph that sets the tone for the whole issue (**Philip Larkin's** famous poem “Money” translated into Portuguese by **Rui Carvalho Homem**), the article section opens with a theoretical reflection by **Karen Bennett** about the historical analogies between money and translation as parallel systems of equivalence. Building on earlier works by Robinson (1997) and Liu (1999), it traces the rise of the universal equivalent from its appearance in the Hellenistic Empire, and growing respectabilization in the mercantile climate of Early Modern Europe, to its apex in the age of the gold standard and the prescriptive dictionary tradition, before it finally gave way to the uncertainties of floating currencies and floating signifiers in the second part of the twentieth century. The article is particularly attentive to the moral alarm that universal equivalence provoked in philosophers like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas

¹ For example, Barbin and Monjean-Decaudin (2019), Biel and Sosoni (2017) and Gallego-Hernández (2015).

² For example, Durban (2010) and Gouadec (2010), reviewed here by Phillippa Bennett and Aloísio Ferreira respectively.

³ For example, Musto and Amini (2018) on the translation history of Marx's *Capital* or Tribe (2014) on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.

⁴ For example, Marais & Meylaerts (2018); Pym, (2017); Neves (2019).

and Karl Marx, as well as contemporary manifestations of the same concern in arguments about untranslatability (e.g. Apter, 2013) and “eco-translation” (e.g. Cronin, 2017). By highlighting the historical parallelisms between discourses about money and discourses about translation, the article seeks to demonstrate that the analogies between them run deeper than mere metaphors, telling us something important about the values that have governed Western culture at different points in time

The next article, by **Sabeur Mdallel**, continues the historical theme but shifts to the Middle East, with a study of the Arabic translation movement of the eighth to the tenth centuries. Based in Baghdad under the Abbasid caliphate, this was the largest translation effort ever in terms of its scope, yielding versions in Arabic of almost all the (non-religious) Greek and Hellenistic scholarship that was available in late antiquity, as well as works from other cultures such as Persia and India. Taking as a starting point the exceptional remuneration that the translators enjoyed (the Banū Mūsa brothers apparently paid an in-house translator 500 dīnārs a month, the equivalent of 132,000 USD in today's terms, while al-Ma'mūn, the seventh Caliph of the Abbasids, paid the weight of the book in gold), Mdallel explores the reasons for this remarkable added value, concentrating particularly on the motivations of the various patrons and sponsors and the material underpinnings of the endeavour. He concludes that, as the Arabic empire reached its territorial limits, translation was not only a response to specific (tangible and symbolic) needs, but also a new means of appropriating the other, a way of capturing the infidels' spirit and knowledge without actually taking their lives. However, it would not have been possible had there not been a material and institutional infrastructure that stimulated the acquisition of books and creation of libraries, generating an intellectual culture that valued and encouraged the pursuit of knowledge by all members of Abbasid society.

Abeer Khatoon's article remains in the Middle East but shifts the attention to the iconography of Syrian banknotes, understood as translations of a nation at war. Focusing on the issue of new 500-, 1000-, 2000- and 5000-pound notes in the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict, the article addresses the power of abstract icons to reinforce and/or deflate questions of power and representation, and offers insights into the (re)fashioning of national identity at a time of political crisis. We learn, for example, how images glorifying Syria's ancient history (like the city of Palmyra) and/or markers of modern development (like the oilfields of Deir ez-Zor or the Tabqua dam) had to be abandoned when those territories fell into the hands of enemy militias; how the pan-Arab narrative popularized under Hafez al-Assad was abandoned in favour of symbols of national unity under his son Bashar; and particularly how the new 2000- and 5000-pound notes, issued in response to the galloping inflation, provoked controversy with the political implications of the images chosen.

Peter Sandrini's paper, which follows, is the first of three articles that look at the impact of financial and economic matters on translators' lives. It focuses particularly upon the economic impacts of translation technology, proposing a model to account for the depreciation of skills caused by such developments (the translators' “obsolescence cycle”),

and highlighting the need for translators to adapt and reconfigure their expertise by shifting towards more managerial (advisory, supervisory or planning) roles. It argues that more attention should be given to translation policy in areas such as ideology, organization, technology, quality and human resources, as a way of avoiding inefficient ad-hoc translation practices, and predicts that translator training programmes will be challenged to shift their emphasis from production-focused models towards the formation of translation policy experts capable of setting up a translation infrastructure within a company or an organisation. In this way, Sandrini concludes, translators will be better able to integrate into business processes, allowing the management of multilingual communication to fully take advantage of all forms of technological support.

Marco Neves's article explores the issue of double taxation, a problem that affects translators with clients in countries other than their country of residence, and translation companies that work with foreign suppliers. Beginning with a practical analysis of the difficulties caused by a particularly opaque document required by the Portuguese tax authorities to overcome the problem (the 21-RFI double taxation form), it goes on to examine the translational procedures required to make the form intelligible to those agents that require it, in doing so, contributing to the much-touted expansion of the traditional interlingual conceptualization of translation to include intralingual, inter-epistemic and even human-machine operations. The final part of the article uses complexity theory to connect these two aspects, demonstrating how even seemingly mundane documents such as a tax form can provide valuable insights into the complexity of translation processes.

Armando Magaia's article reports the results of an empirical study investigating the financial challenges affecting translators and interpreters in Mozambique. By means of a survey questionnaire, qualitative and quantitative data was collected with a view to building a profile of such professionals and gauging the levels of financial security they enjoyed. The results show that they are mostly young adults, who offer freelance services on a part-time basis while holding down a full-time job elsewhere, and that few of them have a pension scheme. The author concludes by suggesting that these insights might be used in the planning of translation and interpreting courses in order to equip students with skills beyond their immediate field of expertise and enhance their graduate employability.

The next article, by **Marie-France Guénette**, is concerned with training translators to work with economic and financial texts. Drawing on examples from the Canadian financial sector, it discusses the challenges raised for translators in four main areas: macroeconomics and regulation, accounting, banking and investments, and insurance. Each area is described in detail, with examples of text types, resources, and necessary skills, and once again, recommendations are made about the type of content that could be integrated into translator training with the goal of making this subspecialty accessible to those who do not qualify as subject matter experts.

The final article of the issue, by **Emily Duffy**, resonates with the very first one in its concern with translation as a form of (taboo) transaction. Taking as a starting-point Martha

Nussbaum's (1998) observations about the medieval objections to philosophizing for money ("it should be a pure spiritual gift, and it is degraded by the receipt of a wage") and its similarities with sex work, it explores the analogies between translation and erotic labor, suggesting that the marginal nature of both may have to do with a cultural aversion to alterity or otherness. After tracing the erotic dimensions of translation as depicted through theory and metaphor, it discusses the figure of the yoginī from Hindu Tantric religion, and the colonial construct of the "sleeping dictionary", before closing with examples from the contemporary intersections of translation, global commerce, and sex work. Sex workers, Duffy concludes, should not be framed as trafficking victims or dangers to society, but rather as agents of change, or indeed translators, who make meaningful contributions to the circulation of information and development of global thought.

All of these eight articles, together with the two book reviews that follow, illuminate different facets of the symbiosis that has always existed between translation and money, proving that their relationship is far complex than single-dimension analyses allow.

Karen Bennett

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EPIGRAPH

Money

Quarterly, is it, money reproaches me:
 'Why do you let me lie here wastefully?
I am all you never had of goods and sex.
 You could get them still by writing a few cheques.'

So I look at others, what they do with theirs:
 They certainly don't keep it upstairs.
By now they've a second house and car and wife:
 Clearly money has something to do with life

— In fact, they've a lot in common, if you enquire:
 You can't put off being young until you retire,
And however you bank your screw, the money you save
 Won't in the end buy you more than a shave.

I listen to money singing. It's like looking down
 From long french windows at a provincial town,
The slums, the canal, the churches ornate and mad
 In the evening sun. It is intensely sad.

Philip Larkin, *High Windows* (London: Faber, 1974) p. 40

Dinheiro

Cada três meses, talvez, o dinheiro censura-me:
 "Porque me deixas para aqui sem me dar uso?
Sou tudo o que nunca tiveste em bens e em sexo.
 Ainda os podias gozar se passasses uns cheques."

Olho então para os outros, vendo o que fazem com o deles:
 Não o guardam no colchão, com toda a certeza.
Já vão na segunda casa e mulher e carro:
 Que o dinheiro tem algo a ver com a vida, fica claro

— De facto, têm muito em comum, se virmos bem:
 Não se pode adiar para a reforma o ser-se jovem;
E pondo a queca no banco, o dinheiro a poupar
 Só compra um último serviço: que nos venham barbear.

Escuto o canto do dinheiro. É como contemplar,
 Do alto de amplas janelas, uma vila de interior:
Os casebres, o canal, a barroca e doida igreja
 Ao sol do fim da tarde. É uma intensa tristeza.

Philip Larkin, *Janelas Altas*, tradução e introdução de
Rui Carvalho Homem (Lisboa: Cotovia, 2004) p. 93

SYSTEMS OF EXCHANGE: TRANSLATION, MONEY AND THE ECOLOGICAL TURN

Karen Bennett*
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ABSTRACT: It is no coincidence that Marx, in the *Grundrisse*, spoke of money as a system of translation, while Saussure, in his *Cours de linguistique générale*, describes translation in terms taken from the political economy (Liu, 1999). Both are systems of exchange based on a concept of universal equivalence in which the exchange value attributed to the token (the coin or verbal sign) is unrelated to the inherent value of the material carrier. This has not always been the case, of course. Historically, coins and then paper money developed from the use as currency of intrinsically valuable commodities such as gold, while in semiotics, the conventional symbol evolved out of the motivated sign or icon. This paper traces the rise and demise of the universal equivalent in both translation and economics, and discusses the implications of the move back to an embedded and embodied understanding of meaning/value, with particular attention to the ecological framework proposed by Michael Cronin (2017).

KEYWORDS: Translation, Money, Universal Equivalent, Transcendental Signified, Ecological Turn

1. Introduction

At the beginning of his chapter, 'Principles of Correspondence' (1964), Eugene Nida uses the metaphor of the currency exchange to describe what the translator has to do to overcome the lack of natural correspondence between languages. In a quote attributed to Constance West (1932, p. 34), he states: 'Whoever takes upon himself to translate contracts a debt; to discharge it, he **must pay not with the same money, but the same sum**' (Nida, 2003, p. 156, emphasis added). The analogy is appealing. It suggests the existence of some gold standard of semantic equivalence which can en(in)sure the 'meaning' of the words irrespective of language or culture, a value that will hold firm in all contexts and situations despite the vagaries of the markets. Given that Nida was a missionary whose translational interests were mostly centred on the Bible, this makes sense: for him, God will have been the ultimate source of meaning and value, and author of a message that was universally intelligible to all peoples on earth.

Some two thousand years before, Cicero (46 BCE) used a very similar metaphor to illustrate his strategy of translating 'sense for sense':

I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language. For I did not think I ought **to count them out to the reader like coins, but to pay them by weight, as it were** (Cicero, 46 BCE, emphasis added).

As Douglas Robinson (1997, p. 2) has pointed out, the Latin verb that Cicero uses here for translate ('reddere') actually means "pay back" or "render a debt", so the metaphor is similar to Nida's. However, Cicero here is explicitly contrasting this method of translating

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according to value (or ‘weight’ as he calls it) with one that is fixated on the material carrier (counting out words like coins). For him, and for the many translators and translation theorists that have quoted him in support of their own translation strategies, this method is unquestionably superior because it focuses on the value that the message will have in the target culture rather than upon the material form that it takes in the source text.

Since then, many other translation theorists have made the monetary analogy. Robinson (1997), in his survey of the field, focuses particularly upon Dryden, who, in his 1680 preface to a translation of Ovid’s *Epistles*, uses a similar metaphor to argue against the fluent but overly free translations of the libertine translators of his time (‘tis not always that a man were contented to have a present made him, when he expects the payment of a debt’); and again in his ‘Dedication of the Aeneis’ (1700) to refer to the problems of exchanging from a strong foreign currency (Latin) into a weak local one (the English vernacular):

Words are not so easily coined as money; and yet we see that credit not only of banks but of exchequers cracks, when little comes in, and much goes out. Virgil called upon me in every line for some new word: and I paid so long, that I was almost bankrupt...
(Dryden, 1700 in Robinson, 1997)

As Robinson (1997, p. 3) puts it, the translator is envisaged as ‘a kind of lexical stockbroker or real estate speculator, amassing the “property” of “proper words” or verbal propriety through personal initiative, entrepreneurship, enlightened self-interest’.

What money and translation have in common is that they depend upon a concept of equivalence which enables one thing to be exchanged for another in a relatively unproblematic way. The similarity has been noted by many. For example, Saussure (1959), describing how language works, compares it to economics:

Here as in political economy we are confronted with the notion of *value*; both sciences are concerned, with a *system for equating things of different orders* – labor and wages in one and a signifier and signified in the other. (Saussure, 1959, p. 79)

Marx, for his part, in *Grundrisse* (1973, p. 93), presents it the other way round, likening money to ‘ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable’, and for which is required a ‘third, objective entity which can be re-exchanged for everything without distinction’. Marc Shell, interpreting Marx, makes this more explicit:

The act of monetary exchange, like the act of linguistic translation, depends on a **socially recognized (*gültige*) universal equivalent**, which seems to homogenize everything, or to reduce everything to a common denominator. (Shell, 1982, p. 107; emphasis added)

In this article, I aim to explore the theoretical and historical analogies between money and translation as parallel systems of equivalence. I’m not the first to do so – others before me, particularly Douglas Robinson, in his short article of 1997, and Lydia Liu in her book *Tokens*

of Exchange (1999),¹ have produced very detailed and valuable reflections on the theme, which I draw on to some extent. But my aim is to tie in this discussion with some of the more recent developments that have taken place in translation theory, such as the discourse of untranslatability that has acquired considerable traction in the last decade, and the so-called ‘ecological turn’, protagonised by Michael Cronin (2017), amongst others. In particular, I trace the development, and subsequent demise, of the notion of the **universal equivalent**, which has motivated discussion about translation for the best part of two thousand years. I hope to show that the analogies between translation and monetary exchange run deeper than mere metaphors, and that they may tell us something important about the values that have governed Western culture at different points in time.

2. The universal equivalent

The concept of the universal equivalent, in both language and economics, is surely a product of globalization. When human communities lived in relative isolation from one other, in circumscribed and homogenous groups, there was little need for it in either domain. It is therefore no coincidence that reflections about both first arose in the context of the Hellenistic empire, arguably the first globalized market in the western tradition.

Let’s look at money first.

Money is anything that people use to symbolically represent the value of other things for the purpose of exchanging goods and services. Livestock, grain, salt, beads, amber, jade, cloth, oil and, particularly, shells have all been used as currencies at different times, taking over from the earlier form of barter, or direct exchange.² There are various advantages to having a symbolic form of value: money splits a single barter transaction into two separate acts (a purchase and a sale), which eliminates the problems caused when the parties involved in the deal have incompatible wants; it allows the two transactions to be separated in time; and of course, tokens like shells, beads and coins are more transportable than actual goods, and can also be stored (Faure, 2013a, p. 7). Above all, though, money enables people to easily convert goods or wealth of one kind into another, facilitating transactions. As popular author Yuval Noah Harari puts it:

Money is a universal medium of exchange that enables people to convert almost everything into everything else. Brawn gets converted to brain when a discharged soldier finances his college tuition with his military benefits. Land gets converted into loyalty when a baron sells property to support his retainers. Health is converted to justice when a physician uses her fees to hire a lawyer – or bribe a judge. It is even possible to convert sex into salvation as fifteenth-century prostitutes did when they slept with men for money, which they in turn used to buy indulgences from the Catholic Church. (Harari, 2015, p. 199)

Money is thus what makes possible translation between different commodities or services in the trading relationship. So, we might ask, what is it that plays the role of money

¹ See also Robinson (2017a, pp. 33-66) for a very detailed critique of Liu’s argument.

² See Davies (2002, pp. 1-61) and Faure (2013a) on the development of money out of barter.

in language? If we think that natural languages are as different from each other (in the way they interpret the world) as two different commodities or services, then what is it that makes translation possible at all?

The answer is a particular conception of ‘meaning’ that Jacques Derrida (1998, pp. 20-24) calls the *transcendental signified*, alluding to the signifier/signified dichotomy inaugurated by Saussure (1959).³ This refers to the belief, dominant in the West, that the ‘meaning’ of the sign (the ‘signified’ in Saussurean terminology) is separable from the form (the ‘signifier’) and can therefore be transported into other contexts with minimal loss. This abstract transferrable ‘meaning’ is what plays the role of the universal equivalent in translation, just as money does in financial transactions, and is a prerequisite for any kind of translation, including (intra)lingual reformulation and summarizing.

But this understanding of meaning as transcendental and transferrable has not always been the dominant one. Many communities have believed that their language is untranslatable because it expresses (indeed *performs*) meanings that are particular to them alone, and they have consequently resisted the universalisms of (the various) globalizations on these grounds. For example, the Jews of Hellenistic Alexandria believed that their god was untranslatable because he embodied the values of the Jewish community alone; their Holy Book therefore had to be in Hebrew, the language in which the world had been called into being (Greenstein, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Similar sentiments were expressed in the third-century *Corpus Hermeticum* (Treatise XVI, Asclepius) attributed to the mythic figure of Hermes Trismegistus (Fowden, 1993, p. 37). More recently, we have seen such ideas emerging in various parts of the globe in response to the globalizing effects of English (Apter, 2013, discussed below). In all such cases, ‘meaning’ is not understood as transcendental but rather embedded in a particular language and culture, and bound up with the materiality of the sign.

The onset of the transcendental signified (and therefore translatability) in the Western tradition can, I believe, be dated like the creation of currency. I shall argue here that that it coincides with the onset of Christianity, which (as a philosophical system) occurred when Judaism came into contact with Greek philosophy in the globalized culture of the Hellenistic Empire (Fredriksen, 2000; Doherty, n.d.) – though, because of philosophical and religious objections to the mercantilism of thought, it only reached true fruition in the Early Modern period.

In fact, a convenient marker for the birth of the transcendental signified might be the myth that appeared in Hellenistic Alexandria in the late first century BCE to legitimize the Greek translation of the Jewish Bible that had been made a couple of centuries before. In Philo Judaeus’s version of the tale from 20BCE (the one which was subsequently accepted by the Fathers of the Christian Church), seventy scholars, all working

³ See also the term ‘semantic invariant’ used by lexicographers (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1996) to refer to a core definition of a term that all the instances of its use have in common. This approach postulates that there may exist universals (‘semantic primes’) that have the same meaning in every language.

independently from each other, miraculously produced exactly the same translation in seventy days, and for this are likened to prophets, operating under divine inspiration:

Therefore, being settled in a secret place, and nothing even being present with them except the elements of nature, the earth, the water, the air, and the heaven [...] they, like **men inspired, prophesied**, not one saying one thing and another another, but **every one of them employed the self-same nouns and verbs, as if some unseen prompter had suggested all their language to them.**" (Philo, *Life of Moses* II. 7. 37; emphasis added)

In semiotic terms, this represents what Seidman (2006, p. 52) calls 'a radical reorientation of the very conception of translation'. Rather than the horizontal transfer of meanings through space between fallible human translators, as in the earlier account by Aristean (130 BCE), Philo figures the relationship as a vertical one, a flow of meaning that originates in the divine space and moves downwards into the human realm through inspired prophet-like translators. The implication is that the Hebrew and the Greek are exact equivalents because they are translations of the divine meaning, which exists in some transcendental Platonic realm.

This of course meant the splitting of (what had previously been) the motivated sign. For the Jews, the actual sounds of the Hebrew language and the shape of its letters were meaningful: even today, their ancient scrolls are carefully tended as material objects, copied with care, and ritually read aloud in synagogues, even if the congregations present do not really understand the language (Holtz, 2006). But from the moment that Paul of Tarsus (a contemporary of Philo Judaeus) began to transmit the Jesus message to gentiles, founding Churches whose membership depended on faith rather than strict observance of the law, the Hebrew carrier lost value; the meaning of the text now became separated from the words in which it was couched, laying the conditions for translatability. That is to say, within the Christian tradition, the material part of the sign gradually ceased to have inherent value in itself and became an arbitrary vehicle for the (now transcendental) meaning.

Interestingly, the whole notion of the arbitrariness of the sign – which of course is a fundamental principle of Saussurean semiotics – is explained by him using the analogy of money:

It is not the metal in a piece of money that fixes its value. A coin nominally worth five francs may contain less than half its worth of silver. Its value will vary according to the amount stamped upon it and according to its use inside or outside a political boundary. This is even more true of the linguistic signifier, which is not phonic but incorporeal—constituted not by its material substance but by the differences that separate its sound-image from others. (Saussure, 1959, pp. 118-9)

Thus, it is probably no coincidence that the introduction of coined money into Judaea seems to have occurred at around the same time as the translation of the Hebrew bible, provoking a similar reaction of outrage amongst the Jews. According to Marc Shell (1982, p. 2), the Jewish rabbis felt that their law was being contaminated with mercantile notions

and launched a far-ranging debate about the analogies between intellectual and material exchange.

As for the Greeks, they had been through a similar discomfiture some centuries earlier when coinage was first introduced into their culture. Coined money seems to have originated in around the seventh century BCE in Asia Minor, reaching Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE; and with it, payment by *count* (as occurs when a non-coin commodity is used for money) was replaced by payment by *weight* (Faure, 2013a, p. 8). This development seems to have generated a certain amount of moral unease: from the start, it was associated with cautionary tales, such as the legends of Midas and Croesus (both of whom were credited with the invention of coinage), and later, philosophers like Heraclitus and Plato, recognizing the parallels between economic and intellectual exchange, also denounced the monetary transaction of commodities and the mercantilism of thought (Shell, 1982, p. 2).

In fact, the Greeks, in this early globalized marketplace, had a theory that accounted for the translation of an object's intrinsic use-value into the symbolic terms of artificial exchange-value, though it was charged with negative connotations. 'Chrematistics', as it was called (from *chrema*, 'money'), was different from 'economics', which was the realization and exploitation of use-value for the purpose of running a household [*oikos*]. According to Keith Tribe, 'economy' was much closer to our present term 'ecology' in that it referred to a socially embedded understanding of value, 'a self-organising and self-correcting system in which the connections between parts and whole are not immediately evident, nor reducible to any law-like functioning, but where interference with one part could lead to unforeseeable consequences for the whole' (Tribe, 2015, p. 2).⁴

In a culture where the *telos* of every human being was the cultivation of the soul, money was, ideally, only a means to an end, a way of providing the leisure with which to do this. Chrematistics, which involved the pursuit of profit for its own sake, made money into an end in itself, and in doing so, revealed a "degraded, materialist and above all servile approach to the world" (Hawkes, 2015, p. 9). As Aristotle put it in his *Politics*:

How can that be wealth of which a man may have a great abundance and yet perish with hunger, like Midas in the fable, whose insatiable prayer turned everything that was set before him into gold? Hence men seek after a better notion of riches and of the art of getting wealth than the mere acquisition of coin, and they are right. For natural riches and the natural art of wealth-getting are a different thing; in their true form they are part of the management of a household [*oikos*]; whereas retail trade is the art of producing wealth, not in every way, but by exchange. And it is thought to be concerned with coin; for coin is the unit of exchange and the measure or limit of it. And there is no bound to the riches which spring from this art of wealth getting. (Aristotle, 1999, p. 15)

⁴ See also Polanyi (2001[1944]), whose concept of 'embeddedness' expresses the notion that the economy is not autonomous but subordinate to social relations, politics and religion. According to him, it was the Classical economists, Malthus and Ricardo, who inverted this relation, subordinating society to the logic of the market.

Thus, the onset of the universal equivalent, in both language and economics, was viewed by many people of Antiquity as a noxious development, a rupturing of the 'natural' healthy form/meaning relationship inherent in the motivated sign.

It should be pointed out, however, that the liberation of value from its material carrier did not happen overnight in either language or economics. In the case of language, I have argued elsewhere (Bennett, 2018, 2022) that there was a long period after Philo Judaeus and Paul of Tarsus in which the Christian tradition was pulled in two directions, back towards a performative understanding of meaning (as manifested in the rituals and icons of the early Church) and forward towards the fully arbitrary sign of modernity. It was only in the Early Modern period, with the Protestant Reformation, that a decisive break was made with the iconicism of the ancients, and the representational understanding of meaning took over definitively from the performative one, bringing full translatability.

Precisely the same kind of slow dematerialization happened with money. The earliest coins were made of precious metals and their value derived from their material substance, measured by purity and weight. But when the coins became standardized and stamped with inscriptions guaranteeing their worth, the material carrier was rendered insignificant (Faure, 2013a, pp. 9-14), producing the situation of arbitrariness described by Saussure (1959, p. 118), above.

The Aristotelian attitude that money was only a means to a higher end persisted throughout the medieval period, to the extent that usury (strictly the charging of interest on loans, but often understood more broadly as the quest for unfair profit) was viewed as a mortal sin by Christians.⁵ Thus, a major revolution was required to change this mindset. This occurred in the sixteenth century with the Protestant Reformation, which put the universal equivalent at the centre of the picture in both economics and language. As the feudal system started to break down across Europe, a new trading class, the bourgeoisie, came into the ascendancy. The values of the old religion, which not only prohibited usury but also impeded social mobility by imposing unconditional obedience to authority, started to be called into question. Usury was gradually legitimized, and exchange value began to take over definitively from use-value, allowing all kinds of things to be commodified that had previously been considered beyond the pale.

A landmark in this process was the development of paper money, marking a further stage in the dematerialization process. Originating in the promissory notes that could be redeemed by (gold or silver) coin upon presentation, this was introduced in Amsterdam and London in the mid seventeenth century by goldsmith bankers. When the demand came to be satisfied not by gold coins but by the issue of new goldsmith-banker receipts, money was effectively liberated from its dependence upon precious metals, marking the beginning of money creation by banks (Faure, 2013b, pp. 6-7).

Once again, a parallel development took place in the field of language as the material part of the sign was devalued and its referential meaning became everything. In English,

⁵ See Cendejas Bueno (2017) and Wykes (2003, pp. 28- 38) on the Scholastic extension of Aristotelian thought on usury in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

the rich elaborate Ciceronian style of rhetoric beloved of the Elizabethans, which glorified in the cadences and shapes of the sentences, fell out of fashion to be replaced by a pared-down purified discourse which constrained the proliferation of meaning and claimed to offer transparent window onto a pre-existing truth. Representing an ‘extreme form of Platonism’ (Brett, 1999, p. 19), this was first developed in the religious sphere by Protestants as a way of bringing God’s word to the ordinary man without the mediation of priests, rituals or icons, and was continued by the scientists of the Royal Society, in their attempts to forge a clear and objective discourse that could serve as a tool for the new knowledge (see Bennett, 2019).

By the end of the seventeenth century, the process of disembodiment was virtually complete in economics and in language, and the universal equivalent was firmly installed as the arbiter of value in both domains. The problem that the merchants and the early scientists found, however, was how to actually *fix* value in both domains. As money and language were now purely conventional signs, what was to prevent their value from changing in accordance with the use that was made of them?

In the case of language, this was indeed a major source of discussion in the seventeenth century, as Latin – the great *lingua franca* of the medieval period – fell into decline. Particularly in the domain of science, which inherited the Platonic quest for an objective factual knowledge that was true for all times and places, there were attempts to create artificial philosophical languages, whose meanings would be fixed by convention.⁶ Even in the everyday natural vernaculars, there was pressure to pin down the meanings of words: in some countries, such as France and Spain, academies were set up to regulate usage, and by the eighteenth century, (prescriptive) dictionaries proliferated in most European languages. However, it was the bilingual dictionaries which did the most to promote the idea of equivalence between languages by presenting terms and their translations side by side on the same page (Duval, 2008, pp. 273-4).

As for monetary value, this had traditionally been fixed at the national level by means of a standard, which defined the unit into which all other forms of money were convertible: in medieval England, for example, the ‘pound sterling’ was defined as a pound weight of sterling silver (Cameron and Neal, 2003, p. 299), while Sweden, from 1625, used a copper standard, essentially because its government was part owner of the largest copper mine in Europe (Eichengreen, 2008, p. 7-9). However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an international system developed that sought to anchor the values of different currencies to the same bollard, producing a truly *universal* equivalent for the first time. The International Gold Standard, as it was called, was launched when the British government, after the Napoleonic Wars, decided to fix the value of the pound to a gold sovereign, defined as 113.0016 grains of fine (pure) gold (Cameron and Neal, 2003, p. 299). Given Britain’s preeminent role in world commerce, other countries were affected by its economic fluctuations; hence, one by one they joined it on the standard until, by the

⁶ See, for example, the proposals of John Wilkins, George Dalgarno and of course Leibniz (Eco, 1997).

beginning of the twentieth century, almost all the important trading nations had adhered. It worked, Eichengreen explains, because all countries were committed to maintaining convertibility:

In the countries at the center of the system – Britain, France, and Germany – there was no doubt that officials would ultimately do what was necessary to defend the central bank's gold reserve and maintain the convertibility of the currency. (Eichengreen, 2008, p. 31)

Meanwhile, in language, the notion that everything was translatable, via some transcendental and universal 'meaning', also dominated attitudes to translator training, which got under way in a systematic fashion after the Second World War.⁷ The concept of equivalence featured in some form or another in the various training manuals that appeared in the second half of the century,⁸ and some linguists actually defined translation in these terms: Catford, for example, defines it as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by **equivalent** textual material in another language (TL)' (1969, p. 20; my emphasis).

The plain language movement can also be understood as resulting from the triumph of the transcendental signified, in the sense that it prioritizes referential meaning over aesthetic, emotive or formal concerns (Bennett, 2019). Dating from the Early Modern period, in the context of the Protestant reformation and Scientific revolution, as we have seen, it acquired new vigour in the late twentieth century as controlled forms of English, such as Globish or ASD Simplified Technical English, were developed to serve the new systems of computer-assisted and machine translation that had begun to appear.

Indeed, the ultimate manifestation of the universal equivalent is surely to be found in the tools used today by professional translators working with technical and specialized texts. CAT tools such as Trados or Memo-Q handle verbal segments so decontextualised that they can be transferred between documents virtually intact, irrespective of purpose or medium. Nothing of the sign vehicle remains, no graphic aspects, such as fonts or styles, no layout features or illustrations. Instead, the original string and its translation are stored in the memory as if they were perfect equivalents unaffected by context – manifestations of some transcendent meaning that is absolute, universal and unchanging.

This dematerialized meaning, translatable into every language of the world at the click of a mouse, represents the globalized economy at its most intense. Such transactions account for the overwhelming bulk of the translational activity that takes place in the world today as multinational corporations, scientific bodies, and (supra)national administrations communicate with each other in cyberspace, cogs in the whirring machine of (semio)capitalism to which all subscribe.

⁷ The principle is made explicit in Roman Jakobson's (1959) famous claim that "all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language".

⁸ For example, Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Catford (1969), Nida (1964) and Newmark (1988). Mona Baker's *In Other Words* (1992) is entirely organized around this principle, with chapters on equivalence at the word, sentence, text and pragmatic levels.

There may, however, be limits as to how long this can be sustained. For several decades, now, a counter-current has been developing which, concerned at the ecological consequences of unbridled capitalism, is urging a return to an embedded understanding of value in both finance and language. This will be the topic of my next section.

3. The demise of equivalence

As we have seen, the development of the idea of the universal equivalent in Antiquity, and the progressive dematerialization of the sign that accompanied its establishment in subsequent centuries, was viewed with alarm in philosophic and religious circles. We have already mentioned the moralistic legends of Midas and Croesus which accompanied the invention of coinage, but the legitimation of usury in the sixteenth century and the appearance of paper money in the seventeenth and eighteenth provoked similar anxieties. In the first case, we might mention Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, which problematizes the question of usury, setting up a series of oppositions between the Jewish and the Christian attitudes to moneylending, the generativity of money, etc; and in the second, Goethe's *Faust*, with its implicit critique of paper money as a devilish invention (see Shell, 1982, pp. 84-130). The latter work proved particularly inspiring for Karl Marx, who used it to explore the connection between linguistic estrangement (*Entfremdung*) and monetary alienation (*Entäußerung*) (Shell, 1982, pp. 108-9).

Today, dematerialization has evolved far beyond Marx's worst nightmares with the development of bankcards, electronic money transfers and cryptocurrencies. Indeed, the generalization of consumer credit and stock-market speculation, and the widespread practice of encouraging spending via the provision of costly loans that never get paid off but are merely replaced by other loans, makes the Early Modern concern with usury seem quaint and remote. However, in the context of the environmental crisis and atomization of society resulting from the disintegration of social bonds, these anxieties have begun to resurface as part of a generalized critique of capitalism that is gaining momentum in many quarters. Here again is popular author Yuval Noah Harari (2015) on the moral implications of the universal equivalent in economics:

When everything is convertible, and when trust depends on anonymous coins and cowry shells, it corrodes local traditions, intimate relations and human values, replacing them with the cold laws of supply and demand.

Human communities and families have always been based on belief in 'priceless' things, such as honour, loyalty, morality and love. These things lie outside the domain of the market, and they shouldn't be bought or sold for money. [...] Parents mustn't sell their children into slavery; a devout Christian must not commit a mortal sin; a loyal knight must never betray his lord; and ancestral tribal lands should never be sold to foreigners.

Money has always tried to break through these barriers, like water seeping through cracks in a dam... (Harari, 2015, p. 208)

In an attempt to end the subordination of everything to profit, there is now a drive to delegitimize the ‘culture of extractivism’⁹ that is decimating the planet through a shift to a new paradigm that foregrounds sustainable development and social responsibility. Within this, there have been attempts to reverse the process of dematerialization traced across the last two thousand years by, amongst other things, creating a “post-anthropocentric identity” that recognizes the irretrievably ‘**embodied, material** nature of our existence on a planet that we share with innumerable other species...’ (Braidotti, 2013, cit. Cronin, 2017, p. 13; emphasis added). This new ecological thinking seeks to reverse the transcendentalism sustaining both the universal equivalent and the philosophy of human exceptionalism deriving from it by promoting ideas of embedment and interrelation, with widespread ramifications (Cronin, 2017, pp. 68-70).

In the domain of language, the illusory nature of the universal equivalent was already evident in a passage by Saussure in which he again makes the monetary analogy. In it, he makes clear the conventional nature of meaning and emphasises the fact that value in both domains is generated primarily by the interplay of elements within the sign system, rather than by some fixed concept assigned to it alone:

To determine what a five-franc piece is worth one must therefore know: (1) that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g. bread, and (2) that it can be compared with a similar value of the same system, e.g. a one-franc piece, or with coins of another system (a dollar, etc.). In the same way a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea; besides, it can be compared with something of the same nature, another word. Its value is therefore not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be “exchanged” for a given concept, i.e. that it has this or that signification: **one must also compare it with similar values, with other words that stand in opposition to it. Its content is really fixed only by the concurrence of everything that exists outside it. Being part of a system, it is endowed not only with a signification but also and especially with a value**, and this is something quite different (Saussure, 1959, p. 115, emphasis added).

It was this recognition of the ultimate relativity of meaning which gave rise, only one generation after Saussure, to the concept of the **floating signifier** – a signifier without a fixed referent, which means different things to different people. Initially coined by Lévi-Strauss with regard to concepts from the anthropological domain such as ‘mana’, it is today used by media theorists to account for the proliferation of ‘fake news’ and other forms of information bombarding us from multiple uncontrollable sources.

The counterpart of the floating signifier in the economic domain is of course the **floating currency**, one that is not backed by gold or assets but tends to fluctuate in value. When the gold standard collapsed, it was replaced by a floating exchange rate, i.e. one that is determined by supply and demand on the open market and therefore reflects the relative economic strength between countries. Consequently, currencies today are no

⁹ This is defined by Naomi Klein (2014, p.169) as ‘a non-reciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth’ which reduces ‘life into objects for the use of others... turning living complex ecosystems into “natural resources”’.

longer anchored to any fixed source of value, but instead are at the mercy of circumstance, rising and falling in response to world events, political decisions and of course the vagaries of speculation.

In Translation Studies, the notion of ‘equivalence’, which, as we have seen, was central to many of the analyses and methods of the early linguists, fell into disrepute with the appearance of Descriptive Translation Studies and, particularly, the Cultural Turn in the 1980s and 90s. Reviewing the topic in 2004, Mona Baker acknowledged that it had become a problematic concept, not only theoretically, but also because of its implications for translator creativity and status. Interestingly, she ends her article by quoting Anthony Pym’s (1992, p. 43) suggestion that the notion of equivalence should be treated like that of value in economics: ‘a coat may be equivalent to 20 yards of linen this week and 15 yards the next’ (Baker, 2004, p. 6).

Baker also makes a brief allusion in her article to an aspect of equivalence that has acquired a central role in more recent debates, namely its denial of cultural and linguistic difference (*ibid.*, p.5). Quoting Niranjana (1992, p. 46), she acknowledges that the impulse to see ‘sameness’ or homogeneity may be a tool of colonialism, generating a need for approaches which ‘reinvent oppositional cultures in nonessentializing ways’.

It is precisely this sentiment which has propelled the return to a discourse of **untranslatability**, protagonized by Emily Apter (2013) and Barbara Cassin (2014). Reacting against the universalizing logic of World Literature paradigm, which promotes the circulation and study of literature from all over the world in English translation, Apter (2013) argues that some meanings are so fundamentally embedded in particular networks of signification that they resist facile reconstrual in another tongue. Her defence of the ‘right to untranslatability’ (essentially the right of smaller languages to resist assimilation by a powerful lingua franca) echoes sentiments expressed by George Steiner in the closing pages of his *After Babel*:

The communication of information, of ostensive and verifiable ‘facts,’ constitutes only one part, and perhaps a secondary part, of human discourse.... [Different tongues] realize needs of privacy and territoriality vital to our identity. To a greater or lesser degree, every language offers its own reading of life (Steiner, 1998, p. 497).

But untranslatability has also become a critique of capitalism, on the grounds that translatability as a principle of exchange underpins the global market economy, as indeed we have seen here. Apter herself touches upon this dimension, when she admits to harbouring serious reservations about the tendency in World Literature towards ‘reflexive endorsement of cultural equivalence and substitutability’ (2013, pp. 2-3), and Michael Cronin, in his book *Eco-Translation*, takes it further:

(...) world literature mimics a free market fantasy of the endless, frictionless circulation of goods and information. In this massification of the written word, there is no room for difficulty or opacity. The untranslatable becomes a way of **thinking about the specificity of**

languages and cultures, a call to attend to the singularity of written expression in particular places at particular times (Cronin, 2017, p. 17, emphasis added).

In this sense, then, untranslatability becomes an appeal for *semiotic diversity* analogous to biodiversity, within a broader ‘post-humanist ecology of translation’ (Cronin, 2017).

One of the consequences of the demise of the transcendental signified is a new sense of freedom on the part of translators with regards to how they can treat the content transmitted by the source text. This is particularly evident in user-generated translation, which specifically sets out to undermine hegemonic narratives in order to reflect minority or regional perspectives: in crowdsourced projects such as Wikipedia, for example, translators are actively encouraged to draw on multiple source texts, which they then edit and adapt to suit different target culture expectations (O’Hagan, 2009); while stories and interviews from the global news may be translated and disseminated via the internet by citizen-activists, who actively mould the content to suit their own agendas (Pérez-González, 2014). This greater freedom can also be seen in the concepts of ‘experimental’ (Robert-Foley, 2020), ‘experiential’ (Vidal and Campbell, forthcoming) and ‘avant-garde’ (Lukes, forthcoming) translation, all of which make translation into a site of artistic experimentation and creativity.¹⁰

One result of all these developments has been a redefinition of what translation actually is in scholarly circles. The notion of the semantic invariant – that kernel of ‘meaning’ which remains the same despite passage to a new linguistic and cultural environment – is now giving way to the understanding that ‘translation changes everything’ (Venuti, 2013), that it involves ‘transformationality: the constant emergingness of everything through embodied, situated, performative interactions’ (Robinson, 2017b, p. x). One of the results of this has been a remarkable expansion of translational phenomena into other disciplines, such as medicine, genetics, biology, physics, philosophy and anthropology, heralding a new transdisciplinary research paradigm that eschews universal equivalence in favour of a concept of translation as ‘becoming’. Various entitled ‘post-translation studies’ (Gentzler, 2017), ‘translationality’ (Robinson, 2017b), ‘ubiquitous translation’ (Blumczynski, 2017) or the ‘outward turn’ (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019), this new theoretical paradigm represents a distinct challenge to the universalist conception of translation espoused by translator-training programmes that equip professionals to function in the globalized marketplace, and may lead to a serious epistemological schism within the body of Translation Studies.

4. Conclusion

In this article I have argued that there is a relationship between money and translation that goes beyond mere coincidence; that the rise and demise of the universal equivalent has followed a parallel course in both domains, providing an indication of some of the central values that have moved western society at different times.

¹⁰ See also Clive Scott (2018)’s *The Work of Literary Translation*, which is based on a similar premise.

From the invention of coinage in Antiquity, through the development of paper money, to the electronic transfers and virtual currencies of our own day, the dematerialization of the signifier in economics has mirrored changes taking place in the domain of translation as the signified gradually lost contact with its material carrier to become an abstract and universal concept. Both reached their peak in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries with the attempts to fix value through the gold standard and production of prescriptive dictionaries and grammars; and since then, both have been abandoned with the recognition that any anchoring of this kind is artificial, and ultimately dependent upon the existence of some hegemonic power to which all others defer.

Today, in the domains of both money and language, we may now be moving back towards a more embedded understanding of value, not unlike that which characterized ‘archaic’ societies prior to the appearance of long-distance networks of exchange. Whether these developments are a good thing or not is something that I would like to reserve judgement on. While the assumption of universality of value, and the dematerialization of the sign that accompanies it, has clearly reached untenable proportions in both economics and translation, it is by no means clear that its complete relativization – when words are allowed to mean whatever groups and individuals want them to mean, and financial products are bought and sold on the market for prices generated by speculation alone – is necessarily an improvement. It is too early to say where this is heading. We are clearly embarking on a major paradigm shift, unprecedented since the Early Modern period, and until the waters settle – something that will probably only happen many years from now – we can do little more than negotiate the turbulence as best we can.

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FINANCIAL POWER AND THE THIRST FOR KNOWLEDGE: THE FIRST ARABIC TRANSLATION MOVEMENT (8TH TO 10TH CENTURIES)

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ABSTRACT: The first Arabic translation movement was the largest translation effort ever in terms of scope and involvement of public and private institutions. According to ancient sources, the Abbasid era saw unparalleled translator remuneration, even by modern standards. The Banū Mūsā brothers paid an in-house translator 500 dīnārs a month (equivalent to 132,000 USD in today's terms), while al-Ma'mūn, the seventh Caliph of the Abbasids, paid the weight of the book in gold. The purpose of this article is to explore the factors that were conducive to such a massive translation enterprise, including the motivations of the various patrons and sponsors, and the material underpinnings of the endeavour.

KEYWORDS: Abbasid Caliphate, Translation Movement, Translation Patrons, Translation Remuneration, Baghdad

1. Introduction

According to historical sources, the remuneration paid to translators during the first Arabic translation movement was quite probably the highest that such professionals have ever received. The tenth-century writer and copyist, ibn an-Nadīm, describes in his *Fihrist* (c. 998) (1970, p. 585) how the Banū Mūsā (a wealthy family of scholars and translation patrons living in Baghdad in around the ninth century) paid a monthly salary of 500 dīnārs for an in-house translator at a time when a dīnār was worth 4.25 grams of almost pure gold. The monthly salary was, therefore, 2125 grams, or almost 75 ounces, of gold. If we convert this to present-day values (an ounce of gold today¹ is 1,769.00 USD), it equates to a monthly salary of 132,467 USD – a sum that no modern translator could even dream of.

There are other indications of how much translation was valued in this period. The Muslim historian and scholar al-Ṭabarī (1991, p. 31) records, in his *Tarīḥ* of 915, that Muhammad ibn-'Abd-al-Malik az-Zayyāt, a rich oil merchant and industrialist and three times vizier under three successive caliphs, would spend 2000 dīnārs per month on translators and scribes as many other sources concur (see ibn 'abī-Uṣaybi'a, 1996, and ibn an-Nadim, 1970, p. 268). According to ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, in his *Uyūn ul-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (*Sources of News on Classes of Physicians*, 1245), al-Ma'mūn – the seventh Abbasid caliph, who reigned from 813 until 833 – would pay the weight of the book in gold, a method of calculation that seems to have been taken advantage of by his head translator,²

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¹ On the 31st of July 2022

² Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809-873), an influential Nestorian Christian scholar, known in the West as Johannitus, who is described as head of a corps of translators by several sources (including Salama-Carr, 1990; Cooper, 2019, p. 179; Cottrell, 2021), though this is disputed by others. Hunayn is said to have translated, supervised and corrected 100 books and authored 50 more (Cottrell, 2021). Knowing the sums paid to translators, we can imagine the sums of money he will have amassed during his professional career.

who would use especially thick paper to ensure that the translated book would be as voluminous and heavy as possible.

Why would the Caliph and other sponsors and patrons pay such hefty sums for translations? Was the need for it so absolutely pressing that it took precedence over other needs? And how did translation become such a profitable activity for the actors involved?

The objective of this paper is to try to find some tentative answers to these questions, while highlighting the material underpinnings of this translation movement. Our sources for such information are ultimately the ancient authors that bore witness to the translation movement as it was actually happening or lived a relatively short time after. Key texts include: the *Risāla (Epistle)* of Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq (809-873), mentioned above, to his friend 'Alī ibn Yaḥya providing information about the translations of Galen done into Syriac and Arabic (including his own); *al-Fihrist (The Index)*, a catalogue of writers and books of Islam by ibn an-Nadīm (c. 932-995), which references around 10,000 books and 2,000 authors, and provides invaluable information about all the actors of the translation movement; *Tārīḥ (History)* of aṭ-Ṭabarī³ (*The History of al-Ṭabarī*), a forty-volume chronicle of the world, with twelve volumes dedicated to the rise of the Abbasid caliphate, including information about the cultural and scientific life and translation movement; ibn Ḡulḡul's (944-994) *Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā wal-Ḥukamā (Generations of Physicians and Wise Men)*, a tenth-century history of medicine, which presents information about the early Syriac translations into Arabic as well as biographies of fifty-seven physicians and philosophers of Islamic, Greek, African and Spanish origin;⁴ and the *Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā' (Sources of News on Classes of Physicians)* mentioned above, a biographical encyclopedia of physicians from ancient Greece, Rome and India as well as Muslims, compiled by ibn abī-Uṣaybi'a (1203–1270), an Arab physician from Syria.

As for contemporary scholarship, my main sources are Dimitri Gutas's *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society* (1998), Myriam Salama-Carr's (1990) book *La traduction à l'époque abbaside*, as well as more recent articles by her (e.g. 2006), and additional texts by Saliba (2007), Cooper (2019), Cottrell (2021) and others.

The sheer demand for translation during this period is evident in the account given in Ḥunayn's *Risāla* (2001) of the translations of Galen. According to this, a total of 129 of Galen's books were translated in an undertaking that involved 11 Arabic translators, 8 Syriac translators, and 22 patrons. With more patrons than translators, demand clearly exceeded supply, which meant that translators' rates would inevitably be high. In some cases, the translations were done into Syriac before being rendered into Arabic, and many books were translated multiple times into the same language by different translators, sometimes because the commissioner was unaware that a prior translation existed, and sometimes due to dissatisfaction with the first version. Thus, though there were 129

³ Aṭ-Ṭabarī (c. 838-923) was a Muslim historian and scholar from Amol, Tabaristan.

⁴ This was compiled, apparently in Cordoba, by ibn Juljul, an influential physician and pharmacologist of Andalusian Arab origin.

volumes by Galen in total, there would have been hundreds of translation acts. One can only estimate the enormous sums of money that will have changed hands in connection with this author alone.

2. The launch of the translation movement

The first Arabic translation movement was a colossal enterprise centred on Baghdad that produced translations in Arabic of almost all the non-religious Greek works that were available in late antiquity, including astrology, alchemy, physics, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy. It resulted indirectly from the decision in c. 696 of the Umayyad Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik to make Arabic (previously an obscure tribal dialect of the Arabian Peninsula) into the official language of his imperial administration, replacing Greek in the West and Persian in the East (Cooper, 2019, p. 180). The language shift will have generated new translation needs, as well as resulting in the displacement of men with a knowledge of Greek and Persian, who now found new careers as freelance translators for the Arabic regime (Saliba, 2007, pp. 58- 72).

Though the first attempts to translate began in the seventh century during the Umayyad reign, it really got going in the eighth, with the advent of the Abbasid dynasty, and lasted up until the Būyid era (945-1055), by which time scientific and philosophical research in Baghdad had become autonomous (Gutas, 1998, pp. 151-5, 169). Never in history has a translation movement been as massive in scope, or enjoyed such a level of government support, commercial sponsorship, and translator remuneration. Unsurprisingly, it had a massive impact on Arab cultural and scientific life, introducing new areas of knowledge that Arabs had not encountered before, and leading to the appearance of new professions, as described below.

Al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775), the second Abbasid caliph and true founder of the state, is generally credited by Arabic authors with initiating and promoting the translation movement. He is remembered not only for being the builder of Baghdad, establishing a multicultural and multilingual hub that was conducive to translation, but also for being the first caliph to specifically have books translated from foreign languages into Arabic,⁵ books that were then “published among the people, who examined them and devoted themselves to knowing them” (al-Akbari in Gutas, 1998, p. 30).

Al-Manṣūr also invited the first member of the Buḥtišū’ family of Nestorian Christian physicians (Ġurġis ibn-Buḥtišū’) to go to Baghdad to treat him, and commissioned translations of Greek works from him, as testified by ibn abi-Uṣaibi’a (1996).⁶ Over the years, different generations of this family served as court physicians under six caliphs up

⁵ According to tenth-century historian Muhammad al-Akbari, these included ‘books by Aristotle on logic and other subjects, the *Almagest* by Ptolemy, the *Arithmetic* [by Nicomachus of Gerasa], the book by Euclid [on *Geometry*], and other ancient books from classical Greek, Byzantine Greek, Paylavi [Middle Persian], Neopersian and Syriac’ (Gutas, 1998, pp. 29-30).

⁶ See also ibn an-Nadim (1970), al-Ṭabarī (1991) and ibn-Ġulġul (1995)

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to al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861), contributing to the translation movement as both translators and patrons.

Al-Mansūr's grandson, Caliph Harūn ar-Rašīd (786-809), and his great-grandson, Caliph al-Ma'mūn, (813-833) were other important figures of the translation movement. Harūn ar-Rašīd is credited by many historians with the establishment of the great library Bayt al-Ḥikmah (the House of Wisdom), and it was under his rule that Baghdad truly began to flourish as a centre of knowledge and culture. Under al-Ma'mūn, the library seems to have become something akin to a research or study centre, particularly for mathematics and astronomy, though information is scanty about its precise functions. Whether or not translation was actually undertaken within its walls is by no means clear. What it did do, however, was to foster a climate in which translation could be systematically commissioned and undertaken, thereby institutionalizing a translation culture (Gutas, 1998, p. 59).

We also know, from the *Index* of ibn-al-Nadīm, that al-Ma'mūn sent emissaries to the emperor of Byzantium to request Greek books, reputedly on the strength of a dream in which Aristotle came to him and urged him to pursue knowledge. What is more, several translators (such as al-ḥaḡḡāḡ b. Maṭar, ibn al-Baṭrīq, and Salm, the “master of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah”) seem to have participated in these missions (Ibn an-Nadīm in Saliba, 2007, pp. 47-49).

3. The material underpinnings of the movement

When the Abbasids seized power in 750, the Islamic Empire extended from Spain and the Pyrenees in the west to India in the east, Armenia in the north and Sudan in the south. This meant that Egypt and the Fertile Crescent were reunited with Persia and India politically, administratively, and most important, economically, for the first time since Alexander the Great, allowing the free flow of “raw materials and manufactured goods, agricultural products and luxury items, people and services, techniques and skills, and ideas, methods, and modes of thought” (Gutas, 1998, pp. 11-12).

In 762, the capital of the Islamic Empire shifted from Damascus to Baghdad, newly built by al-Manṣūr after the fall of the Umayyads. Taxes levied from all the provinces of the Empire were sent to it, and as a result, it soon became an extremely wealthy cosmopolitan capital. This meant that craftsmen, industrialists, and physicians from all the provinces of the empire would flock there to seize better opportunities. The Empire also brought to Baghdad scholars and scientists from different language backgrounds (Persian, Indian, Greek, Syriac, Latin), many of whom may have been bureaucrats in the Greek and Sassanian (Persian) empires, forced to re-qualify when Arabic was installed as the official language (Saliba, 2007, pp. 58- 72). This then created a pool of potential translators.

The founding of this new capital also marked a shift in state ideology, ethnic composition, and social class. Apart from the caliph and his dynasty, all components of society were of more or less equal status; that is to say, there seems to have been no hegemonic group. According to tenth-century historian and geographer ibn al-Faqīh al-

Hamaḍānī, “opponents of the Shi’ites live together with the Shi’ites, opponents of the Mu’tazilites together with the Mu’tazilites, and opponents of the Ḥārīḡites together with the Ḥārīḡites; each group holds the other one in check and prevents it from setting itself up as leader” (Gutas, 1998, p. 190). The new city was now multiracial, multi-ethnic and most importantly multilingual – a “demographic background conducive to the translation movement” (*ibid.*, p. 17).

Bayt al-Ḥikmah (the so-called ‘House of Wisdom’) was an important intellectual centre, built shortly after the establishment of Abbasid rule. It was a library containing a vast collection of important books and treatises from the Greek, Persian and Indian civilizations, and may have been attached to the palace. Some authors have also claimed that it served as a translation institute, where translation was both practised and taught in the form of translation workshops),⁷ though the claim seems to rest on tenuous evidence and contemporary scholars (Gutas, 1998, pp. 54-60; Cooper, 2017, p. 179) dispute it. Instead, they argue that, rather than a single large-scale translation enterprise, there may have been several translation “schools”, one associated with Ḥunayn and another around the philosopher Yusuf al-Kindī (c. 801–73) (Cooper, 2017, p.180).

Baghdad's geographical proximity to Persia will also have facilitated the translation movement. The Persians, many of whom held high positions in the Abbasid administration, had a long history of translation and the pursuit of knowledge in astrology and other sciences, as well as the establishment of institutions similar to Bayt al-Ḥikmah. The Sasanian culture of translation thus seems to have been pivotal in stimulating the translation movement of the Abbasid administration (Gutas, 1998, pp. 40-45, 165).

As for the translators, most of these were of non-Arab origin and of faiths other than Islam, brought together by a thirst for knowledge and desire to make money working in the Empire's capital. They were largely scholars themselves – scientists, philosophers and physicians – who swarmed into Baghdad from the various provinces and even from territories outside the Empire after having heard that their colleagues were very well paid there. In the *al-Fihrist* (1970, p. 586-590), ibn-an-Nadīm mentions 45 translators into Arabic from foreign languages, 14 translators from Persian into Arabic and three translators from Indian into Arabic. We learn some of their names and identities: for example, there was Yahya ibn al-Bitriq, an Assyrian scholar, who translated the main medical works of Hippocrates and Galen for al-Ma’mūn, as well as Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*; al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ [ibn Yūsuf] ibn Maṭar, a mathematician, who translated Euclid’s *Elements* for Yaḥyā ibn ḥālid (the Vizier of Caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd) and later retranslated Ptolemy’s *Almagest*; Habib ibn Bahriḡ, a metropolitan bishop of the Eastern Church who wrote summaries of Aristotle’s *Categories* and *On Interpretation*, as well as translating many books from Syriac; at-Tamīmī, who translated from Persian into Arabic for al-Ma’mūn, including the Astronomical Tables of al-Shahriyar; and ibn Dahn, al-Hindī, director of the

⁷ See, for example, Salama-Carr (1990, pp. 31-36), who bases her argument on the use of the word “pupil” or “disciple” in Ḥunayn’s *Epistle*. She later (2006) renounces the claim, however.

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Barmak family hospital, who translated from Indian languages into Arabic for al-Ma'mūn.⁸ In short, it is clear from this catalogue that the translators came from many different religions, professions and walks of life, though were clearly intellectuals.

The process of translating books was anything but simple. It usually began when a need for a specific book was expressed by one of the actors in the translation movement, such as a caliph or one of his courtiers, a scientist, researcher, physician, or wealthy individual. If the book could be found locally, it was purchased, and one of the translators was assigned to translate it. If the book was not available locally, which was frequently the case, an emissary was dispatched to purchase it from territories near and far away (which in the case of Greek works was usually from the Byzantine Empire).

The translations of Greek scientific works were often done via Persian (Pahlavi) or Syriac intermediaries, though with the increase in the range of subjects required in Arabic, demand later grew for them to be done directly from Greek. Gutas (1998, pp.136-7) reports a scarcity of translators able to work directly from Greek into Arabic, a claim derived from records that show Arabic translations from Greek (of, for example, Aristotle's *Topics* and Anatolius's *Synagoge*) being commissioned from high-ranking Patriarchs of the Christian Church – though Gutas is at pains to point out that the patriarchs did not necessarily carry out the translations themselves.

A whole set of new professions came into being as a result of this translation movement, such as the emissaries charged with purchasing the source texts, editors, book binders, librarians and, most significantly, paper makers. According to Gutas (1998, p. 13), one consequence of the conquests and “arguably the most important factor for the spread of knowledge” was the introduction of paper-making technology by Chinese prisoners of war (in 751). Ibn Ḥaldūn, in his *Muqaddimah* (2005, p. 488), states that “copies of scholarly works, government correspondence, and diplomas” used to be written on parchment “prepared from animal skin”, but, as translations grew more numerous, there was not enough parchment to cover the growing needs, so a strategic decision was taken to replace it by paper. Interestingly, the various types of paper developed during that time actually bore the names of some prominent patrons of the translation movement: for example, Ġa'farī paper was named after Ġa'far al-Barmakī, while ṭalḥī and ṭāhirī paper were named after two members of the Tāhirid clan.⁹ This clearly demonstrates that translation was also an income-engendering activity in that it ensured a return on investment in the form of paper sales money. Ibn an-Nadim mentions the Warrāq profession, who was a book and paper seller as well as sūq al-warrāqīn, which was a paper market in Baghdad and is believed to contain 100 paper and book shops (see *al-Fihrist*, p. 320 and p. 236).

Another profession that was boosted by the translation movement was that of copyist or scribe. As most individuals could not afford to hire a translator to translate a

⁸ We also learn some curious details, such as the fact that Ibn Šahda al-Karḥī, who translated Hippocrates' book on embryos “badly” (from Syriac) into Arabic, or that Midlāğīj (Marlāḥī), who had good knowledge of Syriac, stammered in pronouncing Arabic.

⁹ We find in (*al-Fihrist*, 1970) several accounts of paper types, paper shops and paper market.

book, they would hire a scribe instead to duplicate one that had already been translated. *Al-Fihrist* records the following anecdote:

Abū Zakariyā' [Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī] said that he offered fifty gold coins (s., dinar) to Ibrahim ibn 'Abd Allah for a copy of the Sophistici, a copy of the Oratory [Rhetorica], and a copy of the Poetry [Poetica], as translated by Ishāq, but he would not sell them. (al-Fihrist, 1970, p. 609)

Scribes would also copy books for the Abbasid caliphs, such as Hārūn ar-Rašīd and al-Ma'mūn. Indeed, ibn an-Nadīm seems himself to have been such a copyist, judging by his epithet 'al-Warrāq.¹⁰

4. The patrons

According to Gutas (1998, p. 5), translation patrons included many different ethnicities, religions and professions: "Arabs and non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims, Sunnīs and Shī'ites, generals and civil leaders, merchants and land-owners". This suggests that the translation movement was a phenomenon that cut across all lines of society – though some groups will of course have been more prolific than others, and responsible for the translation of a greater number of books.

4.1 The Caliphate

As previously mentioned, the Abbasid caliphs are often seen as responsible for starting the translation effort. The construction of Baghdad as a cosmopolitan multilingual capital, and their ongoing efforts to stabilize the Islamic empire by securing the borders and quelling any internal rebellion, indicate that these caliphs contributed to the translation movement at least indirectly by creating the conditions necessary for it to flourish.

However, in addition to their indirect role, Abbasid caliphs like al-Manṣūr, ar-Rašīd and al-Ma'mūn (other caliphs to a lesser extent) also championed the translation movement by appointing scribes, directors, and translators to Bayt al-Ḥikmah, communicating with foreign kings, and dispatching emissaries to foreign nations to bring back books. For example, ibn-Ḡulḡul's *Tabaqāt* (1955, p. 65) states that Caliph Harun ar-Rachid brought all the books he took as war booty in his invasions of Ankara, Amorium and parts of the Roman Empire, appointed ibn Māsawayh as Chief interpreter and appointed scribes to his service.

There is also evidence that other less important members of the caliphal family, such as princes and princesses, and even low-ranking members of the caliphal household, ordered the translation of some books. According to the *Fihrist* (1970, p. 694) Caliph al-Mutawakkil's (r. 847-861) slave concubine and mother of his son 'commissioned from the great Ḥunayn himself a book on eight-month embryos. The importance of the Abbasid caliphs' contribution to the translation movement not only lies in the number of

¹⁰ The nickname means 'the copyist of manuscripts' and also 'book and paper seller' (al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, 1970, p. xvii).

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translations they commissioned but also in the example they set, which was followed by all scientific, administrative, military elites of Baghdadi society (see below).

4.2 Courtiers, officers of the state and military administration

The close circle of the caliphal dynasty was also involved in the translation effort. Some courtiers were scholars, such as the Banu-l-Munağğim (Banū Mūsā) family that had been brought to the Abbasid court from Persia precisely because of their learning and who frequently patronized translation (Gutas, 1998, p. 127). Others may have felt compelled to act as translation patrons in order to please the caliph. All the families mentioned in the section below were scientists, translation patrons and as such were close to the caliphal circles and deserved the courtier epithet.

The same applies to state and military officials. Members of the Barmakid family, for example, who held important administrative positions in the apparatus of state under the early Abbasids, figure as prominent sponsors of translation in the domains of astronomy and agriculture, while Tahir, al-Ma'mūn's general, also commissioned numerous translations, presumably on technical subjects (Gutas, 1998, pp. 128-9).

4.3 Scientists, scholars and physicians

The three Banū Mūsā brothers, scholars of Persian descent, who, in the ninth century, researched in the House of Wisdom and in astronomical observatories established by the Caliphate, and wrote works on geometry and mechanical applications, were also patrons of scientific translation. According to the *al-Fihrist* (1970, p. 584), they sent translators and emissaries to “the Byzantine country” to “bring them rare books and unusual compositions about philosophy, geometry, music, arithmetic, and medicine.”

As for the Buḥtīšū' family, mentioned above, Gutas (1998, p. 118) tells us that, in addition to practicing medicine in the Abbasid court, they also engaged in medical research, wrote medical textbooks, and, most importantly, commissioned translations. Indeed, as we have seen, they spent colossal amounts on this, sending emissaries to near and far away countries to purchase medical books and then having them translated.¹¹

4.4 Merchants and bankers

Many merchants and bankers also commissioned translations. We have already seen how Muhammad ibn-'Abd-al-Malik az-Zayyāt (d. 847), a rich oil merchant and industrialist and three times vizier under three successive caliphs, ‘would spend 2000 dīnārs per month on translators and scribes’ (ibn 'abī Uṣaibi', cit. Gutas 1998, p. 130). However, we do not know what kinds of texts he required nor why he requested them.

All these different actors clearly found the necessary financial resources to contribute to the translation movement and had various motivations to do so. The final

¹¹ What was said about the Banū Mūsā and the Buḥtīšū' family also applies to the Māsawayh and Ṭaifūrī families (see for instance *al-Fihrist*, 1970).

part of this paper will be dedicated to the individual motivations of each stakeholder in order to arrive at some tentative conclusions as to why translation was such a highly valued activity in this period.

5. The need for translation

Many theories have been put forward to explain the explosion in translation experienced during the Abbasid era. In this section, I will suggest some possible reasons that led the Caliphate as a whole, and certain actors in particular, to commission translations.

5.1 The desire for a legacy

On the part of the Abbasid rulers, who, as we have seen, were the real engines of the translation movement, the overwhelming motive seems to have been the need for achievement. All the preceding caliphs including the Umayyads had had an achievement to their credit,¹² and the Abbasids, who overthrew them, wanted to leave some legacy as well. Yet there were few options available. The Empire had been stretched to its utmost limits, beyond which it would be impossible to control, and the Abbasids were left with the burden of holding on to those territories (the wars they fought were all in that direction). On the religious front, the Qur'an had been compiled and vowelized, and the Arabic language had been standardized. The solution they found was to seek a quite different frontier to conquer: the frontier of knowledge.

5.2 Religious duty

The Islamic religion also constitutes an important factor that contributed to the instigation of the translation movement. Many sacred texts urge Muslims to seek knowledge: the first word of the Qur'an is the imperative form of the verb 'to read',¹³ and various other Koranic verses and Hadiths exalt the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.¹⁴ Seeking knowledge was

¹² For example, Caliph Abū Bakr (632- 634) fought pagans (murtaddīn) and succeeded in uniting the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam, as well as compiling the Qur'an into a single book; Caliph Umar (634-644) conquered large parts of the Roman Empire (including modern Syria, Egypt, Palestine, and Jordan) as well as the Sassanian Empire (including Modern Persia and Iraq) during his reign; Caliph 'Uthman (644-656), for his part, conquered North Africa (which included modern Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria). As for Caliph Ali (656-661), his reign was so turbulent that it was impossible to achieve anything other than keeping the Islamic Empire minimally united, an objective that paid for with his life. In general terms, the major achievement of the Umayyads were to extend the Islamic Empire to unprecedented limits, quell revolts, but also vowelize the Qur'an and establish a new spelling system for the Arabic language (something that had become particularly necessary with the influx of so many different nationalities within the Islamic empire).

¹³ 'Read! in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created— / Created man, out of a leech-like clot:/ Read! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, —/ He, Who taught (the use of) the Pen,— /Taught man that which he knew not.' (Sūrat 96, Āyat 1–5)

¹⁴ For example: "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim" (ibn Mağah, 2007, Hadith 224); "Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and those and who have been granted knowledge." (Sūrat 58, Āyat 11); "Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise. The angels lower their wings in approval of the seeker of knowledge, and everyone in the heavens and on earth prays for forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The superiority of the scholar over the worshipper is like the superiority of the moon above all other heavenly

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therefore understood to be a religious duty and a virtue that would be lavishly rewarded by Allah.¹⁵ By following this important commandment, Abbasid rulers would have been seeking moral legitimacy after their (controversial) overthrowing of the Umayyads.

5.3 Religious ideology

Another reason may have been the *miḥna* or deadly conflict between the traditionalist perception of Islam and a more rationalist one espoused by the Mu'atazilites, especially under Caliph al-Ma'mūn. Although Gutas (1998, p. 161) admits that the conflict did not affect the translation movement directly, he argues that al-Ma'mūn's policies made the association possible because he 'used the translation movement as the basis of a rationalistic theology, Mu'tazilism, to be wielded for the purpose of concentrating religious authority in the hands of the caliph and his intellectual elite'. By encouraging the translation movement, the caliph was taking power away from traditionalist theologians and transferring it to a new category of rationalist theologians over whom he had more control.

5.4 Material and cultural shortfalls

In addition to these symbolic and ideological reasons, there were also more tangible needs resulting from the administration of the vast empire. In the Umayyad era (AD 661-750), once a territory had been conquered, the new rulers would appoint Arabs into key positions and impose Arabic as the official language. Unsurprisingly, the first documents to be translated were the accounting registers (taxation and fiscal records, public accountancy) to enable the new administrators to assess the financial situation there (Gutas, 1998, p. 23; Salama-Carr, 1990 p. 19). The model was also followed under the Abbasids because the prime need was to take stock of the financial situation of the conquered country, crucial for the formation of a powerful, efficient central authority to command and coordinate the rapidly growing empire.

There was also a need for books that might serve as training manuals for secretaries (*kuttāb*) or civil servants in the different state administrations. These usually followed Sasanian models, as most high-ranking state officials were of Sasanian descent, and contemplated a broad form of education that went beyond immediate technical needs. For example, ibn Qutaiba's *Adab al-Kātib (The Education of the Secretaries*, in Gutas, 1998, p. 110) states:

[...] it is indispensable for [the secretary] to study geometrical figures for the measurement of land in order that he can recognize a right, an acute, and an obtuse triangle and the

bodies. The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets did not leave behind a Dīnār or Dirham, rather they left behind knowledge, so whoever takes it has taken a great share' (ibn Mağāh, 2007, Hadith 225).

¹⁵ In fact, we might wonder why the movement had not begun earlier. The answer to this is that the preceding caliphs will have been preoccupied with the more pressing need of spreading Islam, either peacefully or through Jihād if that failed.

heights of triangles, the different sorts of quadrangles, arcs and other circular figures, and perpendicular lines, and in order that he can test his knowledge in practice on the land and not on the [survey] registers, for theoretical knowledge is nothing like practical experience.¹⁶

Thus, under the Abbasids, not only were manuals composed specifically to train certain civil servants, but other books were also translated in the fields of geography and geometry for the education of the expanding number of secretaries, lawyers and engineers badly needed to work in the central and local administrations of the vast empire.

We can imagine that a similar shortfall will have been behind the translation of medical texts by Hippocrates and Galen, which, as we have seen, were in great demand, and also possibly of philosophy (all the extant works of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were translated). And though we do not know what kinds of texts were commissioned by the merchants, bankers and industrialists mentioned above, it is likely that they will have been technical works, corresponding to another lack.

Cultural shortfall also explains why certain works were *not* translated. Almost all the ancient Greek heritage was translated into Arabic with the exception of literary works, which were excluded for two main reasons. First, poetry was the most elevated form of literature for the Arabs, used to express love and other emotions, to describe battles and heroic deeds, to mourn the dead, and to evoke other aspects of Arab life, to the extent that it was dubbed ‘the register of Arabs’ (Cachia, 2002, p. 2). This seems to have precluded an interest in the literary culture of the Greeks. Second, the constant struggle between gods and humans depicted in Greek literature was alien to Islam. Indeed, religious works were generally excluded from the translation movement, as the Arabs were more than satisfied with the message of Mohammed, regarding him as the last of all prophets. What they required, above all, was new or improved knowledge of the secular sciences, which, as we have seen, was also a religious duty.

5.5 Social mobility and status

According to one group of researchers (Goitein, 1963), the translation movement was also related to the rise of a new middle class and its desire for intellectual pursuits. As Gutas (1998, p.5) puts it, ‘intellectual activities /.../ presuppose literacy, which presupposes wealth and leisure, which presuppose urbanization and economic prosperity, which is precisely what happened in the Near East as a result of the initial Arab conquests. In fact, Gutas interprets the high monthly outlay of Muhammad ibn-‘Abd-al-Malik az-Zayyāt (the

¹⁶ Ibn Qutaybah adds that, according to the Sasanian model, “he who does not know the following would be deficient in his formation as state secretary: He who does not know the principles of irrigation [*iğrā’al-miyah*], opening access-canals to waterways and stopping breaches; [measuring] the varying length of days, the revolution of the sun, the rising-points [on the horizon] of stars, and the phases of the moon and its influence; [assessing] the standards of measure; surveying in terms of triangles, quadrangles, and polygons of various angles; constructing arched stone bridges, other kinds of bridges, sweeps with buckets, and noria waterwheels on waterways; the nature of the instruments used by artisans and craftsmen; and the details of accounting”.

rich oil merchant, mentioned above) as a way of proving that he “belonged by right to his newly acquired status” (see also aṭ-Ṭabarī, 31).

In short, the new middle class formed of physicians, merchants and craftsmen all had a certain interest in translation, either because they needed it for professional reasons or because ordering translated books was a status symbol.

Finally, we must consider that there may have been some scholars and scientists that were interested in knowledge for its own sake, particularly those of Persian descent who had a long tradition in this regard (the Banū Mūsa, mentioned above, seem to fall into this category). But ultimately, it is not easy to clearly separate motivations in this way. The Buḥṭīṣū` family, who supplied generations of physicians to the Abbasid court, may have had a genuine interest in the pursuit of knowledge, but will also have been influenced by social factors, such as the desire to maintain scientific superiority. As Gutas (1998, p. 118) puts it, ‘their high social status as caliphal physicians and the consequent wealth they amassed depended on their medical expertise’.

6. Conclusion

As territorial conquest ceased, translation became the new means of appropriating the other, of domesticating and subduing the foreign. Acquiring science was the new war booty that could be acquired without actually engaging in conflict, a way of extending the frontier, and of capturing the infidels’ spirit and knowledge without actually taking their lives. It was also a response to specific needs, both tangible and symbolic, such as performing a religious duty or marking an ideological position.

The translation movement would not have been possible without the massive investment made by all translation patrons at every stage of the process. At the outset, the Abbasid would never have considered instigating this movement if the Islamic Empire had not been stable and prosperous following the successful conquest conducted by the Umayyads. And the movement would not have been possible without the building of Baghdad, far from the Byzantine threat. The new capital was so prosperous and cosmopolitan that scholars, craftsmen and merchants flocked to it from all the conquered territories, many of them assuming a role in the movement as a translator or patron, and sometimes both.

Because of the Empire's material prosperity, there were, in its society, a great many very rich men, all of whom wanted to translate books for various reasons. In this sense, therefore, money in all its forms played a preponderant role in the translation movement. Aside from the unrivaled remuneration reserved for individual translators, it ensured a material and institutional infrastructure that stimulated the acquisition of books and creation of libraries, generating an intellectual culture that valued and stimulated the pursuit of knowledge by all members of Abbasid society.

I can confidently assert, therefore, that this colossal translation movement would never have occurred if the financial basis had not been there to support it at every stage of its development.

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FROM INFLATION TO TRANSLATION: A STUDY OF SYRIAN BANKNOTES

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ABSTRACT: This study examines Syrian banknotes as translations of the nation. Through a contextualised visual analysis, it showcases the interrelatedness of political reality and money design, focusing on the issue of 500-, 1000-, 2000- and 5000-pound notes in the context of the Syrian war (2011-present). With the aim of demonstrating the potency of abstract icons to address, reinforce and/or deflate questions of power and representation, the study offers insights into the (re)fashioning of national identity at a time of political crisis. Authorised by the government, money iconography reflects the effects of the Syrian war and contributes to the self-fashioning of the Syrian state at large.

KEYWORDS: Banknote Iconography, Syria, National Narratives, Translation

1. Introduction: Money, nation and translation

I recently had a casual chat with the director of the Bureau of Immigration, Hyderabad, about the significance of money in cultural production. The incident led me into thinking how, throughout history, coins and banknotes, from ancient Greek drachmas to contemporary British sterling pounds, have featured great kings and emperors, as well as a whole host of other symbols of relevance to the issuing culture. Despite that, the iconography of money has been largely overlooked as a site of cultural analysis. Though money itself, as an abstract commodity, has attracted a lot of attention from cultural theorists,¹ the symbolism of its material carrier has received much less. Isabel Gil, in her introduction to *The Cultural Life of Money* (2015), perhaps sheds light on why:

The abstract dimension of money renders it an object that is utterly subsumed into its outside. *Rhetorically, the face value of money has no identity.* Just as a coin or a banknote carry a face that is not the object's own, the value of money is always dependent on the perception of others. (Gil, 2015, p. 10, emphasis added)

However, despite this perception, there has not been a complete dearth of studies into the 'face value' of money. Shtalenkova (2018, p. 291), for example, has shown that, beyond its economic value, money is an ideologically determined communicative tool that helps promote certain images of the state; while Penrose and Cumming (2011), studying the iconography of Scottish banknotes over several centuries, reveal that they serve both national and non-national political agendas in their symbolic content.

Since state ideology almost always works in camouflage,² money offers a space for it to operate freely. Working under the state are the central banks, which authorise money-cum-meaning circulation. And while the everyday usage of money might make it seem a

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¹ See Gil (2015, pp. 2-9) for an overview of the most significant contributions.

² See Fiske (1987, p. 11) on how ideology may present itself "in the aggregate of apparently insignificant encodings".

‘banal’ form of nationalism (Billig, 1995), the very recurrence of images, words, and symbols, assured by its circulation, ultimately enables an ‘imagined political community’ (Anderson, 1983) to emerge. Thus, the visual lexicon deployed comes to signal the official discourse of the nation (Marten, 2008, cited in Penrose and Cumming, 2011, p. 821). Hence, money contributes, *inter alia*, to the visual construction and (re)production of national identity, one of the manifold ways in which nations narrate themselves (Bhabha, 1990).

Banknotes are instances of translation, both in terms of cultural significance and political implicature. Like conventional verbal translations, they are never innocent, but profoundly embedded in networks of value and signification, which makes them into a privileged site for studying questions of representation, power, and historicity (Niranjana 1992, p. 1). Studying money as part of culture thus requires “an examination of the processes of encoding and decoding characteristic of translation” (Bassnett, 1998, pp. 138-9).

This article looks at money in the Syrian context with the ultimate aim of understanding the close links between nation and translation (Bermann and Wood, 2005; Selim, 2009) in this particular case and their politics of representation.

2. Arab uprisings and the Syrian war

From December 2010, Arab protests swept across the Middle East and North Africa. The events, extensively covered by Western media, brought about an unprecedented crisis, as Arab states like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain erupted into violence, with unprecedented uprisings against their ruling regimes. In Syria, the crisis took the form of a gruesome war that has lasted for over a decade now. Dubbed as the one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history, the war has left 350,000 dead, nearly 14 million displaced and basic infrastructure destroyed.³ As tension escalated between pro-governmental and anti-governmental Syrian forces in March 2011, there was no consensus amongst Syrians as to what really caused the war or which interpretation of it to accept.

In 2013, three years after the start of the uprising, the central bank of Syria issued new banknotes of 500 and 1000 pounds. Though this was ostensibly to tackle inflation, there seemed (given the political conundrum affecting the country) to be a compelling need to represent the nation anew and to do so efficiently. Other denominations followed: a 2000-pound note in 2017 and a 5000-pound one in 2021 – each of them the highest denominations ever to be released. Money was clearly being used as a site for the transmission of cultural and political messages as well as economic value; and as a visual medium (Shtalenkova, 2018, p. 291) encoding questions of power and representation, lends itself to cultural analysis.

As the Syrian conflict is about to enter its thirteenth year, it is high time that the socio-political dimension of the conflict is addressed at the micro-level, something that has gone

³ See latest UN special envoy briefing, 24th of March 2022 <https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14839.doc.htm> (Accessed: 13 December 2022)

unheeded until now. With the aim of identifying the forces which necessitated the issue of the new banknotes, this article traces the timeline of changes introduced by the government after the uprising, arguing that money embodies the struggle for control over how the nation is interpreted.

3. Methodology

For this study, I selected Syrian banknotes of the 500-, 1000-, 2000-, and 5000-pound (SYP) denominations issued in 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2021 respectively – years which may be considered “relevant moments” (Handley and Ismail, 2010) in the Syrian war for reasons that will be given below. I then carried out a qualitative content analysis, with the image/figure/icon as the unit of analysis. In the case of the two lower-value denominations, the new notes were compared and contrasted with older ones in order to better understand the relationship between money and nation-building and the effect of the immediate context on such decisions.

What money offers is a site of translation where meaning is negotiated and hierarchies maintained. Through banknotes, a mainstream narrative emerges about the Syrian state in general and the war in particular. Money, like a camera, translates the nation pictorially, but, like a camera, it also lies by omission (Knightly, 2003, p.14), particularly when certain identities are excluded. Thus, absence becomes political. We take Syrian banknotes as signifiers whose meaning is determined by context, be it of growth and welfare or of crisis and warfare.

Some of the troubling questions addressed are: What do the figures signify? Are they presented as timeless or contextualised? Are they inclusive of all identities, and if not, which identities are left out and why? Why are certain figures chosen but not others? Is the choice driven by ideology and politics? Which face does a banknote carry and why, and does this bring an additive value? Who politicises, nationalises and invests money with meaning? Who authorises the narrative? Where else is the nation implied?

And finally, what do banknotes tell us about translation itself? This is a question that I will return to at the end of the article.

4. Data Description and Analysis

4.1 The 500-pound note (2013)

Figure 1.1 shows the old 500-pound note issued back in 1998, under the rule of Hafez al-Assad, father of the current president Bashar. On the obverse, the note features Queen Zenobia⁴ next to the city of Palmyra, and Philip the Arab⁵ next to the city of Bosra. On the reverse, it features Tabqa Dam on the Euphrates, located in the al-Raqqa governorate, next to some agricultural products. The watermark is the head of an Arabian horse, which, like Philip the Arab, is a marker of supranational identity.

⁴ Zenobia was a warrior queen who ruled over the Palmyrene Empire in the third century and fought the Romans. Over the years, she has turned into a patriotic symbol engraved in the consciousness of Syrians.

⁵ Roman emperor from 244 to 249, who was born in Auranitis in modern-day Syria.

Figure 1.2, on the other hand, shows the new 500 note issued in 2013, under the rule of Bashar al-Assad. On the obverse, we see the Damascus Opera House, located in the capital. The reverse shows the ‘Mosaic of the Musicians’, dating from the Byzantine era, alongside a 4000-year-old clay tablet from Ugarit bearing the oldest surviving fragment of musical notation (a text reading ‘Oldest musical note’ is written vertically up the left-hand side in English and Arabic). The watermark is the country’s coat of arms, the Syrian eagle.



Figure 1.1. 500-pound note (1998)



Figure 1.2. 500-pound note (2013)

Other than the crisis with Turkey over territory and water resources, the Arab uprising in 2011 was the most significant event in the recent history of the country. There was also a change in leadership from father to son in the early 2000s, but it pales in

comparison with the events of 2013, when the infrastructure was destroyed, economic sanctions imposed and the political rule challenged. As we consider the first two years of the Syrian conflict, the issue of the new 500-pound note becomes significant.

By 2013, the times were different to those experienced under Hafez al-Assad. ISIS had come into the picture, and there were heavy casualties. Large parts of Palmyra (the capital of Zenobia's empire) were either damaged or completely destroyed, and the area was no longer controlled by the government. As for the Tabqa Dam, Syria's largest reservoir, this had been targeted by oppositional groups since the early days of 2013, and by now was out of order, controlled by non-governmental armed groups.

The new 500-pound note introduced different symbolic features. The Damascus Opera House replaced Queen Zenobia and a mosaic from the Byzantine era, alongside a Sumerian clay tablet depicting musical notation, replaced the Tabqa dam. The Syrian eagle now became the watermark on the currency.

There is a clear shift in the narrative triggered by the political conundrum. The message moves from political to cultural history, from war to harmony, and from supra-national to state-based identity affiliations. The musical heritage seems to serve as a soothing substitute for the horrors of the ongoing war, and perhaps also as an apolitical, and therefore uncontroversial, unifying element. The same is true of the Byzantine mosaic and the fragment of musical notation. At a time when Palmyra and Raqqa were about to fall, forms of art, particularly music, had a role to play. And as the Syrian people stood divided, perhaps more than at any time in history, it will have seemed appropriate to harness the uncontroversial potential of a great civilisation in the remote past. In short, there is a correspondence between the political reality of the times and the iconography chosen for the new banknotes. Losing control of the dam and of major cities implied losing control of the narrative associated with them. Perhaps it was thought that the stability of the past could in some way detract from the uncertainties of the present.

4.2 The 1000-pound note (2013)

Figure 2.1 shows the old 1000-pound note issued back in 1997, under the rule of Hafez al-Assad. On the obverse, the note features a photo of Hafez al-Assad himself wearing a suit and tie, alongside the Umayyad Mosque, located in the capital, two spikes of wheat, the first Arab dinar, and a clay tablet from the kingdom of Ebla. The reverse depicts the oil industry with ships, workers, and harvesters. The watermark is the face of Hafez himself.

Figure 2.2, on the other hand, shows the new 1000-pound note issued in 2013 under Bashar al-Assad. On the obverse, we can see the Roman Amphitheatre in Bosra (an ancient city in the southern part of the country). The reverse features the As-Suwayda mosaic (a Roman mosaic of a grape harvest in Deir al-Adas, located in that city). The watermark is now the country's coat of arms, the Syrian eagle.

A gamut of symbolic messages is evident on the old note. The figure of the president symbolises power, while the mosque is a marker of Islam. The harvest and oil are markers of development and growth; the Arab dinar represents pan-Arab identity; and the Kingdom

of Ebla is a symbol of civilisation. President Hafez, whose rule stretched from 1971 until his death in 2000, had been an aviator of the Syrian Air Force and Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian Army, and he also served as the regional secretary of the Arab socialist Ba’th Party. The Umayyad Mosque, known as the Great Mosque of Damascus, is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world, known for its Islamic architecture. The first Arab dinar is no less important, as it goes back to 7th-century Arabia, when Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan first used Arabic script on the gold coins. Ebla, one of the earliest kingdoms in Syria and a major trade centre, is also invoked through the use of tablets, which are said to shed light on the Abraham tradition and serves therefore as a reminder of the origin of all Abrahamic religions. All of the designs evoke the rich civilisation of the region.

Coming into circulation in 2013/2014, the new 1000-pound note featured new faces with different attributes. In this period, ISIS seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq, the US-led coalition was established and subsequently launched airstrikes on ISIS, and President Bashar al-Assad was re-elected. Once again, the new note seems to signal an important shift in rhetoric. As larger parts of the country fell outside of the control of the government, and Assad’s leadership was increasingly questioned, the use of the presidential photograph became a site of contestation; an image from social history (in this case, the Roman Amphitheatre at Bosra) was clearly much less controversial. As for the markers of development and growth, with the economy stagnating, the narrative of development could no longer be sustained. Most of the oil fields in Syria had been lost to ISIS, which was smuggling crude oil abroad through Turkey, and the sanctions against Syria had led to one of the worst economic crises in contemporary history, leading to the devaluation of the Syrian pound.

The mosaic from Suwayda is particularly significant since it seems to signal a change of addressee. The city of Suwayda, home of the Druze minority, was the first to rise up against the government in March 2011,⁶ and was still fighting for its overthrow at the moment the banknote was issued.⁷ Including this reference expressly on the banknote seems to represent a directed appeal for unity and an end to resistance.

The transition from a state of prosperity, growth and firm leadership to one of war and devastation thus required a new narrative, one that would avoid political demarcation and foster unity. What facilitates such unity is a “set of values, institutions, and symbols common to a particular social group”, which allows the cluster of “unconscious images which are socially shared” to form a social imaginary (Taylor, 2004, p. 32). We can say that such a social imaginary exists for Syrian people, so much so that even among those who have never met and might never do there is an ‘imagined’ Syrian nation to which they all belong (Anderson, 1983). Images like the amphitheatre and the mosaic thus represent an appeal to this common Syrian identity over and above the ethno-religious differences.

⁶ This echoed the important role played by the Druze of Suwayda in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 against the French mandate.

⁷ See Al-Shami (2022) for an in-depth analysis of the Al-Suwayda’s position in the present conflict.



Figure 2.1. 1000-pound note (1997).



Figure 2.2. 1000-pound note (2013).

4.3 The 2000-pound note (2017)

Figure 3 shows the new 2000-pound note issued in 2017, under the rule of Bashar al-Assad. On the obverse, the note features a photo of al-Assad in a suit and tie alongside the Umayyad Mosque; on the reverse is the Syrian Parliament. The watermark is the Syrian eagle.

The note is peculiar in many respects. Firstly, the 2000-pound bill was the highest Syrian denomination ever to be released and many Syrians opposed it on purely economic grounds, fearing a rise in inflation. Secondly, this was the first time that Present al-Assad's image featured on the currency since he took office in July 2000. What is more, the image was not a contemporary one but seems to have been purposefully chosen to evoke the

2000s, functioning as an assertion of power. Finally, the denomination 2000 has been read by some as significant for the same reason (Moubayed, 2017). The specimen came out in 2015, fifteen years into Assad's rule, but it was not until July 2017 that it went into circulation, due in part to the controversy it provoked.

Let us start with the photo of President Assad. The controversy around the issue of the banknote was mainly related to the use of his photograph, since it seemed to indicate a refusal, on the part of the president, to heed the clamours for him to step down (Moubayed, 2017). However, by 2017, when the Russian forces were already helping, the state regained its balance and was in a position to issue such a firm statement through money. The implication is that, although the Umayyad Mosque, marker of Islam, had been damaged several times, the Assad leadership could protect the UNESCO world heritage site and, by extension, protect Islam and its artifacts. As for the Syrian Parliament featured on the reverse side, this is not meant to be read in isolation, as it signifies that very legitimacy. The image attests to the will of the Syrian people and reminds us of the first time Bashar al-Assad was elected in 2000, while also alluding to his re-election in 2014. As such it becomes a counter-narrative to that circulated in the West in which Assad is predominantly portrayed as an oppressor of his people. The watermark, too, seeks to emphasise national identity.



Figure 3. 2000-pound note (2017).

4.4 The 5000-pound note (2021)

Figure 4 shows the new 5000-pound note issued in 2021, under the rule of Bashar al-Assad, which remains the highest denomination note in circulation today. Although it was meant to be issued in 2019, controversy again pushed the decision forward to 2021. On the obverse, it features a Syrian soldier in military uniform saluting the Syrian flag, next to a mural from the temple of Baal Shamin in Palmyra. Ten years into the war, this was the first time the currency had depicted a soldier in uniform alongside the Syrian flag. Perhaps this

was the state's way of honouring, commemorating, and publicly acknowledging the sacrifices of its soldiers. At the same time, the photo may have served to mobilise the people to take action and defend their homeland. It also clearly identifies the Syrian Armed Forces as the sole legitimate defenders of the nation. On the other hand, the choice of a detail from the lintel of the Temple of Baal Shamin combines three national symbols: the sun (which is what 'Syria' means in Sanskrit); the olive branch, which across the Levant is seen as a symbol of peace, life and continuity; and the Syrian eagle, the country's coat of arms and symbol of resilience.



Figure 4. The 5000-pound note (2021).

5. Gender issues

Although Syria is among the very few countries to feature women on its currency, we cannot be content with the mere fact that Queen Zenobia was represented on the old 500-pound note; rather, we need to ask ourselves how she was represented and why. Which image of Zenobia was chosen? Where was she placed? On the obverse or reverse, on the right side or on the left? Why were women musicians used on the reverse? Is money thus a gendered site of narration? And what do we learn from the combination of gender identity, gaze, and social status in these particular images? (Cañadas and Lupiáñez, 2012)

We might begin by looking at the representation of the men. In all cases, the al-Assads are presented on the obverse of the banknotes and on the right-hand side. This is significant because the right has been associated with the future and legitimacy, whereas the left is associated with the past and illegitimacy (Cirlot, 1971, p. 138).

As with any other state institution, banknotes are prone to a gendering process where women continue to be under-represented, if not effaced altogether. At face value, Zenobia featuring on the 500-note has been viewed by some as “a sign of social progress” on the part of Syria (Poppick, 2015). As we have seen, Zenobia, known as the Queen of Palmyra, is celebrated as the rebel who took on Rome, honoured for her military success

and physical prowess. I, however, argue that the state has appropriated Zenobia in order to turn her into a patriotic symbol for Syrians and a reminder of a glorious past, to further its own cause. Rather than a goal in herself, Zenobia, here, is a means to an end.

If we compare her portrait to those of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, we encounter a discrepancy in representation that is revealing. Both Assads are presented on the right-hand side of the obverse, smiling, confident, besuited and formal, and most importantly, staring at the beholder with an assertive gaze. Zenobia, on the other hand, despite being positioned similarly on the banknote, is dressed as a warrior and shown in profile, which emphasizes her sharp features. The fact that Zenobia does not return our gaze as the Assads do but is the object of ours is significant. Like Britannia or Marianne before her, Zenobia is presented as the personification of the nation, idealized and abstract.⁸ The historical queen has been translated into a powerful female icon that embodies the homeland in a simultaneously maternal and belligerent role – ultimately, a female figure as conceived by a powerfully patriarchal society.

As for the four women on the reverse of the note, their role is different. This is a detail of a fourth-century mosaic from Mariamin, near Hama, which depicts female musicians playing different musical instruments and gazing directly at the viewer as if playing for an audience. Whatever the mosaic tells us about the status of women in late Antiquity,⁹ this is subordinated, on the banknote, to the overall glorification of the modern state. Cropped and juxtaposed with other references to ancient culture (the clay tablet and text reading ‘Oldest musical note’ in English and Arabic), the image becomes an element in a new narrative about ancient civilization and music, as described above.

In such representations, the power of the state is (re)asserted even over the dead, who are revived (like a translation of old classic texts), to suit contemporary purposes. This simple instance of translation, in my view, is symptomatic of the general attitude pervading Syrian society in which women are marginalized.

6. Conclusion

This study has sought to show how the iconography of money contributes to the daily (re)production of national identity. It also highlights the persistence of a visual lexicon in the (re)tellings of the contemporary conflict in Syria. Akin to national articulations found on flags and maps, and in museums and anthems, the elements depicted on banknotes are clearly worthy of attention, becoming, by implication, the nation itself.

At a time of crisis, money seems to have offered a site of translation that allows the state to exert power over the narratives of war. The new 500-note was issued in 2013 at a time when the government was losing control over water resources in the northern and north-eastern part of the country, and territory in Palmyra had already been lost to armed

⁸ On the role of feminine figures as personifications of (otherwise patriarchal) nations, see Hess and Klee (2021).

⁹ Experts are divided as to whether the mosaic represents professional performers, members of an upper-class family group posing as musicians, or ideal allegorical images (see Kiilerich 2011, pp. 99-100).

groups; the depiction of the Damascus Opera House alongside specimens from the past thus offered a historico-cultural narrative that was easier to control. Similarly, when the new 1000-note was issued in 2013/2014, the economic prosperity associated with Hafez al-Assad's name was long gone; hence, the use of the Bosra amphitheater and other features of the cultural heritage, particularly from Suwayda (a city with a history of political unrest), were an attempt to generate unity by evoking a national imaginary that all the warring groups might share.

The new 2000-note, however, was sending a different message. With it, Bashar al-Assad was reminding Syrians, and the rest of the world, that seventeen years had already passed since he came to power, and that here he still was, strong and resilient.

And finally, there is the 5000-note issued as recently as 2021 as a response to the rise in inflation rates. This note is a tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives serving the nation, a homage to a glorious past that could perhaps be regained with effort, and a call for further sacrifice.

Finally, what does this study of banknotes tell us about translation?

I would suggest that, above all, it showcases the relationship of translation and time. As the literature on retranslation (e.g. Albachten and Gürçağlar, 2017) shows, what stands as a good translation at one point in time may be perceived as inadequate later, and thus has to be revised, translated anew. In short, all translations are bound to a particular time and place; they are finite, and replaceable.

These banknotes, which translate the Syrian national identity, have been politicized in much the same way as written texts are politicized. And like written texts, the narratives of the nation are always provisional, prone to re-translation. Money has here become a site for the contestation and rewriting of national narratives, an attempt by a beleaguered government to reassert control in the context of an unprecedented and violent political crisis.

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“IT’S THE ECONOMY, STUPID” DISCUSSING THE TRANSLATOR’S BUSINESS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF A CHANGING TECHNO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT: This paper starts by discussing the economic impacts of technology and automation on translators’ activities. It then proposes a model to account for the depreciation of skills and respective economic consequences caused by technological changes, described as the translators’ ‘obsolescence cycle’. This highlights the need for translators to adapt and reconfigure their expertise in order to accompany these changing circumstances, something that can be done by shifting the focus of their activities away from production towards more managerial responsibilities, including advisory, supervisory and planning functions. On a broader scale, management and the organisation of translation converge in the concept of translation policy, a still under-researched topic, which could prove to be a potentially rewarding field of action for translators.

KEYWORDS: Translation Business, Organization, Management, Productivity, Efficiency, Translator’s Expertise, Translation Policy

1. Introduction

The following discussion focuses on the job profile of the professional translator who has to earn his/her livelihood from translation and is embedded in a commercial and economic environment, often as a freelancer. In most cases s/he has to work under the constraints of time and money. In this context, automation, in the form of machine translation and advanced AI technology, appears to be a strong competitor. Bringing issues to bear from the domains of business studies and economics, the paper attempts to find answers to questions such as what the modern job profile of the translator might look like, and what rewarding opportunities might exist for translators given the rapid transformations taking place in the global translation market. Not only is the demand for translation services steadily growing but so too is the amount of pages translated daily, although the lion’s share is dispatched by the online machine translation platforms now readily available. This has contributed to the development of translation into a “fully fledged industrial sector” (Dunne, 2012), frequently referred to as the “translation industry” (Massardo and van der Meer, 2017).

In a special edition of the journal *Perspectives* (25, p.3, 2017), the editors, Biel and Sosoni, claim that changes in society and technology have led to an increased interest in the economic implications of translation:

The economics of translation (...) appears to be moving to the centre of TS as it is becoming more relevant due to four predominant factors: (a) unprecedented globalisation, (b) increased migration, (c) the global economic crisis of 2007–2008, which led to pressure on costs and increased productivity and (d) the advances of information communication technologies (ICTs). (Biel and Sosoni, 2017, p. 354)

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Today we may add two more factors that have had an impact on communication and the language services: the health crisis caused by the covid pandemic, which boosted the use of communication technologies, and the war in eastern Europe with its impact on language policy and use. The editorial also invokes the “increasing technicalisation of the profession” and even an “acute technologisation of translation” (Biel and Sosoni, 2017, p. 351) as a consequence of the growing demand and scarce supply. In line with such a drive towards efficiency, digitalization and automation have had a big impact on production but may also contribute to reducing the number of qualified translators available. The big challenge for translators, as well as for academia, is, therefore, to keep up with the innovations introduced by technological and economic changes.¹

To succeed in such a fast-changing scenario, translators have to adapt. As Baumgarten and Cornellà-Detrell (2018, p. 11) put it, “The new buzzword for us is the reality of the economy as the foundation of our existence”. Consequently, the economy of translation has to be analysed and studied with the appropriate instruments and research tools. Its focus can be manifold, touching on the efficiency of services, the overall and individual organisation of translation, or even the cost factor of translation. Gambier (2014, p. 9), for instance, has called for micro-studies to highlight the economic effects of translation, and urges scholars to “compare translation and interpreting costs with the other means used for taking care of international multilingual communication”. The kinds of costs that have to be factored in for translation have also been studied under the heading of “transaction costs” (Pym, 1995, 2017; Robichaud and De Schutter, 2012) – another term taken from business studies – which implies the need for translators to keep an eye on the overall economic impact of their job.

2. The translators' obsolescence cycle

In larger translation or localisation projects, digital workflows are broken down into specific tasks assigned to different groups of people: project managers, terminologists, proofreaders, editors, QA managers and translators. This concept, called ‘digital Taylorism’, in which “jobs are standardised, methods documented” (Moorkens, 2020, p. 4), means that workers no longer choose their own work and pace but “are monitored and have their tasks arranged so as to increase overall productivity” (Moorkens, 2020, p. 1). That is to say, human activity is divided into small chunks of labour activities which are becoming ever more specialised and supervised, and wherever possible, tasks are automated to save costs, with the overall goal of efficiency. In such a context, translators are increasingly entrusted solely with the language transfer itself while higher-level tasks are delegated to other professional roles. This makes their work subordinate and reduces their autonomy; the translator becomes a tiny cog in the whole process, with the result that they may well lose sight of the whole picture. As organization, training, development, and the overseeing of work move from worker to management, workers have less and less

¹ See, for example, the concepts of “competition for talent” in the ELIS report (2022, p. 35) or “HR training as a driver of change” in Massardo and van der Meer (2017).

say in the choice of the single best method for carrying out their work (Moorkens, 2020, p. 3).

This potential skill-disenfranchisement of translators can be illustrated as a downward spiral, representing the shrinking area of competence triggered by such developments and the encroachment of technology, which we may call the translators' obsolescence cycle (Figure 1). While, on the one hand, the ongoing advance of translation technology, with its ever-increasing range of tools and functions, provides help and support for human translators, on the other, more and more human activities are increasingly being replaced by automated tasks done by machines.

Thus, translators are increasingly losing skills to technology. Historically, the spiral began in the 1980s, with the introduction of electronic dictionaries and terminology management systems (“Translation Technology 1” in Figure 1 below), which reduced the need for terminological research and the creation of glossaries. Another technological breakthrough came with the onset of CAT tools in the mid-1990s (“Translation Technology 2”), when machines became able to save translations of text chunks and re-purpose them in new environments whenever similar segments recurred; now, the ability to organize and refer to past translations was no longer necessary for human translators. As for “Translation Technology 3”, this of course represents Machine Translation, which has taken over the very act of producing a target text, relegating translators to pre- or post-editing roles. Thus, as long as technology is advancing, the spiral continues to wind down with the cluster of translator competences becoming ever thinner without disappearing completely.

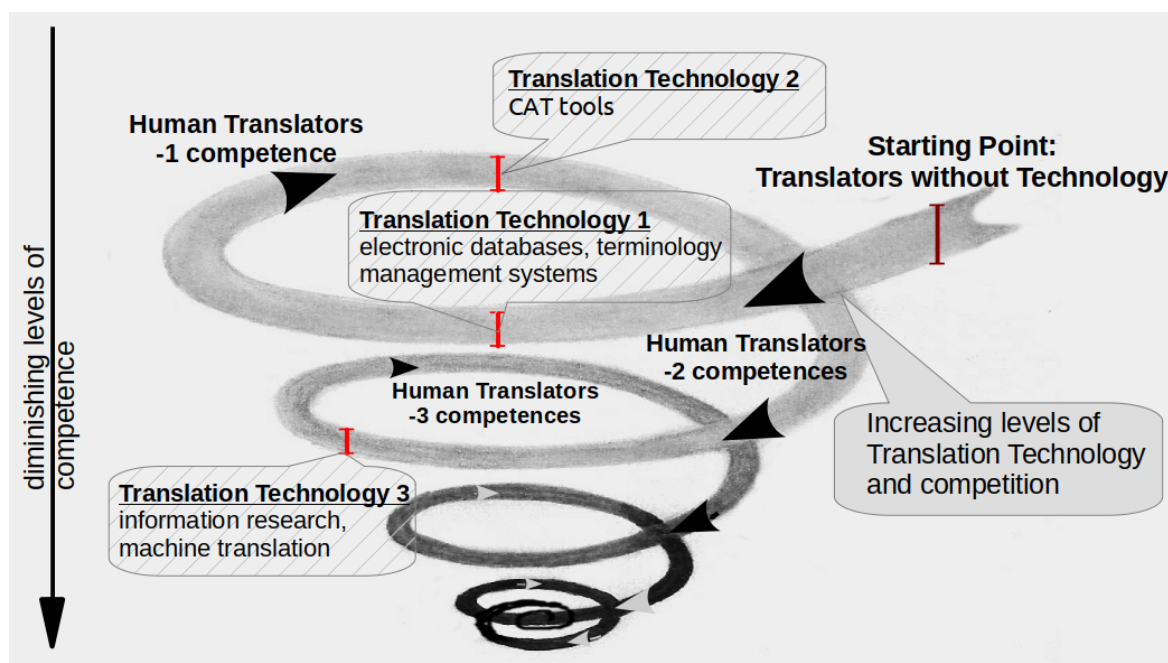


Figure 1. The translators' obsolescence cycle.²

² *Obsolescence* from the Latin *obsolescere*, wear out, grow old, go out of fashion, lose value. Available at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/obsolesce> (Accessed: 28 December 2022)

This view of technology correlates to some extent with the concept of the digital assistant proposed by Martin Kay (1980, p. 13), when he described how translation technology first takes over peripheral aspects before going on to assume ever more important tasks of the translation process. However, while Kay’s digital assistant (which dates from 1980) is essentially human-friendly, I would like to argue that modern translation technology goes much further, taking over the very production of the target text itself, automating the process perceived as linguistic commutation. If translators refuse to adapt to this situation and adjust their job descriptions accordingly,³ they will be thrust further down the spiral of the obsolescence cycle, progressively losing skills and self-esteem.

In order to sustain their business and preserve their status, translators must relinquish “pure” translation (understood as the faithful transfer of information between languages) and move into “tailoring products to meet the needs of clients” (Kujamäki, 2021, p. 6). For individual translation projects this has already been theorized by Reiss and Vermeer (2014), whose skopos theory describes a switch from equivalence to adequacy, where the purpose or function of the target text is considered the decisive factor for a successful translation. However, in order to succeed in a modern service-oriented economy, translators have to offer a range of services that goes far beyond individual translation projects by offering comprehensive solutions in the field of multilingual communication: multilingual terminology work, language data analysis and management, multicultural marketing, translation technology consulting, etc. This comes at the cost of redefining professional activities in the field of translation in order to distinguish them from mere language transfer, be it automatic or human. Indeed, as Koskinen (2020, p. 141) puts it, “It may well be that, in the future, some tailor-made multilingual services will not be labelled translation, as the term ‘translation’ may eventually begin to denote machine translation only”.

3. The translator’s profile

Although potential activities for translators will always exist in one reduced form or another as shown in the obsolescence cycle, there is a common perception that translation is slowly being taken over by machines, which threaten to replace humans altogether. This fear comes from the pervasive influence of digitalization and automation in businesses. Developments in AI and machine translation cannot be halted or simply ignored by translators but must be faced and addressed at the risk of a further slide down the spiral

³ It should be pointed out that modern definitions of translator’s competencies, such as those provided by the European Master in Translation, acknowledge this change by broadening the central “Strategic, Methodological and Thematic Competence”. This disrupts the obsolescence cycle since it integrates “all the strategic, methodological and thematic competences that come into play before, during and following the transfer phase per se – from document analysis to final quality control procedures” as well as “the ability to interact with machine translation in the translation process (...) as an integral part of professional translation competence” (EMT, 2017, p. 7).

into insignificance: “Will people work in the future?” ask George and Paul (2020, p. 3) to which the answer is “No, especially if we continue to define work the way we do it now”. Relevance can be preserved through change. And change means adapting and seizing opportunities beyond traditional tasks, by avoiding competing with machine translation and looking for solutions that can give translators a competitive advantage over their automated rivals. Moorkens suggests that, in order to maximise their agency, translators must continually acquire new competences and diversify their portfolio of services, focusing more on areas that are least likely to be replaced by machines or non-professionals. (Biel and Sosoni 2017, p. 357)

Translators’ tasks must be redefined along the lines of optimizing communication through the organization and planning of translation, or in other words, by choosing the best method and tools for the translation tasks that are necessary in a specific context, commercial or institutional. For individual translation or localisation projects, this task is traditionally done by project managers who nevertheless need specific translation expertise, and many translators have moved up to take over this role. Planning and organizing multilingual communication and translation globally for an institution, organisation or company needs specific translation expertise, providing thus an opportunity for a more pronounced professional profile. Control over the overall process of multilingual communication can be regained in this way.

The profession of translator has always been undervalued, and translation is frequently seen as something that can be done by anyone who speaks two languages. In a commercial context it is often perceived as an annoying, if necessary, aspect of communication. As Venuti (2008, p. ii) puts it:

Translation continues to be a largely misunderstood and relatively neglected practice, and the working conditions of translators, whether they translate into English or into other languages, have not undergone any significant transformation.

The advent of machine translation has added another component to the lowering of the social status and overall recognition of translators, affecting their identity,⁴ motivation and commitment.⁵ Thus, the more translators are able to detach themselves from the narrow role of pure language transfer and regain control over entire communication processes, the more fulfilment they will gain. This would imply a shift of emphasis from the functional area of production to more fulfilling business areas.

4. From production to management

Business studies distinguish five traditional functional areas: “management, marketing, information systems, finance, and operations management” (Eveleth et al., 2011, p. 754).

⁴ Identity, in this context, is defined as “the extent to which core producers recognise each other as professionals and are recognised as such by clients and competitors” (Kujamäki, 2021, p. 5). Recognition and esteem are thus closely tied to the role translators take up in business processes.

⁵ Motivation and commitment come primarily from “achievement, recognition for achievement, the work itself, responsibility, and growth or advancement” (Moorkens, 2020, p. 4).

Though other analyses reduce this number to four (Horngren, 1970; Swenson, 2001; Heng et al., 1989), one thing they have in common is that production – sometimes also called operations or manufacturing – constitutes a basic function. In translation, the activity of producing a target text has also always been a key defining feature and accordingly at the heart of training and research. However, if we look at it from an economic or business perspective, mere production would be seen as the least rewarding business area for translators in terms of income and social status. It is precisely this area of production that is threatened by competition from unskilled labour as well as digitalization and automation, particularly in the light of the impressive progress machine translation has made in recent times.

As a consequence, any gain in status and income is likely to require a shift away from the production of a target text based solely on the input of a source text towards a much more refined business process in which production plays a subordinate role. Indeed, it is precisely this aspect which may very well be substituted by machines without compromising the translator’s business process as a whole. Machine translation output in this sense resembles the simple transfer process, with the raw material to be refined and customized by human translators: “by taking over what is mechanical and routine, it frees human beings for what is essentially human” (Kay, 1980, p. 3). Machine translation is therefore a standardized service or utility. Essentially human, though, are all activities that are not mechanical and routine.

A service can, of course, also be delivered in the form of offering a standardized utility for the masses (e.g., electricity or machine translation as a utility), but in the categorization of different kinds of services, translation is typically defined as a knowledge-intensive professional service. (Koskinen, 2020, p. 141)

Humans excel in knowledge-intensive tasks while machines struggle with connecting information on a wider scale. Translators have a broader picture of the overall communicative situation and may take into account the needs of all participants. Koskinen (2020) speaks of user-centred translation as “an array of methods to enhance and ensure translations match the needs and expectations of their future users” (Koskinen, 2020, p. 139), while Kujamäki sees the concept of customisation as the key feature of a service (Kujamäki, 2021, p. 6). In this sense, added value does not come from language transfer but rather from managing client requests by controlling the functions of the target text, as exemplified by functionalist approaches to translation (Reiss and Vermeer, 2014). The needs of businesses and companies, though, go well beyond single translation projects and circle around the question of how to tackle international multilingual communication in general. Let us look at what areas of activity these would be from a business perspective.

First, let us identify some possible business activities for translators which, till now, may have been neglected, or marginalized as mere sideline tasks. Pegels (1991, p. 29) suggests thirteen functional areas: (1) Product planning, (2) Market research, (3) Product styling, (4) Product design, (5) Product engineering, (6) Prototype engineering, (7) Manufacturing engineering, (8) Manufacturing, (9) Sourcing and suppliers, (10) Marketing

and promotion, (11) Sales and distribution, (12) Service engineering, (13) Budgeting and finance. In such a business approach, the product is moved from one functional area to the next as each one completes its work on it.

There is no doubt that translators working as service providers in a competitive market have to deal with most of these aspects in their professional life. They plan their product or service (i.e. language combinations and specializations) and as freelancers, also do market research to see whether such services might be needed, refining their product offer to specific text types and choosing their preferred tools to work with, etc. But even if we look at specific translation jobs, the manufacturing step is strongly affected by what is called customization or user-centred translation. The appearance of the target text depends heavily on product design, marketing, sales and service engineering, all activities which are negotiated in dialogue with clients and prospective target text users (“one of the definitive characteristics of a service is customer and user involvement” [Kujamäki, 2021, p. 3]). In such a context, the production of a target text cannot be fully automated without impacting negatively upon customer relations. Instead, the initial translation proposal, produced by the machine, will need to be reworked and redesigned by human translators in order to bring it into line with customer requirements. Machine translation, in this case, is then reconfigured as a kind of supplier and categorised under the label of “manufacturing/sourcing and suppliers” in the integrated management of functional business areas, shown in Figure 2 below:

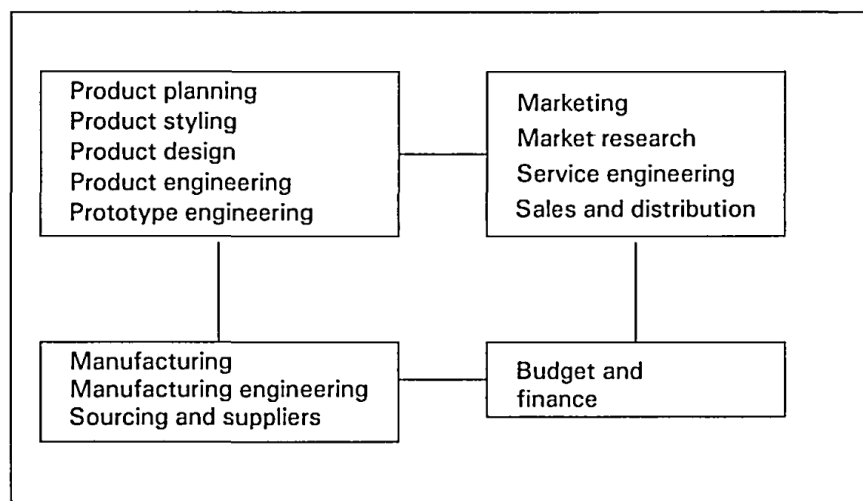


Figure 2. Integrated management of functional business areas (Pegels, 1991, p. 31).

Such an integrated or overlapping approach for the development of a product or service from the product conception to its use by the ultimate customer allows translators to 1) devise their own services and activities, 2) take advantage of all kinds of suppliers for the manufacturing part, including machine translation, and 3) regain autonomy in their work or self-esteem. Whatever we may call such an overall approach to translation services, be it customization, user-centred translation or integrated management of

business activities, it is conceptually opposed to mass production, and shifts the focus away from pure language transfer. Nonetheless, as with any other business, translation service providers are subject to efficiency and competitive pressures. Automation of the most tedious and time-consuming tasks, using all the opportunities modern technology can offer, is the way to remain competitive in the national and international marketplace. For translation, this means delegating mass production to the machine and reserving fine-tuning, adapting and customizing for humans.

Many linguists experience reservations about the widespread implementation of machine translation due to a narrow focus on language or a misguided perception of the very nature of their service in the age of AI. Many still see themselves as rivals of the machine, and consequently fail to take proper advantage of automated machine translation. In addition, many training institutions put an emphasis on linguistic skills and cultural competence, neglecting technology. As a result, graduates frequently lack specific skills and expertise in the adoption of machine translation. Moreover, qualified IT personnel are in short supply. Therefore, priority should be given to encouraging the personal motivation of translators to engage with machine translation technology and to focus on innovation.

Initiatives to adopt machine translation within a business, an institution, or an organization should be implemented with a high degree of transparency, making clear how it will foster the goals of the company or institution. Involving translators and team members from the start reduces fears about competition and allows bottlenecks to be identified in the process. Automation furthermore needs a considerable investment not just in time and know-how but also in money. While there are open-source machine translation tool kits (ModernMT, OpenMT and others) at virtually no cost, the collection of sufficiently large-scale and qualitatively adequate training data may be complex and arduous. Thus, it can be a challenge to provide positive performance data and show value in the short term. In the longer term however, the time saved enables human translators to concentrate on higher-value work and problem-solving in order to provide a more streamlined and custom-fit service. This allows for reduced efforts in the area of manufacturing, strengthening the other three business areas as outlined above in the integrated approach.

Translation has always been driven by specific interests, including economic ones. However, business studies and economic theories have only had a minor impact on translation studies, producing an “inadequate or lack of interaction between [the] two disciplines” (Türkmen, 2021. p. 91). Among the turns seen and described in the last sixty years within translation studies, no business trend or economic turn has been identified. Instead, these trends have focused on different aspects of translation: from linguistics and pragmatics in the early years to culture, sociology, and technology in more recent times. Overall, language and culture remain strongly positioned in translation studies, often preventing a more open approach to economic issues in translation and its role in business:

It is time to balance this over-reliance on cultural epistemology by an approach on translation that is more firmly grounded in the material and technologically mediated dynamics of everyday (...). In other words, it is time to take a much closer look at the ways in which the products, processes and functions of translation are embedded in the markets of commodity exchange. (Baumgarten and Detrell, 2019, p. 11)

Thus, research in translation needs to take account of business models in order to justify its value for society, in particular when it is used for commercial purposes or as a public service. Hitherto, business and economic studies have mainly focused on the multilingual challenges of international communication and the role translation plays in it. Recent political and economic developments have only accentuated the awareness of the importance of economic models for translation.

How translation was treated in business research was discussed primarily in the studies regarding international business research since it is a relatively narrow area of research that refers to the trade of goods, services, or capital across national borders on a global scale focusing on cross-border transactions (Türkmen, 2021, p. 80). This has been picked up positively in translation didactics as courses in website localization, multilingual marketing or cultural adaptation of texts to foreign markets show. However, the role business studies could play in organizing translation as a service, as well as providing a viable business model for translators in the era of ubiquitous machine translation, and an ever-increasing output quality at almost no cost, has largely been neglected.

The management of language services; the organization of translation within multilingual companies or organizations; the application of return on investment (ROI) models in translation (see DePalma, 2002, p. 230): all these could be fruitful for translation studies. As well as looking at the potential input of translation studies to international marketing and international business relations, we might also ask how business studies could contribute to boosting translators’ income, their social and economic status, or the efficiency of translation in general. This would open up new strands of research and lead to a fruitful two-way cross-fertilization between the two disciplines as shown in the illustration below.

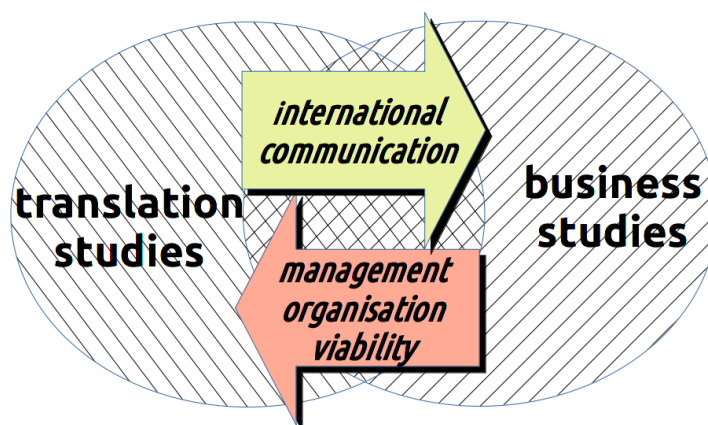


Figure 3. Cross-fertilization between business studies and translation studies.

Indeed, economic approaches to the organization and management of translation, to the market viability of translation services, and the sustainability of (human) translation are still under-researched in translation studies. Research in this area can lead to a more profitable role and a better position for highly trained translators, provided that translation is seen from the perspective of a business sector needing a well-thought-out and sophisticated policy.

5. Translation policy and infrastructure

This is where translation policy comes into play: the planning and organization of needs prior to consultation, ensuring that necessary decisions are taken in advance, i.e. well before the actual translation projects start. Thus, inefficient ad-hoc approaches to translation can be avoided. We refer to the concept of translation policy as the sum of all decisions regarding translation taken within a company, organisation or institution independently of actual translation projects or individual translators. This reflects Toury’s (2012, p. 82) distinction between preliminary norms, among which he includes translation policy (though only in terms of source text choice), and operational norms (regarding the act of translating itself). The concept of policy in its meaning of “a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body” (Merriam-Webster online), which we might apply here, thus transcends the rather restricted definition as a “set of legal rules that regulate translation in the public domain: in education, in legal affairs, in political institutions, in administration, in the media,” quoted by Meylaerts (2011b, p. 165). If we go beyond legal rules and see policy in a more general sense, we could define translation policy more broadly as “investigating the how and why aspects, in addition to the aspects of what kinds of materials are translated, by whom (with what qualifications), where, and when” (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011, p. 281). Such decisions do not necessarily have to be formally expressed; disregarding the essential requirements and challenges of translation still represents a kind of policy: “Some policies are characterised by avoidance or declaration without implementation” (Kadenge and Nkomo, 2011, p. 259). Nonetheless, a sensible policy with regard to translation presupposes specific preparation work as stated, for example, for the context of minority languages: “A proposal for efficient translation management in minorised communities necessarily implies the explicitness of such norms” (Diaz Fouces, 2005, p. 103). The goal of efficiency obviously holds true all the more for commercial enterprises where translation is just a means to an end, with the ultimate purpose being profit and money.

In order to streamline translation processes and make them economically efficient and productive, a specific translation policy has to be defined, i.e. organizational decisions have to be taken in different areas with a long-term perspective. The empirically based Translations Policy Metrics (TPM) model (Sandrini, 2019) groups relevant decisions into five major areas: 1) ideology, touching on the aspect as to how translations should be done and based on what principles; 2) organization, dealing with issues of organisation, coordination and project management; 3) technology, today a very important factor to

achieve efficiency by deploying machine translation, adopting cooperative translation environment tools such as translation memory systems, term bases, corpus tools, etc.; 4) quality, introducing quality management processes and procedures as outlined by international quality standards; 5) human resources, dealing with the aspect of who translates and with what competences concerning staff management, recruiting, on-the-job training, etc. Each of these is further divided into several sub-areas so that the quality of respective decisions taken for each area can be measured and evaluated. Thus, the TPM study⁶ lends itself very well for an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of translation processes within an organisation or company which according to empirical data lie predominantly in the area of organization, processes, and technology (Sandrini, 2019, p. 388).

Today the use of technology is a sine-qua-non of efficiency. Following Meylaerts (2011, p. 744), who stated that there can be no language policy without a translation policy, we may say: “There is no translation policy without a translation technology policy” (Sandrini, 2016, p. 57). Using technology in all its manifestations also implies a clear vision of how terminology, translation corpora, translation memory and training data for machine translation will be provided, configured and managed. All this presupposes specific know-how as well as training to tap the full potential of technology, especially, as the one big differentiating factor has shifted from availability and cost (where the main accent lay in the first years of adoption) towards customization and quality. Here we see another plea for a substantial shift in translation from mere production to management.

A translation policy bears responsibility not just for the organization and planning of translation but also for setting up an adequate translation infrastructure. This affects all aforementioned areas of translation, in particular organization, human resources and technology. It entails implementing customized machine translation, company-specific term bases, translation memories and parallel corpora, allocation of manpower to translation jobs, etc. In this way the efficiency of translation and its contribution to profit margins and operating results can be ensured.

Coming back to the role of professional translators, it is essential that their specific knowledge of all five areas in translation (ideology, organization, technology, human resources and quality) are integrated into the decisional structure of a company. It presupposes that 1) translators possess the relevant competences in these areas and are

⁶ The Translation Policy Metrics Model (TPM) (Sandrini, 2019) describes a comprehensive evaluation procedure that can be applied to translation policy in the framework of regional or minority languages. It is based on the maturity model (Vom Brocke and Roseman, 2015, p. 41) and its five steps of development specified by organizational management. The various areas of translation policy may be assessed by taking into account the general goal of protecting a regional or minority language and, on the other hand, the findings of translation studies as well as best practices of the translation industry. The study proposes an exemplary implementation of this model for the minority region of South Tyrol in Italy on the basis of two surveys, several personal interviews, as well as by examining the existing sources of legislation.

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willing to go beyond mere target text production, and 2) that the company management acknowledges the benefit of involving professional translators in decision-making.

6. Conclusion

The economy has to be understood as the material demands of society in general and, in this context, as the requirements of the translation market, which in turn define the social value, status, and prestige of translators. Changes in the economy force translators to adapt, something they have to do if they want to preserve their relevance, as shown in the translators' obsolescence cycle. Change means adapting to new challenges by finding a new role at a time when automation due to machine translation and AI are advancing quickly. However, economics and business studies have been researching the impact of automation in depth for different areas. By comparing the historical development of other business sectors and the ways in which the role of humans has changed in them (i.e. which roles have survived or become superfluous), we may draw comparisons with translation services.

Alongside the repercussions of automation in the translation industry, it is necessary to investigate the consequences for professional translators, their business roles and translator training as well. Continued concentration on the production aspect of translation will downgrade human translators to operators doomed to be replaced by machines. By investing in innovation and embracing new developments, however, translators are able to survive as economic actors. A stronger emphasis on the management, planning and organisation of multilingual communication processes can help to preserve or even enhance the position of translators in the value chain.

Translator training programmes will be challenged to shift their emphasis from production-focused models towards the formation of translation policy experts who are capable of setting up a translation infrastructure within a company or an organisation. Thus, translators will be able to integrate into business processes, allowing the management of multilingual communication to take advantage of all forms of technological support.

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DOUBLE TAXATION FOR TRANSLATORS: THE 21-RFI FORM AS A CASE OF TRANSLATION COMPLEXITY

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ABSTRACT: This article looks at the issue of double taxation in order to approach translation from two angles: a practical analysis, from the perspective of translation agents, of a particularly opaque document required by the tax authorities of Portugal (the 21-RFI double taxation form), and a reflective examination of the complex translational procedures (in the broader sense) required to make the form intelligible to those agents that require it. The first approach considers the legal and practical difficulties faced by non-Portuguese translators working for Portuguese clients. The second approach helps to expand the traditional linguistic conceptualization of translation as a transfer of texts between two languages to include intralingual, inter-epistemic and even human-machine translation. The final part of the article connects these two approaches, demonstrating how complexity theory offers a productive perspective on translation. The article thus demonstrates how even seemingly mundane documents such as a tax form can provide valuable insights into the complexity of translation and the interactions between human (and non-human) translation agents.

KEYWORDS: Translation Complexity, Double Taxation, 21-RFI, Translation Agents, Translation Complex

1. Introduction

Taxation is not a common topic of discussion in Translation Studies; to date, it has only really been covered as sections of more general works (e.g. Gouadec 2010, reviewed here by Aloísio Ferreira). However, I believe that exploring this issue will provide both practical and theoretical insights of use to translation scholars within the framework of *Translator Studies* (a subdivision of Translation Studies which makes translation agents the central focus of concern).¹

In this article, I will reflect on the interaction of translation agents with their social environment, particularly with regard to legal and administrative issues. In the first part, I will examine the question of double taxation (i.e. the liability to pay taxes in more than one jurisdiction) as it specifically affects translators working for Portuguese clients, focusing on the legal and practical difficulties raised by the use of a particular tax form, the 21-RFI. This will then become the springboard for a discussion, in the second part, of the various translational procedures involved in making this somewhat obscure legal

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¹ Translator Studies brings together theoretical reflection and practical preoccupations in a way that bridges the famous (and usually exaggerated) gap between practice and theory. Since it was first proposed by Robinson (1991), Translator Studies has become a very important strand of research, as recognized by Saldanha & O'Brian (2013, p. 150), and Chesterman (2009, p. 20), who defines it as follows: "Translator Studies covers research which focuses primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation, for instance on their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environment, or their history and influence".

requirement intelligible to service providers that lack specialist knowledge of the Portuguese tax system.

This allows us to move beyond a narrow linguistic conceptualization of translation as a binary transfer of texts between languages towards a much broader understanding that includes transfers between different registers within the same language as well as interactions between human (and non-human) agents. The final section of the article connects the first two parts using complexity theory, as proposed by translation theorist Kobus Marais (2013, 2014, 2020).²

Before delving into the matter itself, it is important to acknowledge two potential constraints. First, double taxation is not exclusively a translation question,³ though it impinges quite clearly on translation agents' lives. In conducting research within the field of Translator Studies, I believe it is important to consider not just translation-specific issues, but also any broader issues that may impact the work of translation agents.

Secondly, this article is based on my own experience as a translator and translation project manager. As such, I am writing this article from both a research and practical perspective, a common occurrence in Translation Studies as researchers often have first-hand experience in the field. While it may be challenging to fully separate the researcher from the object of study, I will strive to clearly explain my thought process and acknowledge this duality in my approach to the issue.

In this way, I hope to shine a light on a very practical problem affecting many translation agents in Portugal, while at the same time, contributing to the ongoing discussion about the expansion of the concept of translation⁴ to encompass a much broader range of phenomena than has traditionally been acknowledged.

2. RFI: a translators' problem

In this section, I shall attempt to explain the procedures that can be used to avoid double taxation in the case of translators working from abroad for Portuguese companies. These procedures impose a significant burden on both translators and translation companies, requiring much time and cognitive effort, but are necessary to avoid the loss of income that double taxation implies.

There are of course many legal subtleties and special cases around this issue and the following is intended only as a general description from a translator's perspective. That is to say, the article does not constitute formal legal advice and readers are advised to seek legal counsel regarding these matters, should they need to apply them.

² See also Marais and Meylaerts (2018).

³ For a recent treatment of double taxation in general terms, see Lang (2021)

⁴ See, for example, Blumczynski (2017), Robinson (2017), Gentzler (2017), Bassnett and Johnson (2019) and Marais (2021).

2.1. Double taxation for suppliers of Portuguese companies

Double taxation is a problem that frequently affects translators, as they often work with clients from different countries. One specific example of double taxation is the case of the many non-Portuguese individuals or companies working for Portuguese clients, who, in addition to paying income tax in their own country, are subject to a 25% withholding tax in Portugal. To avoid this double taxation, two conditions must be met:

- Portugal must have signed a convention with the supplier's country of origin to avoid double taxation. These conventions may impose particular rules on persons or companies from specific countries. The tax authorities in Portugal publish a list of these conventions (Portugal, 2022b).
- The individual or company providing the service must complete the 21-RFI form (Portugal, 2020) in order to activate the conventions, and deliver it, together with proof of residency outside Portugal, to their Portuguese clients, who must then file it and present it to tax authorities on request.

If either of these conditions is not met, the client must withhold 25% of payments and deliver that amount to Portuguese tax authorities.⁵

⁵ An alternative is for the translator to deduct the amount paid to Portugal from taxes in their own country, but this is an even more tiresome process.

REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA MINISTÉRIO DAS FINANÇAS		AUTORIDADE TRIBUTÁRIA E ADUANEIRA – AT DRSI - Direção de Serviços de Relações Internacionais PEDIDO DE DISPENSA TOTAL OU PARCIAL DE RETENÇÃO NA FONTE DO IMPOSTO PORTUGUÊS		MOD. 21-RFI
PEDIDO EFETUADO AO ABRIGO DA CONVENÇÃO PARA EVITAR A DUPLA TRIBUTAÇÃO ENTRE PORTUGAL E: REQUEST MADE UNDER THE CONVENTION FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE TAXATION BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND:				
I IDENTIFICAÇÃO DO BENEFICIÁRIO EFETIVO DOS RENDIMENTOS IDENTIFICATION OF THE BENEFICIAL OWNER OF THE INCOME				
NOME/DESIGNAÇÃO SOCIAL NAME/BUSINESS NAME				
DOMÍLIO FISCAL (Rua, número e andar) TAX RESIDENCE (Street, number and floor)		Número de identificação Fiscal (NIF) no país de residência Tax Identification Number (TIN) in the country of residence		
CÓDIGO POSTAL POSTCODE	LOCALIDADE CITY	PAÍS COUNTRY	NIF PORTUGUÊS (se aplicável) PORTUGUESE TIN (if applicable)	
CÓDIGO ELETRÓNICO E-MAIL				
II IDENTIFICAÇÃO DOS RENDIMENTOS DESCRIPTION OF THE INCOME				
1 - DIVIDENDOS 1.1 - DE AÇÕES 1 - DIVIDENDS 1.1 - FROM SHARES <input type="checkbox"/>				
QUANTIDADE NUMBER OF SHARES	ENTIDADE EMITENTE OU CÓDIGO ISIN ISSUER OR ISIN CODE			
1.2 - RESTANTES DIVIDENDOS 1.2 - OTHER DIVIDENDS <input type="checkbox"/>				
VALOR DA PARTICIPAÇÃO SOCIAL VALUE OF THE PARTICIPATION		ENTIDADE PARTICIPADA PARTICIPATED ENTITY		
2 - JUROS 2.1 - DE VALORES MOBILIÁRIOS REPRESENTATIVOS DA DÍVIDA 2 - INTEREST 2.1 - FROM DEBT SECURITIES <input type="checkbox"/>				
VALOR NOMINAL NOMINAL POSITION	DESIGNAÇÃO DO VALOR MOBILIÁRIO OU CÓDIGO ISIN DESCRIPTION OF SECURITIES OR ISIN CODE	DATA DE AQUISIÇÃO (aaaa/mm/aa) ACQUISITION DATE (yyyy/mm/dd)	ENTIDADE EMITENTE ISSUER	
2.2 - RESTANTES JUROS 2.2 - OTHER INTEREST <input type="checkbox"/>				
NATUREZA DOS CRÉDITOS NATURE OF THE DEBT CLAIMS		DATA DA CONSTITUIÇÃO (aaaa/mm/aa) STARTING DATE (yyyy/mm/dd)	VALOR DOS CRÉDITOS VALUE OF THE DEBT CLAIMS	
3 - ROYALTIES 3 - ROYALTIES <input type="checkbox"/>				
NATUREZA DAS ROYALTIES NATURE OF THE ROYALTIES			DATA DA CELEBRAÇÃO DO CONTRATO (aaaa/mm/aa) DATE OF CONCLUSION OF THE CONTRACT (yyyy/mm/dd)	
4 - TRABALHO INDEPENDENTE 4 - INDEPENDENT PERSONAL SERVICES <input type="checkbox"/>				
6 - PENSÕES 6.1 - DE NATUREZA PRIVADA 6 - PENSIONS 6.1 - OTHER THAN FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/>		5 - TRABALHO DEPENDENTE 5 - INCOME FROM EMPLOYMENT <input type="checkbox"/>		
7 - REMUNERAÇÕES PÚBLICAS 7 - INCOME FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/>		6.2 - DE NATUREZA PÚBLICA 6.2 - FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/>		
8 - PRESTAÇÕES DE SERVIÇOS 8 - SERVICES RENDERED <input type="checkbox"/>				
Comissões Commissions <input type="checkbox"/>		Outras Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
9 - RESTANTES RENDIMENTOS 9 - OTHER INCOME <input type="checkbox"/>		Especificar Specify		
Identifique a natureza do rendimento Describe the nature of the income				
III PROVA DA RESIDÊNCIA FISCAL DO BENEFICIÁRIO EFETIVO PROOF OF THE BENEFICIAL OWNER'S STATE OF RESIDENCE				
ESTE FORMULÁRIO APENAS É VÁLIDO QUANDO ACOMPANHADO DE PROVA DE RESIDÊNCIA FISCAL PARA EFEITOS DE PROVA DA RESIDÊNCIA FISCAL, NO PERÍODO EM CAUSA, DA ENTIDADE IDENTIFICADA NO QUADRO I É JUNTO CERTIFICADO DE RESIDÊNCIA FISCAL EMITIDO PELAS AUTORIDADES COMPETENTES DO RESPECTIVO ESTADO DE RESIDÊNCIA, NOS TERMOS DO ARTIGO 4.º DA CONVENÇÃO PARA EVITAR A DUPLA TRIBUTAÇÃO, ATESTANDO A SUJEIÇÃO A IMPOSTO.				
THIS FORM IS ONLY VALID WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY PROOF OF THE BENEFICIAL OWNER'S STATE OF RESIDENCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROOF OF THE BENEFICIAL OWNER'S STATE OF RESIDENCE, IN THE PERIOD CONCERNED, OF THE ENTITY IDENTIFIED IN BOX I A CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF THE RESPECTIVE STATE OF RESIDENCE SHALL BE ATTACHED, WITHIN THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 4 OF THE CONVENTION FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE TAXATION, PROVING THE TAX LIABILITY.				
EXEMPLAR DESTINADO À ENTIDADE ORIGINADA A EFETUAR A RETENÇÃO NA FONTE COPY FOR THE ENTITY OBLIGED TO WITHHOLD TAX				

Figure 1. 21-RFI form (first page).

In the case of translators, these procedures are particularly relevant, since working for foreign clients is a very usual occurrence. Therefore, any non-Portuguese translator working for a Portuguese translation company will need to fill out the 21-RFI to avoid the withholding tax of 25% that would otherwise be imposed on their income from Portugal. This tax, known as a "*retenção na fonte*" in Portuguese, is a tax on income paid to non-residents that is withheld by the payer and paid directly to tax authorities. For example, if a translator is to receive 1000 euros from a Portuguese client, 250 euros would be withheld and paid to Portuguese tax authorities, while the remaining 750 euros would be paid to the translator. By completing the 21-RFI form and activating the relevant conventions, translators can avoid this withholding tax and ensure that their income is taxed only in their country of residence.

However, the process of completing and submitting the 21-RFI form can be time-consuming, requiring translators to gather and provide various pieces of documentation

and information. It can also be a source of stress and uncertainty, as failure to complete the form correctly or on time can result in the withholding tax being applied.

In short, there are three possible scenarios that may occur when non-resident translators work for Portuguese clients:

- The translator lives in a country without a convention to avoid double taxation signed with Portugal: in this case, a 25% withholding tax must be applied to all payments.
- The translator lives in a country with a convention signed with Portugal but does not provide the 21-RFI form and proof of tax residence to the client: the 25% withholding tax must again be applied.
- The translator lives in a country with a convention signed with Portugal who submits the annual 21-RFI form and proof of residency: now, no withholding tax is applied.

2.2. Problems for translation companies

Translation companies in Portugal face unique challenges when it comes to complying with the requirements for the 21-RFI form. Firstly, translation companies tend to be small, but often work with large numbers of foreign suppliers due to the nature of the services they provide. This can result in a heavy administrative burden for a company with a small internal structure. Secondly, many translation companies are run by translators or individuals with a background in translation or linguistics, who may have limited training in legal, accounting and administrative matters. This can make it difficult for them to navigate the requirements of the 21-RFI form effectively.

Many Portuguese translation companies start by being unaware of the 21-RFI form and the associated requirements, leading to fines and tax payments when audited by authorities. Others may actively choose not to apply the correct procedures and do not withhold the appropriate taxes, putting themselves at risk of penalties.

This administrative burden, combined with the potential legal jeopardy, makes many companies reluctant to work with translators from abroad. Some find themselves choosing not the best translator for the job, but the one who lives in Portugal; while others might consciously decide to not pursue any business that would imply contracting translators living abroad (a very limiting proposition for a translation company).

When the company complies with the requirement, it becomes subject to a significant burden, which includes:

- obtaining the 21-RFI form from all foreign suppliers, regardless of the size of the company or organization (any company or individual that invoices for services from

abroad must provide the form, including Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.⁶, as well as individual freelance translators), or withholding 25% of amounts paid to those suppliers which do not provide the form;

- ensuring that all completed forms are filed properly and accurately (mistakes or errors in the forms could lead to non-compliance issues for the company);
- obtaining a Portuguese tax number for each non-resident supplier in order to be able to submit an online form (Modelo 30); this process is particularly time-consuming and requires the completion of a complicated XML file, as described below;
- submitting Modelo 30 in order to accurately account for any payments that are withheld or payments made in full due to the presence of 21-RFI;
- transferring the withheld amounts to the tax authorities on time.

2.3. Problems for translators

Translators all over the world have to deal with double taxation rules in a variety of forms. Some countries demand the completion and submission of forms (e.g., the US), while others require sending to the client a proof of tax residence (e.g., Spain). Portugal, as we have seen, requires both. What is more, the financial and legal literacy of translators varies considerably — some are aware of double-taxation issues, while others have no knowledge whatsoever of the matter, which may impact their reaction to legal demands from clients.

The intricacy of the regulations in force leave many translators dumbfounded. Some believe these rules are “just another ploy on the part of the agency to pay as little as possible” (Ritu Bhanot, 2008)⁷. These doubts, coupled with general ignorance about Portuguese tax regulations (in comparison with those in force in the US, for example), lead some translators to refuse the obligation to fill in and send by post the 21-RFI form,⁸ which has a direct impact on their income and/or on the relationship with the client. Consequently, some translators may avoid working with companies that request the 21-RFI form in compliance with legal requirements, instead opting to work with companies that do not request it.

The 21-RFI form can itself be difficult to complete correctly, as it is a large document written in Portuguese and translated into English in a way that is not always clear. It also follows the conventions of Portuguese administration, which may be unfamiliar to non-Portuguese translators.

⁶ These companies provide a range of different services to translation companies: Alphabet provides e-mail server services; Meta provides marketing services; Amazon provides server virtualization; Microsoft provides software licensing services. All these companies should send the 21-RFI form to Portuguese clients.

⁷ Except in the case of outright fraud, it is not normally such a ploy, since amounts withheld must be paid to the tax authorities.

⁸ This is particularly common among EU translators, since they are convinced this matter is settled through EU law, as VAT is, which is not the case.

Double taxation and the procedures to avoid it can be difficult for translators and translation companies alike. This complexity can create uncertainty in the relationships between translation agents, causing confusion and mistrust. The lack of information about the procedures involved, as well as the difficulties in navigating different systems, languages, and tax laws, all contribute to this complexity, which results in different agents having different expectations and approaches to tax laws and procedures. This in turn can have a negative impact on the translation process itself, as well as on the overall quality and efficiency of the work. It is therefore important for translators and translation companies to be aware of these challenges and to take steps to navigate them effectively.

3. 21-RFI: a multi-layered translation problem

In this section, I will apply a translational perspective to the issue of double taxation faced by translators, trying to identify the many moments when translation is needed to overcome the problems created by it. By viewing the various movements and transfers involved as translations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic barriers at play, not only in this particular case, but also in all legal issues faced by professionals all over the world, in the translation industry or otherwise. This may help us to find ways to overcome these barriers to solve this issue and others.

Completing and submitting the 21-RFI form may seem, on the surface, like a fairly straightforward task that simply requires a translation of the form into a language that is understood by the person filling it out. Indeed, the form is already translated into English (and there is also a Spanish version). However, the process of completing the form goes much beyond a simple question of interlingual translation.

To fill it out correctly, many factors must be taken into consideration. The interlingual translation of the form is just one piece of the puzzle, the last in a whole series of translational processes necessary for this aspect of Portuguese tax law to become intelligible to a legal layperson operating in another cultural context. These processes could be conceived as a series of concentric circles, with the final interlingual translation at the center. To fully understand the challenges involved in this process, we must consider the outermost circles, encompassing the various linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic barriers that impede effective communication.

3.1. Translation of legal knowledge into business procedures

For the 21-RFI form to be completed and submitted successfully, and for the linguistic translation of it to effectively serve its intended purpose, it is essential that Portuguese companies be aware of their legal obligation to request the form from foreign suppliers. In some cases, a company may unknowingly fail to request the form from their suppliers, potentially resulting in consequences if the company is subject to a tax audit. It is generally the responsibility of a company's accountants or lawyers to inform them of this obligation.

The communication between accountants or lawyers and companies can be seen as an instance of intralingual, or even inter-epistemic⁹ translation, due to the inherent complexity of legal language and the general difficulty that laypeople may have in navigating the nuances of the law. This is compounded by the fact that we are dealing with different legal systems coming into contact with one another.

The requirement to complete the 21-RFI form results from a combination of two general principles, namely the principle of tax sovereignty, which holds that each state has the power to levy taxes in the manner of its choosing, without regard to foreign laws; and the conventions to avoid double taxation celebrated under international law. It is also influenced by the details of the tax laws of various countries as interpreted by tax authorities, courts, accountants, and lawyers who advise companies and individuals.

In this specific case, the obligation of non-resident translators to pay taxes in Portugal without physically being present in the country arises from Article 17 of the Portuguese Personal Income Code (Portugal, 2022a). Article 17 outlines the types of income that are subject to Portuguese taxation and includes the following clause:

c) Os rendimentos relativos a propriedade intelectual ou industrial ou de prestação de informações respeitantes a uma experiência adquirida no sector comercial, industrial ou científico, ou decorrente do uso ou concessão do uso de equipamento agrícola, comercial ou científico, quando não constituam rendimentos prediais, **bem como os derivados de assistência técnica, devidos por entidades que nele tenham residência, sede, direcção efectiva ou estabelecimento estável a que deva imputar-se o pagamento**, bem como quando nele tenha sido feito o registo ou praticada formalidade equivalente ou ainda quando nele seja utilizado o bem ou exercido o direito de que derivam (emphasis added);

The word "nele" in the highlighted extract refers to "Portuguese territory," as stated in the first part of Article 17. In the translation provided, this is rendered as "therein." The translation of this line into English is not particularly challenging:

c) Income related to intellectual or industrial property or to the provision of information regarding an experience acquired in the commercial, industrial or scientific sector, or arising from the use or concession of the use of agricultural, commercial or scientific equipment, when they do not constitute property income, **as well as those derived from technical assistance, payable by entities having therein their residence, registered office, effective management or permanent establishment to which the payment should be attributed**, as well as when the registration or equivalent formality has been done therein or when the good is used or the right from which they derive is exercised therein (emphasis added);

⁹ i.e. translation between specialist legal discourse and the everyday language of the layperson. See Robinson (2017, pp. 200-202) for more on this category, in the context of science versus humanities.

According to the general interpretation of this norm by tax authorities and accountants, a translator's income paid by Portuguese companies is considered to be "derived from technical assistance, payable by entities having therein [i.e. in Portugal] their residence, registered office, effective management, or permanent establishment." As a result, this income is subject to both Portuguese tax and, naturally, the tax laws of the translator's country of residence, leading to double taxation.

The requirement to complete the 21-RFI form, imposed upon translators resident all over the world, who may never have been to Portugal, can be difficult to interpret without a good understanding of Portuguese tax laws. What is more, the rule depends upon the understanding that translators provide 'technical assistance', an interpretation that might not be consensual in other legal contexts.

While it is generally expected that all citizens should be familiar with the law, this principle ignores the fact that the legal system is highly complex, and that it can take many years to fully understand even specific aspects of it. As a result, such regulations often have to be explained to the company by an accountant, lawyer, or tax officer through the use of intralingual (or inter-epistemic) translation – the translation of legal language into more general language. The company must then incorporate this information into their internal procedures to ensure that all non-resident translators either complete and submit the form or pay the 25% tax.

3.2. Translation of Portuguese rules into a text to be read by translators

When a Portuguese company needs to explain these requirements to a translator, a more complex translational situation arises. The task usually falls to a local project manager (usually someone that does not have legal training and is not a native speaker of English), who has to try to explain, in English or in some other language, the intricacies of Portuguese law as it interfaces with the translator's law and international law. This is not exactly interlingual translation, as both parties are usually speaking the same language – whether English, Portuguese or a third one – but it is also not exactly intralingual translation either, since it implies the use of concepts linked to different legal systems (possibly as many as three, if English is being used as a lingua franca to communicate with a translator from a third country). Some texts or messages between translation agents can be reused in new situations and conversations may follow a similar pattern to previous conversations about the same issue, but the exact wording will vary from time to time or be adapted for each particular situation. (In the last part, we will call this an instance of the "translation complex".)

Portuguese companies trying to explain the situation to translators encounter many different kinds of interlocutor, whose attitude to the problem will depend on many factors: their degree of knowledge or tolerance of Portuguese legal procedures (which in turn depends on the image that each person has of the country – similar forms from the US normally are usually accepted unquestioningly); the trust the translator has in translation

companies in general and in that specific company in particular; their degree of financial literacy; and even the specificities of the situation in hand.

In fact, it is hard to understate the intricacy of this matter and the opportunity for error and conflict. The intricacy is such that many translation agents simply avoid the procedure completely, even if this means not accepting translation jobs they would be perfectly happy to perform.

3.3. Translation of the form itself

After considering the outermost circles of translation, we arrive at the more traditional form of interlingual translation at the centre: the translation of the 21-RFI form from Portuguese into English. This translation is included as part of the form itself and was completed under the responsibility of Portuguese tax authorities. It is a good illustration of how interlingual translation alone may not be sufficient to achieve the desired outcome, namely, to permit the recipient of the income (in our scenario, the translator) to avoid double taxation.

The first challenge of producing such a translation is to ensure that it is understood. However, the official English translation of the form contains much unclear and ambiguous language. For example, the person subject to double taxation (i.e. the translator, in our scenario), is called the “beneficial owner of the income”, which is a translation of “*beneficiário efetivo dos rendimentos*”. The term is common among Portuguese tax law specialists and accountants but could be opaque for a person working from outside the country. Another example is the nature of the service: two of the options provided are “*trabalho independente*”, translated as “independent personal services”, and “*prestações de serviços*”, translated as “services rendered”. Even for a Portuguese tax-payer, the distinction between these options is unclear. Hence, the translator will need to get help from their client, who may themselves need to get help from an accountant or lawyer, or even the tax office, initiating another round of translation (both textual and oral).

A second challenge lies in the mechanical requirements for the completion of the form. The PDF document supplied by Portuguese tax authorities has five pages, with the third page needing to be printed on the reverse side of the first and second pages¹⁰ in order to create an original and a duplicate. The original is to be sent by post to the client, signed by hand and returned, together with a tax residency certificate, while the duplicate is to be kept by the translator. The only difference between the first and second pages is a note on the footer indicating which entity should file each copy. To properly follow these instructions, the translator must read through the (unclear) guidelines given on pages 4 and 5. The presence of many non-relevant instructions and the use of legal language compound the difficulties.

Furthermore, the correct completion of 21-RFI requires an understanding of the cultural specificities of Portuguese forms. For instance, the form includes many more fields

¹⁰ The instruction in the form itself reads: “the third page has to be printed out in duplicate on the reverse side of the two first pages”.

than actually need to be filled in, as it is intended for a variety of situations. The translator must only complete certain fields. This is something that Portuguese tax-payers are used to, but which may be confusing to non-residents.

3.4. Translation of information into a computer-legible file

Translation companies receiving completed 21-RFI forms from their suppliers must also submit another form labelled “Modelo 30” (Portugal, 2012), a specific tax declaration stating, among other things, whether taxes were withheld or not. At this point, an additional level of complexity is added to an already knotty problem: companies are asked to provide Portuguese tax numbers for all non-resident suppliers, most of whom have no relationship to the Portuguese tax system. In other words: all translators resident outside the country must have a Portuguese tax number, and if they don’t (as is most often the case, for obvious reasons), the Portuguese company must request one.

This request is done using an XML form (Fig. 2), which is the template for requesting a tax number for an individual (there is a separate template to request a tax number for companies).

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="iso-8859-1"?>
<ContribuinteEspecial>
  <Singular>
    <Nome>Fulano</Nome>
    <Morada>
      <Rua>Rua X</Rua>
      <Edificio>1</Edificio>
      <Suite>111</Suite>
      <Piso></Piso>
      <ProvinciaDistrito>Fictício</ProvinciaDistrito>
      <Apartado></Apartado>
      <CodigoPostal>9999</CodigoPostal>
      <Localidade>Fictícia</Localidade>
    </Morada>
    <PaisResidencia>112</PaisResidencia>
    <NIFPaisResidencia>999</NIFPaisResidencia>
    <DataNasc>1900-01-01</DataNasc>
    <PaisNascimento>112</PaisNascimento>
    <ConcelhoNascimento>0000</ConcelhoNascimento>
    <FreguesiaNascimento>00</FreguesiaNascimento>
    <LocalidadeNascimento>sem informacao</LocalidadeNascimento>
    <Sexo>F</Sexo>
    <Nacionalidade>112</Nacionalidade>
  </Singular>
</ContribuinteEspecial>
```

Figure 2. XML form to request a tax number for a non-resident supplier.

This form is quite curious as it not only asks for the supplier’s place of birth, but also the precise “*concelho*” and “*freguesia*” (specific administrative regions in Portugal, corresponding roughly to ‘county’ and ‘parish’). Many of the individuals covered by this procedure will not have been born in Portugal and thus cannot use the Portuguese administrative codes. In fact, the system will only provide a tax number for such suppliers

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if “0000” is inserted in the “*concelho*” field and “00” in the “*freguesia*” one. This is something that is normally learnt by trial and error.

The data needed to complete this XML file is to be found in e-mails and documents sent by the translator. The person responsible for creating the XML file will need to translate that data into a format that is readable by the tax authorities’ system. This could be seen as an instance of human-machine translation.

A quirk of the system is the following: if the non-resident supplier already has a Portuguese number (as might happen, for example, if another company has already requested a tax number for the same non-resident supplier), the response from the Portuguese tax administration system will be a message stating that the number already exists, but without providing that number. The translation company will need to send a new file requesting the existing number. There are cases where the system will then declare no such number exists, creating an endless loop that can only be solved using the phone.

4. Translation complex

As we have seen, many different kinds of translation are required to make the legal and procedural framework surrounding the 21-RFI form intelligible to those translation agents that need it. This includes the interlingual translation of the form itself into English; an intralingual/ inter-epistemic translation from legal to lay language by an accountant or other legal professional (usually in the form of an email); a translation of the accountant’s explanation by the Portuguese project manager for the benefit of the foreign translators, which may be presented orally (via a phone call), or in writing (in the form of a template prepared by the translation company for all foreign suppliers, to be adapted as needed). Finally, we have an instance of human-machine translation, as the data collected is rewritten into a format that is readable by the tax authorities’ computer system.

These instances of translation are constantly evolving and changing based on the interactions between translation agents. Texts are reused, rewritten, retranslated continuously to answer dynamic needs and conflicts. This is clearly a case of complexity. The study of complexity in translation is a relatively new field within Translation Studies, but it has already proven to be highly productive (Marais, 2013, 2014; Marais & Meylaerts, 2018).

Holland (2014, pp. 5–6) describes the features of complex systems:

- self-organization into patterns, as occurs with flocks of birds or schools of fish
- chaotic behaviour, where small changes in initial conditions (‘the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in Argentina’) produce large later changes (‘a hurricane in the Caribbean’)
- ‘fat-tailed’ behaviour, where rare events (e.g. mass extinctions and market crashes) occur much more often than would be predicted by a normal (bell-curve) distribution

- adaptive interaction, where interacting agents modify their strategies in diverse ways as experience accumulates.

All these features are very clearly applicable to translation in general,¹¹ but how is the translation of a simple form a complex system?

First of all, it is part of the general phenomenon of translation and so part of a complex of systems (cultural, linguistic, social, etc), all of which are complex in their own right. Secondly, we can find self-organization in the way some reactions to the form tend to follow the same pattern (for example, the first reaction of disbelief or distrust when an accountant explains the matter to the translation company and, then, the first reaction of distrust when a translation company asks a translator for the form); instances of chaotic behaviour (for example, in the way a specific e-mail can impact the outcome of the whole process) and even “fat-tailed” behaviour (since the whole process may lead to tax audits or even, in the worst-case scenario, to the breakdown of a company or translator’s business).

However, it is in the last of Holland’s features that we clearly see complexity at work in this particular situation, namely “adaptative interaction”. Clients and translators modify their expectations and demands, and then retranslate and/or rewrite messages, guides, etc. according to those modifications. This is the point where the two approaches of this article are connected: the many instances of translation related to 21-RFI are part of the general complex behaviour of translation agents faced with the social, cultural and legal complexity in the world around them. The form can be described as a nexus of multiple interlinked instances of translation in many different modes (oral, written, inter- and intra-linguistic), with feedback loops, dynamically evolving as an answer to a specific need (in this case, dealing with double taxation rules) that is dealt with by different people through time. All these translation activities are interlinked with other translation instances (regarding different matters) and, together, they are part of what Marais (2020) described as the *translation complex*. 21-RFI could be said to be a particular node in this complex, a node to which many translation activities are connected.

In Marais’s conceptualization, the translation complex is a set of streams: “One could conceptualize the streams in various ways, one of them being that the streams represent language, literature, culture, society, etc. All of these aspects combine in a translation process.” (Marais, 2020, p. 52). In the case we are analysing, we should also consider legal systems, legal terminology and agents’ expectations and behaviours as streams.

Marais imagines all streams of the translation complex combining in each translation process. However, translations related to 21-RFI are not a single process, but rather a node where many translation processes converge. Taking Marais’ conceptualization one step further, 21-RFI is perhaps more like a translational whirlpool, made up of different, often conflictual, currents, through which translators navigate at their peril.

¹¹ See Neves (2019) on the application of complexity thinking to organizational challenges in translation.

There's a final feature of translation complex, as seen from this larger perspective that should be highlighted. A person who needs to communicate inside this maze of legal rules and translation agents will normally act and translate by trial and error. Even the interaction between humans and machines is done by trial and error, as we have seen above. So, translation evolves through a series of trial-and-error processes by translation agents dealing with rules, texts and other people. In fact, this article is a way of using my own trial-and-error process to turn it into *social* trial and error — i.e. a way of making knowledge acquired through experience, then reflected upon, available to the general community of translation practitioners and researchers. We could say this article is, itself, part of the translation complex as it swirls around 21-RFI.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I started by examining the issue of double taxation for translators working for Portuguese clients, using the case of the 21-RFI form as a nexus to reflect on translation agents' lives, demonstrating the challenges that translation professional face in navigating complex legal and administrative procedures.

Then, I looked at 21-RFI form from a translational perspective, searching for translation instances beyond the traditional interlingual model. It becomes clear that translation is a complex activity that involves more than just the transfer of texts from one language to another. This approach is particularly useful within the framework of complex thinking, as proposed by many recent works in Translation Studies. In particular, translations related to 21-RFI can be seen as part of the translation complex described by Marais (2020).

Finally, the creators of legal forms intended for use by people from diverse cultural backgrounds might themselves benefit from a more informed translational perspective. Translating a form like 21-RFI, even in the strict interlingual sense, is not a simple matter, particularly when it is to be used by people from different backgrounds. Tax authorities need to recognize that translation will inevitably introduce change or, at the very least, ambiguity into a document of this nature, and should consider using more sophisticated techniques (such as explicitation or even translation notes) to clarify the content and thus avoid the kind of bewildering situation described in this article.

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FINANCIAL MATTERS AFFECTING MOZAMBICAN PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS: A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the financial challenges affecting translators and interpreters in Mozambique. Specifically, the study seeks to describe the Mozambican translators' and interpreters' business context. By means of a survey questionnaire, qualitative and quantitative data was collected from 42 participants. Data analysis led to the conclusion that Mozambican translators and interpreters are relatively young adults, who mostly offer freelance services on a part-time basis while holding a full-time job elsewhere, and that few of them have a pension scheme. It also identifies two distinct levels of income amongst these professionals. These findings highlight the need to equip translation and interpreting students with skills beyond their field of expertise to enhance graduate employability.

KEYWORDS: Translators and Interpreters, Translation and Interpreting, Translation and Interpreting Service Provision, Financial Security, Translator and Interpreter Training

1. Introduction

Many people are scared by the thought of financial insecurity and this no doubt influences their choice of career. If someone believes that the career they want to pursue will allow them to support themselves and their dependants, they will have motivation to get the needed training, no matter how hard it is. Conversely, someone that is initially inclined to choose a fulfilling job may reconsider if they sense that it is not likely to help them pay bills, perhaps even opting for a job they do not necessarily like.

Those who choose to enter the translation and interpreting profession usually have, first and foremost, a love of and knack for languages. Long before they seek any specialized training, they will probably have developed a good mastery of at least one foreign language and feel that training that builds on their linguistic proficiency will put them on a path to a career that is both fulfilling and financially secure. However, in a world full of uncertainties, few academic courses can, in themselves, guarantee a financially secure job. For a demand-driven industry such as translation and interpreting, multiple factors are at play that affect success. These include the translator's language pair, the country in which he/she operates, his/her networking skills, and of course economic shocks operating at the national or global levels etc. Thus, in a country such as Mozambique, it is not uncommon to find successful full-time translators and interpreters working alongside others who provide freelance translation and interpreting services while holding down jobs in other domains (as language teachers, for example). Indeed, it is quite frequent to meet translators and interpreters who are struggling to make a living, to the point of getting frustrated with their career choice. This is unfortunate, considering that in some countries, translators' salaries are comparable to those of other highly trained professionals (Arnold et al, 1994, p. 4).

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Against this backdrop, this study aims to find out more about the financial challenges affecting professional translators and interpreters in Mozambique. Specifically, it seeks to provide some insights into Mozambican translators' and interpreters' business context by answering such questions as: How do Mozambican translators and interpreters practice their profession? Do they have access to the government's pension scheme? How does taxation affect their financial situation? What rates do they charge for their services and do these make their job financially secure?

It is hoped that this data might ultimately contribute to the curriculum development for translator and interpreter training and enhance graduate employability.

2. Context of the study

The context of this study is Mozambique, a country situated in Southern Africa, bordered by Tanzania to the north, Zambia and Malawi to the northwest, Zimbabwe to the west and South Africa and Eswatini to the southwest. The geographic location is significant because, apart from Mozambique and Angola, whose official language is Portuguese, the remaining countries of Southern Africa mainly speak English as their official language. This provides an opportunity for Mozambican professionals to tap into the region's translation and interpreting market. Nearby South Africa and Botswana, for example, host international bodies (the Pan-African Parliament and the Southern African Development Community, respectively), both of which use Portuguese as one of their working languages.

The history of translator and interpreter training in Mozambique dates back to the late seventies, when the Language Institute of Maputo offered intensive training for translators, interpreters and tour guides. In 2001, Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) launched a BA Honours degree (*Licenciatura*) in Translation and Interpreting, which it revised in 2009 in the context of the Bologna Process. One negative aspect of the Bologna Process was the decision, on the part of UEM, to phase out the Interpreting component from the BA Honours degree.

1 However, training in interpreting is still available in Mozambique, having been offered at MA level at the Pedagogical University (UP) since 2010. More recently, the Pedagogical University also introduced MA courses in translation as well. These are, however, the only training courses for translators or interpreters in Mozambique, and the professional shortfall is made up by people with university degrees in modern language teaching, who have effectively taught themselves translation in order to be able to operate effectively in the marketplace.

In Mozambique, there is a professional association of translators and interpreters known as the *Associação de Tradutores e Intérpretes de Moçambique (ATIM)*, founded in 2016. During a phone interview conducted on 19 May 2022, Sandra Tamele, a founding member of this association, stated that ATIM now has 63 members, but is quite "dormant" because the majority of Mozambican translators and interpreters hesitate to join the

¹ See Magaia (2018) for more detail about these historical processes and about the study itself.

association and help it become a truly active organization. She added that the association recently lowered the annual membership fee from MZN 5,000 (nearly \$78) to MZN 750 (nearly \$12), but despite this incentive, many are still reluctant to join.

3. Materials and Methods

Bearing in mind that “in any research methodology, the relationship that a researcher establishes with the object of study will determine the kind of research to undergo” (Cravo and Neves, 2007, p. 94), this study uses a survey questionnaire consisting of two parts, namely: 1) Respondent’s profile and 2) Professional practice and financial matters. The first part collected data regarding respondent’s gender, age, city, language pair(s), academic training and work experience. The second part consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questions centred on the following:

- a) how the translator/interpreter is practising his/her profession (i.e., whether he/she is working freelance only or he/she has another job while working freelance, or he/she is running his/her own translation and interpreting business);
- b) whether the translator/interpreter has a pension plan (if working freelance only or running own translation/interpreting business);
- c) whether the translator/interpreter will access government pensions after retirement (if he/she is not on a pension plan);
- d) how the translator/interpreter is preparing for life after retirement (if he/she will not access government pensions);
- e) whether the respondent thinks working full time as a translator/interpreter is financially secure;
- f) the usual translation rates per page (220-250 words);
- g) the usual interpreting rates a day (up to 8 hours);
- h) the translator/interpreter’s annual revenue, on average, in a successful business year;
- i) factors the translator/interpreter takes into consideration when determining rates; and
- j) whether the tax regime applicable to respondent’s business affects his/her income.

The questionnaire was distributed via social networks and email among 68 practising translators and interpreters, of whom 42 responded through the same channel within a period of three weeks from 5th to 27th May 2022. The data was anonymized to comply with

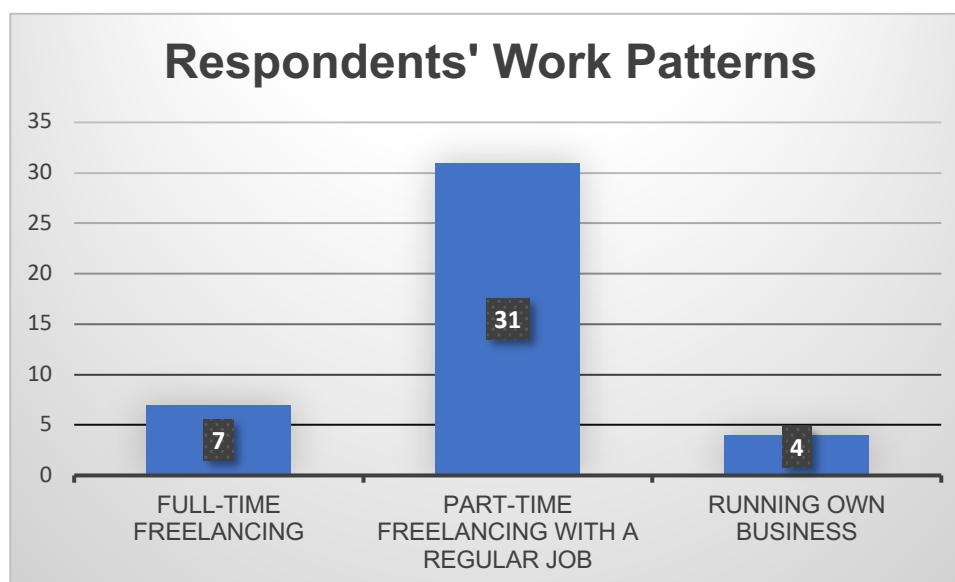
ethical and confidentiality considerations. For the purpose of citation, respondents were assigned a code (for example, P1 means participant number 1, P2 participant number 2, and so on). The findings of this survey are presented and discussed in the section below.

4. Results

4.1. Respondents' profiles

A total of 42 respondents took part in the study, 36 (85%) of whom were male and 6 (15%) female. Of these, the majority (24 or 60%) were aged between 31 and 40, followed by a group of 11 participants (26%) aged between 23 and 30. A further 6 people (12%) were aged between 41 and 50, and 1 (2%) between 51 and 60. Most (72%) of the participants lived in the capital city, Maputo, while the rest lived in the nearby town of Matola (19%) or in the cities of Beira (5%), Tete (2%) and Pemba (2%). All participants have at least a BA Honours degree in translation and interpreting or in modern languages.

With regard to language pairs, 39 (93%) of the participants translate and/or interpret from English into Portuguese and vice versa. The other three participants (7%) have other language combinations in addition to English and Portuguese: i) English-Portuguese-French-Spanish-Italian; ii) English-Portuguese-French; and iii) English-Portuguese-Ronga-Shangaan. The respondents had more than 7 years of work experience on average. As can be seen in graph 1, the majority of Mozambican translators and interpreters (74%) offer freelance services on a part-time basis while holding down a permanent job in different sectors. Those working exclusively as freelancers or running their own translation and interpreting business total 11, making up just 26%.



Graph 1. Respondents' work patterns.

The main issue emerging from these results is that the overwhelming majority of the study participants are young adults still in their prime. Hence, it is crucial that at this age they begin to feel some degree of financial stability within the career of their choice.

Furthermore, with more than 7 years of work experience, on average, it is to be expected that by this age translators and interpreters will have identified and conquered their market niche. However, as shown in graph 1, only 11 (26%) professionals were self-employed, against 31 (74%) who relied on a permanent job elsewhere while offering freelance translation and interpreting services on a part-time basis. This finding suggests that Mozambicans do not feel much security in the translation and interpreting career.

4.2. Financial matters

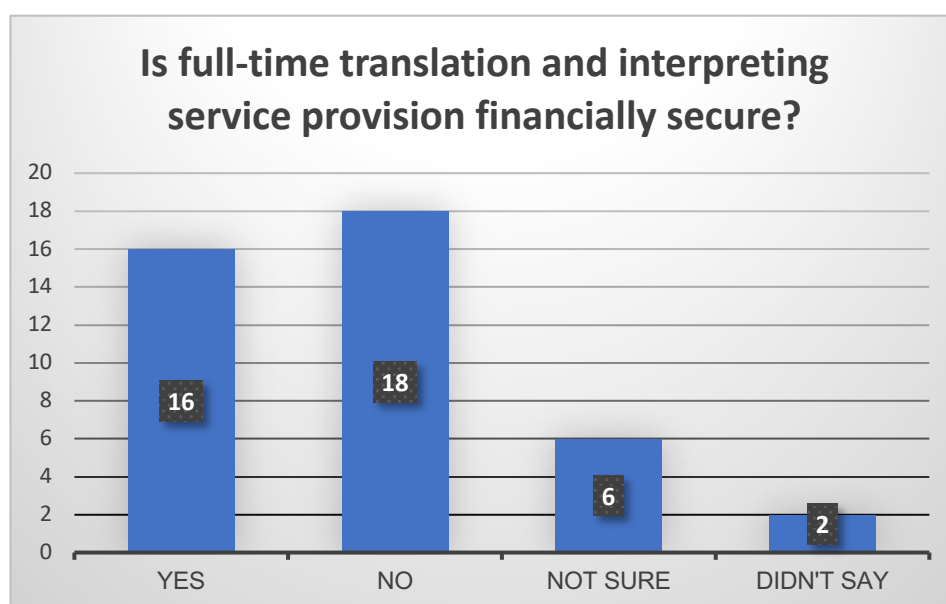
4.2.1. Social security in translation and interpreting

Focusing on the 11 translators and interpreters who are either offering full-time freelance services or running their own company, the data reveals that only 4 participants (36%) have a pension scheme. This is because only those that run a business are registered with the tax office and National Social Security Institute (INSS) and pay the monthly contribution that will entitle them to a state pension upon retirement. The other 7 (64%) are operating in the informal economy. Of those, 3 are investing money into other businesses in preparation for retirement and 2 are saving money; the other 2 are doing nothing.

This suggests that it is advisable for freelance translators and interpreters to move out of the informal economy and formalize their services in order to benefit from the government's social security system and minimize their social insecurity.

4.2.2. Findings on financial security in translation and interpreting

The data reveals mixed views among Mozambican translators and interpreters regarding financial security. As shown in graph 2, a significant number (40%) think that working fulltime as a translator/interpreter is financially secure, but a larger number (45%) disagree; 10% are not sure, and 5% have no opinion.



Graph 2. Perceptions about financial security of providing translation and interpreting services full time.

For those considering the work to be financially secure, participants admit that this depends on various factors. For example, one participant mentions the need to keep “good health, good habits and discipline at all levels of life” (P13), while another says that the translator/interpreter needs to be “someone who has already established his spot in the market, [be] well known and [have] good links with companies and projects” (P23). Yet another participant (P30) put it this way:

It is secure if you have a salary-based job. However, if one is starting a business, it might take a while to reach a financially secure level, because the span of time to reach such a level or simply make a living out of this work is dependent on many factors such as: connection (knowing many people or the right people to help boost the company); the market (the price charged for the good and the consumers’ purchasing power); the taxes and so forth.

On the other hand, those who do not find full-time translation and interpreting service provision financially secure refer to the challenges inherent in freelancing. Respondent P38 said: “There are many translators in the market and there is no business”, while P11 affirmed:

There is a lot of competition and sub-contracting; people only rely on official translators for official documents and purposes. Due to the availability of information technology and content, people now have access to all kinds of information and content which leads to lower demand for translation services.

Another participant (P12) put it this way:

Working as a fulltime translator can be financially secure if you are working for a company or an organization. Freelancing is not. Mainly because translation projects are seasonal; they come and go. And there have been delays in getting paid for translations done.

In view of the above evidence, one can conclude that, in Mozambique, full-time translation and interpreting service provision is mostly viewed as financially insecure. That is why most of those graduating from a translation and interpreting course resort to seeking a reliable job elsewhere even if it is not much related to their field of expertise, only offering translation and interpreting services on a part-time basis.

In such a scenario, one can see the link between this feeling of financial insecurity and the weak adherence to the Mozambican translators’ and interpreters’ association (ATIM) mentioned in section 2. If the majority of translators and interpreters felt that their career was a viable and important one, they would probably want to support an organization that advances their common interests.

4.2.3. Findings on prices and determining factors

Closely related to financial insecurity in translation and interpreting service provision are the varying patterns of rates charged in Mozambique. The rates charged are per page of

source text, containing, on average, between 220 and 250 words. Thus, while the majority (46%) of translators charge \$15-20 per page, a smaller number (25%) charge \$20-25, a yet smaller number (12%) \$25-30, and 17% charge below \$15. Based on these figures, it can be concluded that the standard price per 220–250-word page is \$20 in Mozambique.

These varied patterns are also seen in the prices charged for interpreting services, where 29% charge \$200-250 per an 8-hour working day, while 26% charge \$250-300, 16% \$300-350, another 16% below \$200, and 13% above \$350. Here it can be concluded that the standard price per an interpretation day of 8 working hours is \$275, on average.

With regard to annual incomes, according to the study data, 30% of the respondents earn below \$3,000 a year from translation and interpreting services combined, in contrast to 27% who report an average annual revenue above \$6,000. Also, 24% have an average annual revenue of \$3,000-4,000, while 16% earn \$4,000-5,000 per year against only 3% who earn \$5,000-6,000 annually.

Consequently, after analysing the aggregate data, one can conclude that there are two income groups: the bottom group (made up of the majority, 73%) and the top group (made up of the minority, 27%). A bottom group translator/interpreter earns an estimated \$300 a month and a top group translator/interpreter earns about \$500 a month. This suggests that, based on the assumed standard price of \$20 per 220–250-word page and \$275 per interpretation day of 8 working hours, the least successful professional in Mozambique either translates a total of 180 pages a year (i.e., 15 pages per month) or sells nearly 13 days of interpreting services a year. Likewise, using the same criteria, the most successful professional sells 300 pages a year (i.e., 25 pages a month) or a maximum of 22 days of interpreting services a year. On the basis of the data collection tool used in this study, it is not possible to determine what type of service is the primary source of translators and interpreters' income. Nonetheless, a trend that can be noticed is that the demand for Mozambican translators' and interpreters' services is low.

With regard to the factors determining these rates, Mozambican translators and interpreters take into account local and international rates as well as the content and type of document or meeting. Other factors include: type of client (whether private or public, individual or corporate, national or international, etc.), client fidelity, client sensitivity, fees to be paid to institutions that authenticate documents, document format, turnaround time, number of pages, number of words, purpose (e.g. young scholarship applicants may pay less), and the like.

An important finding emerging from the varied patterns of rates charged for translation and interpreting services in Mozambique is that this also contributes to the financial insecurity of translators and interpreters. This situation is compounded by the fact that most of them offer cheap labour in terms of translation rates per page (less than \$20), although a substantial number claim to charge a relatively fair price for interpreting services a day (\$250-350). Hence, one could once again argue that an active professional association of translators and interpreters would play an important role in regulating the

prices applied in the market to counter unfair competition (Picken, 1996, p. 59; Baker, 2011, p. 274).

4.2.4. Findings on the effects of taxation

In terms of the effects of taxes² on translators' and interpreters' financial situation, the data shows that taxes have no effect on the majority of respondents (52%). For example, as regards VAT, one respondent (P40), said:

When running the translation/interpretation through my business, the VAT is added to the invoice (additional to the actual sub-amount). When working for another firm or business, we agree on a fee free from taxation (the other business or firm will cater for taxation).

While another (P24) said: "It doesn't affect my financial situation because I factor it in the final price the customer pays for the services." A third (P20) elaborated further: "I do not consider 3% to be a lot. However, the payment system is very bureaucratic and time-consuming, we have to stay in long queues and make bank deposits."

However, over one third (36%) did report a negative effect of taxation, presumably those whose general financial security was weak. For example, one respondent (P3) said: "The amount given to the government at the end of the year would make a huge difference in my life, chiefly if one is not financially stable", while P33 seemed to agree:

It adversely affects my business financial health because not all customers are willing to pay accordingly so as to face tax obligations adequately. Taxes, as they are now, are not conducive for new start-ups.

In view of this evidence, it can be concluded that Mozambican translators and interpreters know the relevant tax legislation and that most of them do not find it burdensome, for different reasons. However, it is not clear to what extent these views reflect the real majority of Mozambican professionals in this field, since many have another job in addition to translation and interpreting, and may pay most of their taxes from that, while others, operating in the grey economy, pay no taxes at all.

5. Discussion

Translation and interpreting training is useful not only because of its vocational potential, but also because, during training, students develop skills and competences that can be used in other jobs as well. Some university translation courses offer workshops and seminars in areas such as law, banking, finance and technology (Owens, 1996, p. 41), which allows graduates the chance of obtaining employment in those fields as a specialist linguist. As Picken (1996, p. 57) observes:

² Taxes here refer either to the 17% VAT or to the 3% tax paid by small taxpayers known as ISPC (Imposto Simplificado para Pequenos Contribuintes).

It is gratifying to find independent evidence of the fact that a language degree is not regarded as a ‘soft’ subject, and that because language graduates must by definition possess linguistic skills, coupled, one hopes, with the ability to communicate, their merits are at last being appreciated.

It seems that an effective translator and interpreter training model should, among other things, equip students to be self-employed, since freelancing is a very common professional option for translators and interpreters. Sharing an African perspective, Nintai (1994, p. 45) points to “the danger of training too many literary translators for a market often marked by very low demand”. Nevertheless, he argues in favour of the introduction of relevant courses in African universities because “most of those trained will, in all likelihood, come to work with publishing houses, or on a free-lance basis alongside other main jobs” (Nintai, 1994, p. 45). Training translation students for freelancing has also been identified as a goal of “vocational degree programmes in Europe” (Rico, 2010, p. 97). In fact, at least in Mozambique, based on my findings about the number of graduates working freelance, it appears that despite the greater security in having a full-time job, preparing students for self-employment is a strategy that might bring added value to the translation course.

However, as we have seen, working freelance has both advantages and disadvantages. For example, translators and interpreters often take full-time jobs in some adjacent field to provide financial security while working freelance in their free time. Moreover, although those who work solely as freelancers might at times feel insecure, they do enjoy the comfort of working from home, aided by modern technology, as described by Picken (1996). According to this author, the downside of working freelance is that it is risky at the outset and not very lucrative either (Picken, 1996, p. 58). Indeed:

Unless freelance translators are lucky enough to have close links of co-operation with colleagues who work in the same fields or languages, and who are willing to provide mutual assistance, as a freelance one is very much on one’s own (Picken 1996, p. 58).

This hints at the need for networking in order to counter the negative effects of freelancing, as discussed below.

5.1 Importance of translators’ and interpreters’ associations

Schröder (1996, p. 89) argues that “translation organisations bring translators together” and that “translators need to be brought together”. He goes on:

Translation can be a lonely business – even in-house – and those not naturally equipped with social skills may find they need a little help. Hence virtually all translation organisations arrange social events for members.

Although this may not be a compelling reason for translators to join a professional association, he also mentions (1996, p. 90) a “much more valid side of association” –

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namely networking – which means “translators getting together to discuss issues of relevance to the work they do.”

Regarding the benefits of having a functional professional association of translators and interpreters, one scholar writes:

Most countries have at least one association which brings together professional translators with the aim of jointly defending their interests, promoting the profession and ensuring standards. The vast majority of these organize professional development programmes for members, normally in the form of short courses designed to deal with very specific aspects of translators’ work: new technologies, marketing, tax, copyright, terminology management, revision, and so on. (Kelly, 2005, p. 9)

Another potential benefit of having an effective professional association is the provision of “longer-term programmes such as the American Translator’s Association (ATA) mentoring scheme, whereby senior experienced professionals offer guidance to novices over a period of time, facilitating their entry into the profession” (Kelly, 2005, pp. 9-10). Then there is also the matter of professional ethics. For Mona Baker (2011, p. 274), one of the main benefits of translator associations is to ensure the accountability of their members to other parties involved in the interaction, particularly clients who pay their wages.

Since financial matters are at the centre of this study, the next section reviews some of the factors affecting pricing in the translation and interpreting market.

5.2 Factors affecting pricing in translation and interpreting

There is no single way of knowing what price to charge for translation or interpreting services, as multiple factors are at play. Picken (1996, pp. 59-60) has shown that the rates charged for these services may vary according to a person’s age, location, whether one is working abroad or within his or her country, and whether one is working as a staff translator or as a freelancer. Weschke (1996, p. 161) makes a similar point: “rates of pay do vary widely, and are often affected by the subject area, the translator’s profile, internal client regulations, translator location, etc.” The International Federation of Translators, in its Translator’s Charter, stipulates the need for “reasonable fees (not undercutting the profession!)” and advocates that “the general conditions of the translation task ... must not be ‘humiliating’ either to the translator himself or to the profession as a whole” (Chesterman, 200, pp. 187-188). In this regard, it can be argued that if there is a functional association of translators and interpreters, these professionals will find it easier to stipulate prices for the services they render. Indeed, in many countries, the national translators’ associations publish tariffs of recommended rates, graded according to type of language (basically Western European versus others), degree of difficulty and in some cases, the purpose for which the translation is required (Picken, 1996, p. 59).

In order for the translator or interpreter to know how to act in the market, including how to negotiate fair prices with clients, he or she needs to be what Nord (2005, pp. 210-

211) calls a “functional translator”, who, among others, “knows what her/his translations are worth”. If a translator or an interpreter is confident about the quality of their services, they will certainly require fair pay. In other words, translators and/or interpreters who have developed full translation competence and/or interpreting competence will have what Kelly (2005, pp. 32-33) calls “professional and instrumental competence” and “interpersonal competence”. The former will equip them with “basic notions for managing professional activity: contracts, tenders, billing, tax; ethics; professional associations”, and the latter will endow them with the ability to work with clients, in addition to developing their negotiation skills (Kelly, 2005, p. 33).

Armed with good professional and instrumental competence, coupled with interpersonal competence, the translator or interpreter will also be able to educate the client (Weschke, 1996, pp. 149-172). For example, many clients need to be told that “there is a difference between translation and interpreting” (Weschke, 1996, p. 153). Likewise, “the client should be clear that they pay for words rather than time in most cases” (Weschke, 1996, p. 153). Therefore, even though there is no agreed rate for any translation commission or an interpreting assignment, providers need to dignify themselves and the profession they practice by negotiating fair rates of pay and by being assertive, though always flexible, according to the specific circumstances of the potential assignment.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to learn about financial challenges affecting professional translators and interpreters in Mozambique. It was hoped that the study would provide an understanding of Mozambican translators’ and interpreters’ business context (e.g. pensions, taxation, prices, etc.), and that this might ultimately be useful for the development of training courses at university level.

In view of the findings of this study, it seems that, apart from translation and interpreting competence in itself, translator and interpreter education should also include financial matters. During the training, students should benefit from the study of applicable commercial laws and regulations, which could encourage them to aim at acting as formal service providers, instead of following the trend of many current translators and interpreters today who operate in the grey economy, mostly to avoid the burden of taxes. Equally important in translator and interpreter training are contents related to personal marketing (to broaden one’s market share), negotiation skills (to secure fair pay) and networking (to encourage cooperation, for example, through an association, to counter unfair competition).

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ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL TRANSLATION: KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING

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ABSTRACT: This article explores the topic of economic and financial translation, a subfield of specialized translation which requires knowledge of a variety of sectors. Drawing on examples from the Canadian financial sector, it proposes four main areas from the perspective of translation, that is: i) macroeconomics and regulation; ii) accounting; iii) banking and investments, and iv) insurance. Each area is described with examples of challenges for translators, including types of texts, resources, employers, as well as the kinds of skills that are expected to do this work effectively. The information provided can prove useful to translators working in different fields, or those who will soon enter the workforce, as well as university professors, lecturers, and mentors. Specific recommendations are made regarding the type of content that should be integrated into translator training for economic and financial translation, in particular with the goal of making this subspecialty accessible to those who do not qualify as subject matter experts.

KEYWORDS: Economic and Financial Translation, Translation Strategies, Translator Training, English to French Translation, Plain Language

1. Introduction

Financial translation: two words that terrify translators in training. Have you not heard the cautionary tale of the unsuspecting translator who mistakenly translated one word and cost their company millions of dollars in legal fees? How would you feel as a newcomer to the translation profession, especially in specialized fields, when you are told you can kill a patient by mistranslating instructions for a defibrillator or that you could be saddled with a lifetime of debt for misplacing a comma?¹ Many scholars and professionals draw on examples from the field that led to catastrophic losses for, as Barbin argues, “any of the translator’s errors can immediately take on a considerable significance and permanently harm the company that sponsored the translation” (Barbin, 2019, p. 33).² Exaggerations aside, I remember vividly the advice given by colleagues, superiors, revisors during my first encounters with a variety of subfields of economic and financial translation. Many said this field was extremely challenging, and more so than other areas of specialized translation, though such claims have yet to be verified. In any case, my experience taught me that there is a steep learning curve, but that with determination, a supportive environment,

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¹ In the introduction titled “Spécificités de la traduction économique, financière et commerciale” to his co-edited volume with Sylvie Monjean-Decaudin, Franck Barbin recounts the case of the French food giant Carrefour’s failed integration into the South Korean market due to translation errors. He writes: “Faute de n’avoir pas su intégrer les valeurs familiales et patriotiques du pays dans sa campagne (traduction trop littérale) ni adapter son modèle économique au marché sud-coréen (en ne proposant pas notamment suffisamment de produits locaux), ce groupe de distribution français s’est vu dans l’obligation de fermer définitivement en 2006 toutes ses succursales (32 hypermarchés) et de les céder au groupe britannique Tesco” (Barbin, 2019, p. 43).

² My translation of “toute erreur commise par le traducteur peut tout de suite prendre une ampleur considérable et nuire durablement à l’entreprise commanditaire de ladite traduction” (Barbin, 2019, p. 33).

and a form of modesty bordering on self-deprecation, this area of specialization can become a valuable and needed area of expertise.

Contributing to the development of this area, in this article, I explore strategies for teaching and learning financial translation, with the ultimate goal of making the field more enticing and accessible for translators-in-training. To do so, I first look at the field of financial translation and describe related areas of specialty, as well as types of training made available to avid learners. I then cover the main subfields of financial translation, describe the types of documents commonly produced within each subfield, and provide concrete examples of workplaces for translators in the Canadian context. For a variety of reasons ranging from budget cuts to overwhelming demand, many of the organizations and companies named below have moved away from in-house linguistic services, preferring to outsource translation to agencies and experienced freelancers. In parallel, I address the implications of such changes for employment and training. I later on explain the notion of “plain language,” also known as “plain English,” and specify why it is important within the broad field of financial translation. In this context, I introduce a few useful open access resources on plain language for translation in both French and English all the while addressing its importance in the teaching and practice of financial translation. Lastly, I present the course outline for a graduate-level introductory course on financial translation, with suggested readings and topics. This article is of interest to educators, students, and perhaps most importantly, to professionals in the field who will be called upon to support and advise newcomers to the field.

2. What does financial translation entail

Under the umbrella term of specialized translation, economic and financial translation encompasses such fields as regulation, macroeconomics and international organizations, banking and investments, insurance, as well as accounting and auditing. Each of these areas uses complex, field-specific terminology, which means translators must ensure they understand the intricacies of the texts assigned to them and know how to navigate existing resources. In their article titled “The translation of economics and the economics of translation”, Łucja Biel and Vilelmini Sosoni liken economic translation to business or commercial translation, arguing that it “is related to economics and underlying overlapping concepts—business, economy, trade and commerce” (2017, p. 352). Though some universities separate translator training in the subfields of finance and commerce or business, these connected subfields are often taught together.³ Following the logic

³ For instance, Université Laval in Québec, Canada, offers two distinct courses at the undergraduate level, one called TRD-2206 *Traduction économique et financière*, and the other TRD-2202 *Traduction commerciale*. The specific content differs in that the course on financial translation covers the “world of economics and finance (macroeconomics, national and international finances)” (Université Laval 2022A), whereas the course on business translation focuses on “business organization and activities (production, commercialization, human resources, management, finances, etc.)” (Université Laval 2022B). At the graduate level, however, there is only one course covering both subfields, TRD-7012 *Traduction économique*. The latter is all-encompassing, including the “study of works and articles on business language, critical analysis of resource materials, translation of varied texts that are representative of economic and

whereby these subfields are connected by the common denominator that is business discourse, we can assume that economic and financial translation bring together:

(...) a broad variety of genres, from highly controlled and regulated genres, such as annual reports, investor prospectuses, financial statements and articles of association, to ritualised and relatively fixed genres, such as application letters, earnings forecasts, corporate social responsibility reporting, performance appraisals, mission statements and press releases, and, finally, to dynamic, much less predictable and creative genres, such as CEOs' speeches, advertisements and corporate homepages. (Biel and Sosoni, 2017, p. 352)

These types of texts apply to both economic and business translation whether we divide the content into distinct courses for translator training. As such, any of the above-mentioned genres could be considered typical documents within the overarching subfield of financial translation.

It can be argued that economic and financial translation encompasses four main categories: i) macroeconomics and regulation; ii) accounting; iii) banking and investments; and iv) insurance. These specialized areas are connected to the world of business and commerce in a larger sense, even when they hold characteristics that distinguish them from other sectors. Having worked in these areas as a translator on the Canadian job market, I consider it worthwhile to provide a much-needed overview of these areas for a broader understanding of the kinds of knowledge required to perform within the specialized field of economic and financial translation. As I explain to my students, having basic knowledge of the main employers and types of documents needing translation is one of the first skills translators in training need to acquire should they wish to enter the job market in financial translation. Though employers do not always expect new hires to have expertise in translating the specific documents frequently produced within their institution or company, they do presume a certain degree of curiosity and interest in the field. During a job interview, for instance, translators may be asked if they know the use and purpose of specific documents or, at the very least, the subfield of finance in which they are typically situated. At the very least, translators seeking work in finance should have a basic understanding of the fields described below and know the organizations or the equivalent structures for their country.

The first category, i) macroeconomics and regulation, touches on the work of any international organization responsible for financial or market interventions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or those with political orientations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It also includes local organizations that oversee and direct national financial considerations such as the European Commission, the Bank of Canada or the US Federal Reserve.⁴ This category also includes

commercial fields" (Université Laval 2022C). Students who have taken at least one course out of these should be well prepared to work in the field, given expertise is also acquired within businesses themselves.

⁴ Other smaller scale financial initiatives with a potential for global impact can be included within this category such as Grameen Bank, a microfinance organization and community development bank catering to some of the poorest people of Bangladesh and awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 2006 (Nobel Prize 2022).

regulatory bodies of the financial industry, which provide legal oversight of financial markets and transactions. In Canada, the primary organizations include Québec’s *Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF)*, the *Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada (FINTRAC)*, the *Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC)*, and the *Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (OSFI)*. Regulators are notorious for producing complex documents with specialized terminology from the legal and financial fields, but in the case of the *Regulatory Division of the fully electronic Montréal Exchange platform for financial derivatives markets* for instance, documents often pertain to highly specialized information technology transaction platforms. The *Regulatory Division’s* mandate is to perform examinations, market surveillance and investigations, as well as provide legal and regulatory affairs services in support of regulatory activities (Montréal Exchange 2022A). As such, documents needing translation range from reports, to circulars, rules and newsletters, as well as internal documents. The *Montréal Exchange (MX)*, located in the province of Québec, is subject to language laws and policies requiring dissemination of publications in French. However, due to the global nature of financial markets, the MX usually makes most documents available in English. Another type of specialized institution with translation needs is a clearinghouse, also known as “a designated intermediary between a buyer and a seller in a financial market [... that] validates and finalizes the transaction, ensuring that both the buyer and the seller honor their contractual obligations” (Ganti, 2021), such as the *Canadian Derivatives Clearing Corporation (CDCC)*. The CDCC “is the issuer, clearinghouse, and guarantor of exchange-traded equity, index, currency and interest rate derivative contracts traded in Canada [, ... and] offers central counterparty clearing services for OTC [over-the-counter] equity instruments” (Montréal Exchange 2022B). Due to disclosure requirements and Canadian financial regulations, the CDCC must make all its reports and documents available to the public and members in both official languages. Though a clearinghouse is not a regulator, it acts as an intermediary and applies a series of rules to ensure stability or rather, accountability in the markets.

Some organizations fall within the realm of law enforcement, such as the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)*, famous for its historic red wool coat uniform, but better known in the financial industry for its expertise in uncovering organized crime rings and financial fraud. In some areas of the country, the RCMP operates as the provincial police, but highly populated areas like Ontario and Québec have their own provincial police forces, such as the *Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)* and the *Sûreté du Québec (SQ)*. These law enforcement organizations are involved in supervision and law enforcement related to financial matters. The *Competition Bureau of Canada*, responsible for overseeing and approving business transactions such as takeovers and buyouts with the goal of protecting Canadian consumers and businesses might also be included in this category.⁵ The

⁵ For a list of federal and provincial oversight bodies and regulators, including self-regulated organizations (SROs), see the *Financial Consumer Agency of Canada* website in the reference list under *Government of Canada* (2022A).

documentation these organizations produce borders on other specialized language like legal translations as they publish rules, regulations, case descriptions and rulings, market insights and overviews. Translators are therefore required to have an in-depth understanding of the inner workings of the organization, the standards of the industries they oversee, as well as provincial, federal and international laws surrounding financial markets and investments. In my experience, beyond translating such complex texts, translators tend to be called to make changes to original texts ranging from mere copyediting (spelling and grammar verification) to improving clarity by asking their clients to rephrase paragraphs.

The category of accounting (ii) combines several topics which are of public interest and easily applicable to a wide range of work contexts. Accounting services can encompass tax services for individuals and businesses like preparing and filing taxes, as well as consulting and financial services such as estate planning and managing business continuity plans.

Accountants prepare [...] financial statements, which include the balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows. [...] They also provide [...] in-depth analysis and accurate reporting on financial records, most often completed as a supporting role to a chief financial officer (CFO) or a company's finance department. (Depersio, 2021)

On a smaller scale, accounting is necessary for private or unlisted companies, non-profit organizations, small and medium-sized businesses, freelancers and individuals, though the translation needs are less important depending on the scale and global nature of the business. Given that every individual, corporation, non-profit organization and public or private company needs to file an annual tax return, the government must provide forms, guidelines and support to a population with varying levels of financial literacy. Accounting firms, on their end, sell the added value of their services to individuals who may not always understand both the breadth and intricacies of provincial and federal government tax rebates and regulations.

Another category of accounting services with field-specific terminology is that of bankruptcy and insolvency. In Canada, the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy oversees the implementation of the *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* and the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (see Government of Canada 2022B). Licensed Insolvency Trustees trained by the Canadian Association of Insolvency and Restructuring Professionals guide clients through managing debt, submitting a consumer proposal, filing for bankruptcy, or specific business solutions like restructuring. Translators are thus called to produce high quality documents using appropriate terminology, but also accessible language for lay people with lower levels of financial literacy or no formal education in finance. Translation for these sectors would include everything from letters to forms, informational blog posts, internal documents relaying company activities, bio statements of employees, reports for the government, and explanations of new regulations impacting clients or company protocols. Training materials such as e-learning modules with voice

recordings and interview video subtitles, as well as advertisements and marketing campaigns make up the less frequent and more creative content requiring translation.

Auditing is also a crucial sector of the accounting subfield that involves specific terminology and complex texts, thus making it relevant for economic and financial translation training. Auditors validate or approve work done by accountants, verifying “financial statements, particularly the ones of public companies that are required to be released annually” (Depersio, 2021). The main auditing companies in Canada and the United States of America, known as the “Big 4”, bring together Deloitte, Ernst & Young (EY), PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), and Klynveld Peat Marwick Goergeler (KPMG). Beyond auditing services, these companies offer “tax, strategy and management consulting, valuation, market research, assurance, and legal advisory services” (Kenton, 2022). In Qu bec, publicly listed companies notably have the obligation to translate documents related to financial reporting when they seek investors in the province. Therefore, all financial statements of publicly listed companies seeking investments from residents of the province of Qu bec need to be simultaneously released in both official languages. Mutual funds, which are “a financial vehicle that pools assets from shareholders to invest in securities like stocks, bonds, money market instruments, and other assets” (Hayes, 2022), are bound by the same financial reporting rules as publicly listed companies. As such, in Qu bec, the financial statements, along with the management report of fund performance (MRFP) of mutual funds need to be translated and simultaneously published in both French and English for the benefit of investors. The same rules apply to prospectuses used by companies to announce an initial public offering or seek private investments in the province of Qu bec.⁶

The third category, iii) banking and investments, covers all areas pertaining to services offered by banks, credit unions, cooperative financial institutions, and investment brokers. The wide range of services include daily banking and financial transactions, anything related to savings accounts and investments like retirement savings plans and guaranteed investment certificates. Many services are tied to borrowing and lending, like personal loans, lines of credit, car loans, mortgages, refinancing or reverse mortgages. Wealth management, financial planning, and private wealth management targets financially stable or wealthier clients who are looking to invest strategically while minimizing liabilities, including various taxes and risks associated to estate and trust planning. Some insurance products—namely travel and creditor insurance—might be offered as well. From the perspective of a translator who must be mindful of the targeted

⁶ For up-to-date examples of financial reporting documents available in both official languages, see the System for Electronic Document Analysis and Retrieval (SEDAR) online. As specified on the homepage, “www.sedar.com is the official site that provides access to most public securities documents and information filed by issuers with the thirteen provincial and territorial securities regulatory authorities (‘Canadian Securities Administrators’ or ‘CSA’) in the SEDAR filing system. The statutory objective in making public this filed information is to enhance investor awareness of the business and affairs of issuers and to promote confidence in the transparent operation of capital markets in Canada. Achieving this objective relies heavily on the provision of accurate information on market participants” (SEDAR, 2022).

readership for translated documents, it is important to remember that banks serve individuals of all ages and educational backgrounds, but also freelancers, small businesses and corporations. No matter how they portray themselves, banks are lending institutions whose main goal is profit as most of them are also publicly listed companies. They therefore have a duty to serve, inform and educate their clients, but beyond that, remain profitable for their investors. The types of varied documents they prepare speak to a diverse readership. Like all smart businesses, banks also follow trends to keep a youthful and accessible image. They might therefore adopt inclusive or gender-neutral writing protocols, which are much easier to apply to English texts than French translations.

The subfield of insurance (iv) is so vast that it could be taught as a specialized translation course on its own, though such courses are rarely offered because of the extensive amount of training required in short academic programs. In Canada, insurance is mainly regulated by provincial regulators or superintendents. At the federal level, oversight is ensured by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (OSFI). This same organization regulates the industry in lesser-populated provinces and territories. Québec's insurance market is overseen by the Autorité des marchés financiers (AMF), while Ontario has the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA), and inter-jurisdictional concerns fall under the mandate of the Canadian Council of Insurance Regulators (CCIR). On their end, the majority of Canadian insurance companies are represented by the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC), which "works on a number of fronts to increase public understanding of home, auto and business insurance" (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2022)⁷. As for the field of insurance itself, typically, large insurance companies will provide a variety of services to two main categories of clients: companies of all sizes and individuals. If an employer offers comprehensive health coverage, people will likely have access to health and dental insurance, coverage of prescription medication and paramedical services, travel insurance, vision care, and optional wellness programs which can refund health-related expenses like a gym membership or sports equipment. Extended coverage might include life insurance, critical illness insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, short- or long-term disability insurance, or dependent life insurance.

Tying into the banking and investment sector described above, insurance companies often provide employer-sponsored registered retirement savings accounts and encourage clients to subscribe to tax-free savings accounts or similar financial products. As a general rule, all in-house documentation is produced with three main target readerships: companies providing group benefits, individuals subscribing to any insurance product, and

⁷ Like all other Canadian organizations representing a network of key actors, the IBC's website also requires translation. As a reminder that such organizations might also be seeking translators, at the time of writing this article, on the bottom of the "About us" page of the site, one could read, "** La traduction française de toutes les pages anglaises est en cours. Entre-temps, certaines pages ne sont pas offertes en français. Veuillez nous excuser pour cet inconvénient*" (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 2022). This translates as "The French translation of all the English pages is ongoing. In the meantime, certain pages are not available in French. We apologize for the inconvenience."

in-house employees or insurance brokers, both affiliated and independent. Translators may be called to work on multiple platforms and across genres like print or digital marketing campaigns, subtitles for interviews or promotional videos, infographics, training materials such as recorded courses and workbooks which are updated regularly as per industry standards, forms, web pages, apps, general correspondence including gender-neutral letter and email scripts updating clients on new regulations or changes in the services provided. With such a range of products and corresponding documentation, the subfield of insurance offers translators a stable workload and opportunities for professional growth, whether they choose to work in-house, in a translation agency, or as freelancers. It is often overlooked by students because of a prejudice deeming the field as “boring”, but translators at any level would be surprised that the field is quite accessible despite its industry-specific terminology. Having worked as an in-house translator in large multiservice insurance company, I strongly recommend this field to trained translators who are curious by nature and interested in learning more about the financial industry and the kinds of coverage or protections they can subscribe to as they plan for their future, regardless of their age.

Should there be time to build a more extensive training in financial and economic translation, it could be worth adding one or two extra categories. One could be devoted to characteristically interdisciplinary fields like actuarial sciences, which apply statistics, mathematics and legal terminology to the financial and insurance sectors. Arguably, if regulation was separated from macroeconomics, it could become its own category seeing as it blends legal, financial, and technical terminology. Another category would be reserved for professional bodies like the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA Canada) whose area of expertise spans the actual field of accounting, but also business services, oversight of the profession and training or professional development. The organization “works cooperatively with the provincial and territorial CPA bodies who are charged with regulating the profession” (Chartered Professional Accountants Canada, 2022). Professional organizations, as well as institutions dedicated to education and formal accreditation programs produce training documents available in all official languages. The Canadian Securities Institute offers courses required to enter many professions in the Canadian financial services industry like financial planning and investment advising. Taking these courses can guide new translators in acquiring knowledge and master both concepts and terminology. Specifically useful for translators working in the Canadian financial sector, the Canadian Securities Course “is the foundational financial services credential required to perform transactions in securities, mutual funds and alternative funds in many financial services positions” (Canadian Securities Institute, 2022). Though it is costly and time consuming, it is a worthwhile investment for translators, keeping in mind that employers might be open to paying tuition when presented with a worthy explanation of the learning outcomes and practical applications, such as improved accuracy and less time wasted on ad hoc research for concepts or terminology.

3. Translator training in economic and financial translation

In a multilingual context like that of Canada where the recognized official languages are English and French, many financial reporting and disclosure documents must be accessible to the public in both languages, as per the *Official Languages Act* originally adopted in 1969. The main purpose of this act of the legislature is to:

(...) ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada and ensure equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all federal institutions, in particular with respect to their use in parliamentary proceedings, in legislative and other instruments, in the administration of justice, in communicating with or providing services to the public and in carrying out the work of federal institutions. (*Official Languages Act*)

And so, at the federal government level, it is stated that “Wherever [...] there is a duty in respect of communications and services in both official languages, the duty applies in respect of oral and written communications and in respect of any documents or activities that relate to those communications or services” (*Official Languages Act*, 1969). In the province of Québec specifically, the *Charter of the French Language* otherwise known as Bill 101, was adopted in 1977 and ensures the status of French as the official language of the province. In Chapter VII—*The Language of Commerce and Business*, we see the extent to which companies are required to provide documents to their clients for products and services. For instance, at paragraph 51, we can read that “[e]very inscription on a product, on its container or on its wrapping, or on a document or object supplied with it, including the directions for use and the warranty certificates, must be drafted in French. The rule applies also to menus and wine lists” (Ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, 2022). In other sections, there is marked need to publish financial statements in French, as in Chapter VI—*The Language of Labour Relations*, paragraph 48: “An association of workers that makes its articles or financial statements available to its members in a language other than French shall make the French version available on terms that are at least as favourable” (Ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale, 2022).

Very recently, on May 24th 2022, Québec’s National Assembly passed Bill 96, titled “An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec”, which complements and significantly amends the Charter of the French Language. In the opening explanatory notes, we can read that the Act “strengthens the provision relating to the use of French as the language of commerce and business, in particular as concerns signs and posters and the drafting of certain documents, such as contracts relating to the sales of immovable property”. Under Division I, General Provisions, Section of 21 of the Charter is amended to notably include the following paragraph:

Loan contracts may nevertheless be drawn up both in French and in another language. The same applies to financial instruments and contracts whose object is the management of financial risks, including currency exchange or interest rate exchange agreements, contracts

for the purchase or sale of options, and futures contracts. (Bill 96, Division I, General Provisions, Article 13)

This specific example of a type of contract impacted by the new regulations shows to what extent regulatory bodies and businesses connected to the financial markets in the wider sense, will be obligated to adapt to the new provisions of the law. By extension, translators will be required to acquire new skills pertaining to other areas of the financial industry.

For translators in training, the existence of such laws implies that there are employment opportunities in specialized financial institutions or large companies. However, as each subfield related to financial, economic or business translation often requires specific knowledge or an equally prohibitive number of years of experience to develop appropriate expertise, newly trained translators might be dissuaded from seeking employment in this area. The formal training students receive in the university setting is usually limited to basic knowledge, as there is no time to cover all types of documents or difficulties within one or two standard 45-hour courses. As such, professors, lecturers, as well as mentors accompanying students in their discovery of this area of specialization should foster curiosity and find accessible points of entry into the profession, rather than imposing complex assignments that would likely discourage students from seeking employment in such fields. In what follows, I propose a syllabus for an introductory course on financial and economic translation. The course outline can be adapted to undergraduate or graduate classes. I present a broad structure, themes to cover, as well as general guidelines for motivating students in their discovery of this area of specialized translation.

3.1 How to access the field of financial and economic translation without formal training in finance, economics or accounting

Specialized translation is usually accessed from a few different points of entry, be it formal training in a university setting, ad hoc language training offered by professional translator associations, or subject-specific courses aimed at specialists from the given fields. In the university classroom, professors or lecturers usually favour either an in-depth exploration of a topic or an overview of the field.⁸ Both strategies are useful, as learners acquire practical skills and confidence they can later put to use in their workplace. My preference for an introductory course is for a holistic approach with content divided into

⁸ In a recent article (Guénette, 2021) I discuss the debate in the specialized field of technical translation where Claude Bédard claims translators must acquire subject matter expertise *prior to* translating, while Christine Durieux argues that translators must *work through* the topical challenges to acquire expertise. Durieux states that “to translate any given text, translators merely need to seek the necessary information in each discipline [...], simply responding to immediate need” (Durieux, 1990, p. 671), rather than acquiring specific knowledge beforehand. For economic, financial and business translation, Franck Barbin abides by Bédard’s statement, writing: “il est indispensable que le traducteur dispose au préalable d’une très bonne connaissance du domaine qu’il s’apprête à traduire, notamment des concepts et des mécanismes économiques ainsi que des principes de l’organisation et de la gestion des entreprises” (Barbin, 2019, p. 33).

subcategories, rather than focussing on a single area of specialty. This format offers a more representative outlook of the kinds of texts that are translated in the workplace. In any case, when structuring a course, it is important to remember that students will acquire experience through overcoming struggles, and will commit to memory some of the topics covered during in-class discussions. In what follows, I present a model structure for an introductory course on financial and economic translation planned over 45 hours, which can be adapted to undergraduate or graduate levels, and divided or reduced to suit shorter courses.⁹

My proposed syllabus for teaching an introductory course on financial and economic translation is divided into four modules reflecting the areas supervised by the main financial regulatory body for the province of Québec called *Autorité des Marchés Financiers* (AMF). It would be best for courses to be adapted to the areas overseen by the regional regulatory bodies. This way, students will gain an understanding of the way the financial industry operates in their society. Exploring international organizations first helps students see immediate benefits to investing time and energy to integrate the field, as many students approach the profession with the goal of working from home or while travelling abroad. In my case, the broad categories are i) macroeconomics and regulation; ii) accounting; iii) banking and securities; and iv) insurance, as described in the second section of this article. Another strategy can be to divide the course into three modules as follows: i) theoretical and conceptual foundations; ii) in-depth study of subfields; and iii) practical applications. This second format can easily be adapted to the course leader's expertise.

In my experience, students who come to graduate programs in translation rarely have formal training or work experience in fields related to finance. As such, they generally have minimal knowledge of most of the topics covered in class, which means that translating specialized texts might require documentary research or subject-specific reading. To avoid unnecessary research, it is best to cover broad concepts or assign short translations that are representative of the terminological or thematic difficulties they would encounter in various work settings. A key strategy for covering many complex specialized topics while keeping classes entertaining and students motivated is to include subject-specific oral presentations that are accompanied by translation workshops. This way, each student (or team of students for larger classes) is responsible for researching a given topic and teaching others what they have learned. The topics proposed should be adapted to the social and political setting of the location or language pairs for which students are being trained. In my course, adapted to the Québec and Canadian settings, students can choose from the following subjects: i) savings plans (tax-free savings accounts, registered education savings plans, voluntary retirement savings plans,

⁹ The guidelines presented here are adapted from the contents of TRD-2206 *Traduction économique et financière* and TRD-7012 *Traduction économique*, mainly English to French translation courses which I have been teaching at Université Laval over the last three years. On average, the undergraduate course has 25-35 registered students, and the graduate class has 8-15 students.

registered disability savings plans); ii) life annuities and term certain annuities; iii) debt securities; iv) stocks; v) mutual funds; vi) income trusts; vii) mortgages and reverse mortgages; viii) deposit protection; ix) insolvency and bankruptcy; x) individual and corporate taxation; xi) estate planning and wealth management; xii) key policy rate and interest rates; xiii) financial statements; xiv) prospectuses; xv) audit and certification. In this assignment, students are asked to prepare a presentation on the chosen topic for their peers. I specify that the designated audience for their presentation is their peers, specifically translators-in-training who, like them, have some translation skills, but limited knowledge of the terminological and subject-specific difficulties related to the given topic. Each presenter or team must also select a short yet challenging text that is representative of the field, and guide students in a workshop-style translation exercise. I encourage students to choose a 60-80-word passage that they came across while preparing their presentation, and which they barely understood at first. This way, they can accompany their peers in their experience of grappling with a complex or confusing translation, and the whole class can feel the gratifying feeling of having succeeded in translating something they never thought they could.

Beyond the oral presentations, after a few introductory courses, most classes should feature practical exercises aimed at helping students successfully translate a variety of entry-level texts such as bio statements, new articles, blog posts, outreach documents for semi-specialist or general audiences such as publications on the *Investopedia* website. In my courses, I put strong emphasis on the use of plain language in all specialized translations (also known as “plain English”, or *langage clair* in French). Indeed, in many workplaces, especially in fields which require exchanges or partnerships on a global scale, such as economics and finance, plain language has been promoted as an overall communication strategy. Many open-access references are available online explaining the guiding principles of “plain language”, and which may be useful for translation teachers. For instance, the Canadian government has adopted this writing policy, notably for web content. As such, on the website of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, we can read the “Canada.ca Content Style Guide”, where we learn that “These are the rules to create web content that can be easily found, understood and used. They are based on writing principles and techniques that help make web content clear and adapted to the needs of all people” (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2022). The Canadian federal government’s *Translation Bureau* also published the French-language writing guide titled *Le guide du rédacteur*, with chapter 10 focusing on “la langue claire et simple”—*clear and simple language* (see Translation Bureau, 2022). In March 2021, the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Nova Scotia (ATINS) organized training sessions on the use of plain language aimed at translators, something we can expect to see in the upcoming years. Nevertheless, if no such training sessions are made available by local professional organizations, autodidacts can choose from quality documentation available online, such as the websites of the Plain Language Association International (2022) or Plain Language Europe (2022), and the European Commission’s (2022) guidelines on clear writing.

In “The translation of economics and the economics of translation”, Biel and Sosoni (2017, p. 352) remind us that “economic translation draws on business communication, an academic discipline that grew in the early 1990s to research formal and informal communication within business organizations and with the outside world, with the practical goal of improving its effectiveness and efficiency” (see also Nickerson, 2014, p. 50). There is a misconception that because we deal with complex financial texts that the resulting translation should be opaque and difficult to comprehend for the reader. Adhering to principles of clear communication, I rather teach students to prioritize the needs of their readers who may have limited financial literacy skills. From a translation pedagogy standpoint, I encourage students to do the necessary research to understand the text they are translating, and get them to practise translating blog posts and bio statements, for instance. Once their initial translation is complete, I ask them to go over their writing to ensure they did not insert unnecessary explanations or paraphrases, which may stem from their own lack of understanding rather than a requirement for translation.

As with any university course, chosen readings can be assigned to help students acquire targeted knowledge or prepare for practical exercises. In my case, I chose a series of accessible texts, and most of them are in written in French, our students’ mother tongue. In the graduate-level course, they read Barbin’s (2019) introduction to the field of financial, economic and business translation, and Stolze’s (2019) take on a holistic practice for economic translation. This class also reads the paper by Biel and Sosoni (2017) that I have cited throughout this article. I further recommend some readings on the use of metaphors in financial discourse, especially on the animal metaphors used in economic discourse, partly because of its relevance to the field and partly because it is entertaining (see Chavagneux, 2018, and Tcaciuc, 2015). We also look at the desirable skills and abilities of financial translators from the perspective of key employers, reading Marnat’s (2007) short piece on European institutions, as well as available job postings. Otherwise, students read excerpts and conduct subject-specific research while translating in class or preparing for their oral presentations. A series of relevant publications can be found on Gagnon’s (2022) wiki site on teaching materials for translation in the fields of economics and business, which are mainly focused on the Canadian context, but can be used for other contexts as well.

4. Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to provide an overview of the subfields and topics which make up the umbrella field of economic and financial translation, specifically targeting the subject from the perspective of translator training. Training the next generations of specialized translators begins with accessible entry points, such as dynamic and entertaining in-class exercises which remind students that they can penetrate the workforce. When there is a lack of specialized translator training in formal education settings, the responsibility of training the next generation of experts is relegated to employers. At the moment, at least in Canada, demand for intermediate and experienced

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translators is high especially in specialized fields, and linguistic service providers are overwhelmed with employee turnovers due to the current state of the labour market. Without formal training in economic and financial translation, new translators are left to learn specialized skills on their own to set themselves apart from their peers. This is not necessarily a bad strategy, though there is no guarantee of quality, nor certainty that their time will be well spent learning terminology or specific concepts. Using the information provided in this article, it is possible to create an accessible and exciting introductory course to this specialized field that will not discourage students from seeking employment in economic or financial translation.

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TABOO TRANSACTIONS: AN INITIAL DIACHRONIC APPROACH TO TRANSLATION AND SEX WORK

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ABSTRACT: Translation is an ever-evolving form of transmission that carries with it ideas, hopes, politics, poetics, and desires. Building upon Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's assertion that "translation is the most intimate form of reading," the present paper explores translation as a form of labor that can be described as intimate through metaphor and history. This paper offers a diachronic perspective on translation and erotic labor through the lens of metaphor, theory and translation history, and proposes that the marginal nature of both sex work and translation reflects a cultural aversion to alterity or otherness. Situated within these overlaps, this paper will trace 1) erotic dimensions of translation depicted through theory and metaphor; 2) a discussion on the figure of the yoginī from Hindu Tantric religion as well as the colonial construct of "sleeping dictionaries" as translator/ consort figures; and 3) examples from the contemporary intersections of translation, global commerce, and sex work.

KEYWORDS: Translation and Intimacy, Translation Metaphors, Sex Work, Prostitution, Sleeping Dictionary, Yoginī, Globalization

1. Introduction

In her 1998 essay, "'Whether from reason or prejudice': taking money for bodily services," philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1998, p. 696) begins her treatise on the societal stigma facing sex workers by plainly stating, "All of us, with the exception of the independently wealthy and the unemployed, take money for the use of our body." She goes on to address the moral and legal arguments that are leveraged against sex workers and used as justification for their marginalization and criminalization. Nussbaum deconstructs each argument by comparing it to another profession that is deemed more acceptable by society but hasn't always been historically. She cites examples of the opera singer, domestic worker, philosophy professor, and so on, to demonstrate this point. On the comparison between "The prostitute¹ and the professor of philosophy", Nussbaum writes:

These two figures have a very interesting similarity: both provide bodily services in areas that are generally thought to be especially intimate and definitive of selfhood. Just as the prostitute takes money for sex, which is commonly thought to be an area of intimate self-expression, so the professor takes money for thinking and writing about what she thinks—about morality, emotion, the nature of knowledge, whatever—all parts of a human being's intimate search for understanding of the world and self-understanding. It was precisely for this reason that the medieval thinkers I have mentioned saw such a moral problem about philosophizing for money: it should be a pure spiritual gift, and it is degraded by the receipt of a wage. The fact that we do not think that the professor (even one who regularly holds out for the highest salary offered) thereby alienates her mind or turns her thoughts into commodities—even when she writes a paper for a specific conference or volume—should

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¹ Nussbaum uses the work "prostitute" and "prostitution" in her treatise. I will use the terms "sex worker" and "sex work" in accordance with contemporary practices and to emphasize the labor aspect.

put us on our guard about making similar conclusions in the case of the prostitute” (Nussbaum, 1998, p. 704).

If, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993) asserts, “translation is the most intimate form of reading,” then this comparison could also be applied to the translator. Some translation researchers may have heard the saying, “translation is the oldest profession in the world, you know, apart from the other one”; a sly equivocation to the longstanding history of both translation and sex work as intimate jobs done with minds and bodies. It has been noted that translators have been marginalized, undervalued, and made invisible within the global economy and circulation of texts and information (Duarte, 2000; Venuti, 1995; Bassnett, 1990). It has also been observed that the labor of translation is, at times, pejoratively gendered (Chamberlain, 1988). This paper tentatively proposes that the marginal nature of both sex work and translation has to do with a cultural aversion to alterity or otherness, and when testimony from both translators and sex workers is platformed, it can be viewed as a form of cultural resistance (Baldo and Inghilleri, 2018). Translators and sex-workers perform a sort of “border-crossing” in the liminal spaces they occupy, which can be seen as a threat to the status quo (Jaffe, 1995). As such, receiving money for these services can be seen as taboo or treacherous. By examining the metaphoric and material overlaps between translation, intimacy and erotic labor, we can develop a better understanding of what is at stake when we use metaphors to describe or compare these forms of labor.

2. Translation, Eroticism, and Intimacy Metaphors

There are erotic dimensions to the use of language itself as well as the act of translation. Considered from a process perspective, solving translation problems activates a place in the brain where creativity and eros coexist; “Some neurologists have put forward the hypothesis that creative thinking is closely connected with the anterior hypothalamus in the brain, which is the centre of libido and lust and motivates not only sexual fantasies but fantasies and daydreaming of all types” (Kusmaul, 1991, p. 48). After Spivak’s well-known and aforementioned postulation that “translation is the most intimate form of reading,” there has been some emerging work on intimacy and translation, stemming from scholarly streams in queer theory, postcolonial studies, and gender and sexuality studies (West, 2010; Larkosh, 2011; Santaemilia, 2017; Fisher, 2020; Arrojo, 1995). West (2010) offers erotics as a working metaphor for translation and explores connections between eros, language, and the act of translation. Basile (2017) writes of the erotic, queer, and subversive potentials of both translation and self-translation. Jaffe (1995) offers a reading of Puerto Rican author, Rosario Ferré’s work and unpacks the connections Ferré makes between translation and prostitution. Namely, that both the translator and prostitute pass back and forth between worlds. The aforementioned works are varied in their approaches, and the existing literature on translation and intimacy is dispersed throughout different theoretical streams.

Returning to Spivak (1993), the first part of the quotation: “translation is the most intimate form of reading” is often reproduced. However, within the same quotation, she also writes, “I surrender to the text when I translate” and “the translator earns permission to transgress from the trace of the other” (Spivak, 1993). The words “surrender to the text” and “the translator earns permission to transgress” provide valuable clues about how Spivak is articulating intimacy in this instantiation. The act of translating can have an abductive quality on the translator, blurring boundaries between texts, between notions of “self” and “other.” This intimate, and perhaps even violent process of worldmaking through translation is under-examined within the existing literature. This language also reveals a more nuanced perspective on notions of fidelity and betrayal—what does it mean to have permission to transgress? The intersections between translation and intimacy are in an inchoate stage of exploration—particularly in how intimacy is a part of the translation process and how translators themselves use metaphors to describe their work.

In an interview, Katrina Dodson, who has translated Clarice Lispector, highlights a tension between opposites, framing “translation as cultural cannibalism, an act that’s both violent and intimate, in which you absorb the force of another textual body and render it in terms of your own textual body” (Chaffee, 2017a). This understanding of intimacy encompasses its violent potentials, and it frames the text as a “body.” The idea of text as body is echoed in other discussions of translation, intimacy, and embodiment. Referring to both the body of a subject (translator) and the body of a text, Basile writes, “Languages and subjects ‘come undone’ in the sexual and in the translative encounter when the materiality of their intermingling passes a threshold of perception, such that they can no longer be governed by the ideational rule of transparent self-identity” (Basile, 2017, p. 30). Put another way, the process of translation has the capacity to disrupt binaries of subject/object, self/other, source/target, etc. From intermingling to commingling. Mihaela Moscaliuc cites Roland Barthes and Chaim Nachman Bialik and describes “translators and translated texts as lovers going through blissful times, hard times, and entanglements; lovers who may be committed, fickle, both self-centered and giving in their commingling” (Chaffee, 2016). María José Giménez writes that, for her, translation is like “being with a lover, all aspects of loving and being in love: physical, emotional, sexy, searing, tender, embodied, wondrous, frustrating, impulsive, all-consuming, maddening, painful, healing” (Chaffee, 2017b). These metaphors frame the process of translation as both reciprocal and intimate, giving presence both the translator experience and the animate body of the translated text.

In his discussion on Argentinian writer and intellectual, Victoria Ocampo’s relationship to Nobel-prize-winning Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore’s work, Larkosh maps the intersections of foreignness, spoken and written language, and translation by employing an intimacy metaphor for Ocampo’s experience: “It all seems so close, pressing up against the tips of the fingers, against the skin, that most intimate boundary with the foreign, as the meaning hides behind the unfamiliar script of the Bengali language [...]” (Larkosh, 2011, p. 113). He goes on to extend this metaphor in his interpretation of

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Ocampo's own metaphor of a translation having gloves on which desensitize the reader; "This contact is imagined as one of 'undressed' physical touch with what is called 'materia prima'" (Larkosh, 2011, p. 113). In this sense the translation is a glove, or barrier, to direct and unmitigated intimacy with the source text. This metaphor points to the ephemeral and erotic experiencing of otherness present, and how longing for contact comes into play.²

In terms of a gender-based paradigm for translation metaphors and the topic of intimacy, Lori Chamberlain wrote that the labor of the translator has, at times, been pejoratively gendered (Chamberlain, 1988). Arrojo (1995) situates Chamberlain's gendered translation metaphors within a feminist, postmodern, and poststructuralist tradition, emphasizing the translator's pleasure and "orgasmic" collaboration with the text. It has also been noted that the translation metaphors that Chamberlain discusses are "heterosexualized" (Santaemilia, 2017, p.18) as she speaks to how metaphors for translation reinforce binaries and certain notions about women. This aspect of historical translation metaphors can be identified in phrases such as "Les belles infidèles" (the beautiful, unfaithful ones)—coming from French writer Gilles Ménage implying that a translation, like a woman, can be beautiful or faithful, but never both (Polizzotti, 2018, p. 49), and the Italian "traduttore, traditore" (to translate is to betray, or, translation is treachery).

Fidelity and licence are the binary terms that perhaps most obviously reflect the damaging analogues that have long been established between the translator and the prostitute [...] The fidelity/license opposition, where fidelity has been positively valorized and license condemned, has traditionally been employed to celebrate or condemn the translator's work as well as to regard the prostitute as contemptible in contrast to the faithful wife. (Jaffe, 1995, p. 69)

The image of translation as taboo or treacherous can even be traced to Biblical depictions of the Tower of Babel, wherein humans are condemned to translate because of their hubris. Warren Weaver, in 1949, painted a view of machine translation having the potential to undo this linguistic scattering. Writes Michael Cronin, "His mind is on Babel but his images are those of the high-rise developments which would come to house countless numbers of immigrants in postwar Europe" (Cronin, 2006, p. 43). This vision of a neo-Babel by way of tenement housing brings together images of migration and close quarters. The underworld, or basement, is depicted as an ideal space where communication barriers can melt away; "Perhaps the way is to descend, from each language, down to the common base of human communication—the real but as yet undiscovered universal language" (Cronin, 2006, p. 43). I'll push back a little on the language of "undiscovered" which betrays a colonial attitude—that things must be "discovered" in order to be legitimized—however, the idea of descent is a valuable frame,

² Mihaela Moscaliuc's full reflection on Barthes connects with this longing for contact; "I'm not sure how Roland Barthes's metaphor fits here, but it captures some of my approach to the languages between which I travel: 'Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire.'" (Chaffee, 2016)

especially when considering the relationship between translation and intimacy. Translation is a place where perhaps “meaning collapses” (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1), like the tower, and has the potential to be a site both of sanctity and profanity.



Fig 1. Tower of Babel,
Andreas Zielenkiewicz (2006)



Fig 2. The Whore of Babylon, Martin Luther
Bible (c. 1530)

The Whore of Babylon is a figure associated with revelation, evil, blasphemy, and excess. I offer the above Tower of Babel image in conversation with Martin Luther Bible depiction of the Whore of Babylon as potentially connected with how attitudes towards translation and sex work have developed over time—and, necessarily by extension, attitudes towards translators and sex workers, the bodies performing these forms of labor.

3. Abjection, the Yoginī, and Translation

Departing from Biblical references and moving to an example from Hindu Tantric streams, Kristeva’s concept of abjection dovetails with the figure of the yoginī; a woman who crosses borders and challenges “the hegemony of the brahmanical tradition” (Vijaisri, 2013, p. 203). The physical and cultural space occupied by the yoginī is at once marginal and embedded. According to lore, some yoginīs occupied a dual role— as a dutiful wife during the day, and semi-divine witch by night (von Stietencron, 2013, p. 91). Shaman Hatley (2013) characterizes the yoginī as polymorphic, able to take different forms, even possessing the power of flight, and notes their position within an ‘outside’ space; “yoginīs have a strong association with cremation grounds: while a variety of liminal places are spoken of as their haunts, their primary locus is the charnal ground (śmaśāna), the preferred site for the radical practices advanced in Śaiva tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha.” (Hatley, 2013, p. 7). This spatial consideration connotes the alterity of the yoginī — the space with which they are most strongly associated is a site with explicit connections to death and impurity. The cremation grounds can be seen as a border, a frame, and a reminder of the margins that hem both early and contemporary civilizations. I find it

noteworthy that, although these radical feminine practitioners are associated with these liminal places, they are not limited to them:

The spatial shift from the hills, wilds and cremation grounds (all associated with the esoteric cult of the yoginīs) to the boundaries (the Mātāngi in the outcaste hamlet) where the yoginī assumes an extremely powerful locus is attenuated as it flows into the ordered space (the jōgatis in the temple complex). In the latter, where a woman's identity is defined by sexuality, the unfettered erotic identity unfolds as the divine spouse. And yet this identity is layered with normative connotations of non-marital sexuality and distinguished from the dichotomous model (wife versus whore) as the divine prostitute. (Vijaisri, 2013, p. 203)

Here, Vijaisri provides illustration on how danger and impurity translate to power and an identity that transcends spatial and social dichotomies in the case of the yoginī. Her ability to move between abject and orderly spaces. This gives her role a transcendent quality—it dissolves binaries. Not bound by ordered space, her erotic freedom imbues her identity with formidable power. She is able to inhabit, or haunt, the cremation grounds as well as participate in more ordered, patriarchal spaces. Kristeva also connects what is abject with an impossibility of assimilation. She writes "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated" (1982, p.1). I find this theoretical framework useful for examining the spaces in which the yoginī is depicted. The cremation grounds, the hills and the wilds, are all associated with the yoginī. The yoginī occupies a liminal space, neither subject nor object, dancing around the edges of civilization and occasionally occupying the role of divine consort.

The alterity and impurity of the yoginīs are aspects that make them marginal, but also give them power. Törzsök (2014) writes, "[Women's] dangerous impurity can make them menacing and powerful, in the way in which tantric goddesses and yoginīs are depicted" (p. 363). The yogini both transcends and participates in normative space. She acts as a midwife or mediator, bringing chaos to order and order to chaos. She imbues profanity with sanctity and vice versa. Her liminality and ability to move between seemingly disparate spaces make her a bridge. We may imagine the yoginī as a translator, inhabiting two worlds and the multiplicity of consciousness that comes with hybrid identities.

This section has offered some initial forays into the realm of translation metaphors and intimacy. We've seen how translation metaphors can reinforce harmful gendered notions, and also how they can be a space for evocation, creativity, and erotic expression. The figure of the yoginī offers a grounded look at abjection, intimacy, translation, and sex work. The next section will look a bit more closely at a metaphor tied to the history of colonization, violence, translation, and intimacy.

4. Translation as betrayal— La Malinche and the living metaphor of “sleeping dictionary”

The term, sleeping dictionary, in and of itself is a metaphor. But instead of being a metaphor for the translation *process*, it is a metaphor for the translator herself. Naming a figure as a sleeping dictionary objectifies the subject and implies passivity. “Sleeping dictionary” is a British slang term which emerges from the historical practice of British colonial officers taking indigenous African women as concubines and interpreters (West, 2010; Weatherston, 1997; Spurr, 1993). These figures carry both historical prominence and cultural significance in how they served as bridges between cultures. Their translation labor demonstrates the consequential elements of translation and shows how translation is not a neutral activity, but it can change the landscape, the people, the language, and much more for generations to come. Within their interstitial position, they had the power to betray, disrupt, uphold, and accelerate colonial processes. So who are these figures in translation history? What are their stories, and what sorts of choices did they have to make?

One of the most famous and polarizing of these figures is the Nahua woman known as La Malinche, interpreter and lover to Hernán Cortés. Despite the paucity of archival material on La Malinche’s translation work and methods, she remains a polarizing historical figure and symbol— situated in different texts as “Mexico’s Eve” (Paz, 1985) and “feminist prototype” (Candelaria, 1980). These narratives, however, do little to emphasize her agency, choice, and the profound impact that her labor had on the course of history:

[...] Her paramount value to the Spaniards was not merely linguistic, for her interpreting went beyond translating from idiom to idiom, though that was difficult enough given the foreignness of the respective tongues. She was an interpreter/liaison who served as a guide to the region, as an advisor on native customs and beliefs, and as a competent strategist”. (Candelaria, 1980, p. 3)

Existing literature and interpretations on La Malinche points to how communication conventions, nonverbal behavior, and social institutions affect linguistic behavior and shape the translation activities that then, in turn, impact the formation of a cultural context. Her role was one of a “native informant” (Spivak, 1988), and her work was situated within a nexus of translation, power, and intimacy. Writers on translation and alterity through a postcolonial lens have theorized on how desire, projections, and colonial notions serve to conflate the “Other” with inferiority (Spurr, 1993; Weatherston, 1997; Spivak, 1988). I am less interested in how the “Other,” is constructed within a colonial mindset, and more in an explanatory approach to the history of translation that considers these women as early translators, and “effective social actors” (Pym, 1998, p.6) who made choices and did translation work amidst uneven power relations, victimization, and complex historical conditions.

In the case of La Malinche, also known as Dona Marina, the strategic choices she made led to her being typecast in particular ways. As Octavio Paz writes:

Dona Marina becomes a figure representing the Indian women who were fascinated, violated or seduced by the Spaniards. And as a small boy will not forgive his mother if she abandons him to search for his father, the Mexican people have not forgiven La Malinche for her betrayal. (1985)

There are two significant aspects in my reading of Paz's interpretation of the figure of La Malinche here that I would like to highlight. First, the way that Paz clusters fascination, violation, and seduction resonates with Katrina Dodson's metaphor of translation as cannibalism— at once "intimate and violent" (Chaffee, 2017a). Second, the emphasis on La Malinche's betrayal brings us full circle back to the phrase "traduttore, traditore." Translation, then, is seen as an act of betrayal, whether we are considering La Malinche as a historical amalgamation, cultural symbol, or early translator. In the absence of direct testimony from La Malinche herself, flattening metaphors such as "sleeping dictionary" rob her of her subjectivity and ability to dream.

Art historian Tere Romo (2005) traces the transformation of La Malinche into five metaphors: La Malinche as *Lengua* [Tongue]/Interpreter, La Malinche as Indian-ness, La Malinche as Seductive Traitor, La Malinche as Mestizaje, and La Malinche as Chicana. Each of these metaphors could also be seen as a way of describing translation, particularly the metaphor of Seductive Traitor, which can be connected to "Les belles infidèles." This sparks curiosity towards to what extent colonial and patriarchal attitudes have shaped popular translation metaphors, and how much the history of sleeping dictionaries has also informed attitudes towards translation and translators.

5. Sex workers rights, globalization, and translation

Venuti frames faithful translation as "self-effacement, a vanishing act" (cited in Jaffe 1995, p. 69) and Jaffe equates this to sex work: "The work of prostitution also involves self-effacement as the prostitute submits to the demands of the client" (*ibid.*). This equivocation enacts a kind of violence and points to the dangers of utilizing sex work as a metaphor for translation. There is danger, precarity, and risk involved for both the sex worker and the translator (and those aren't necessarily mutually exclusive categories) but framing the sex worker as someone who "submits to demands" in this way is a flattening analogy and reveals a profound lack of understanding of the industry and the matrices of power present within it. As the sex work activism adage goes, "nothing about us without us." In this spirit, I will include a few different examples documented intersections of sex work, translation, and globalization.

Sex work and globalization are interconnected, and border-crossing is a phenomenon shaped by macroeconomic and geopolitical forces. As Inghilleri (2017) writes:

Social and political contexts vary but today, as often in the past, human migration and commercial sex are frequently found in tandem, where a person's body can become a primary source of their sexual capital, transferable across many cultural contexts.

Globalization has not only facilitated the translation of commercial sexual practices across national borders, it has also encouraged the development of international consensus in ideological and legal responses to its existence. (p. 96)

The aforementioned “translation of commercial sexual practices” across borders refers to more of a cultural translation than a necessarily textual one. The body of the migrant sex worker is also a site where meaning is projected. Ideological responses can include moral panic and the insistence on viewing sex workers as victims and the refusal to recognize the complexities of their situation. Inghilleri cites the 2012 *Empower Foundation* report on Thai sex workers in discussing how translation can serve to further marginalize workers; “Where migrant sex workers were involved, issues of translation frequently contributed to the violation of these women’s rights” (Inghilleri, 2017, p. 99). According to the findings (published in Thai and English), anti-trafficking NGOs used untrained volunteer translators who harmed, rather than helped, the migrant sex workers: “Women felt that the volunteer translators often had inadequate language skills and brought their own attitudes and agendas about sex work to the interviews” (*ibid.*). In this case, translation is harmful to the sex workers, and can seriously impact their lives when instances of mistranslation happen in high stakes situations, for example, the filing of a police report.

Translation can impact the way that migrant sex workers are portrayed in both local and international media. Take, for example, the 2003 Time Magazine article on the presence of migrant Brazilian sex workers in Bragança, Portugal. The story, titled “When the Meninas came to Town” discussed the stories of the sex workers as well as the group of mothers and wives who created a petition to drive them out of town. The wives/mothers— dubbed The Mães of Bragança—accused the sex workers of using witchcraft and spells to seduce their husbands (Ripley, 2003; Pais, 2011). This is an example of where encountering the “other” gives way to fear, fetishization, and misunderstanding. In this case, the Brazilian women, or *meninas*, brought aspects of their own culture across borders to a conservative small town, disrupting the social order and status quo. Miki Tanikawa writes “The media’s ability to understand and engage proactively with various ‘others’ – rather than framing others to fit their pre-existing understanding and self-serving narratives – has poor records, despite what might seem a changing global milieu towards greater social, economic and cultural integration of the world” (2022, p. 63). In other words, even with greater access to different cultures via global media, journalists often continue to perpetuate their own biases and stereotypes. In the case of Ripley’s journalism, particularly where the Brazilian migrant sex workers in Bragança are concerned, she sacrifices nuance and curiosity in service of a narrative that paints the “meninas” in a way that reinforces existing stereotypes about Brazilian women. This has been examined from cultural, sociological, and gender and ethnic studies standpoints (Queiroz, 2016; Pais, 2011; Pontes, 2004; Normande, 2009), particularly in respect to how Brazilian women are portrayed in Portuguese media.

This echoes the aforementioned pious wife/treacherous sex worker dichotomy articulated by Jaffe (1995) and contributes to social stigma; “Migrant sex workers, rather

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than being recognized as genuine labor migrants, are pejoratively labelled cross-border criminals, illegals, disease spreaders, prostitutes or trafficking victims” (Baldo and Inghilleri, 2018). The insistence that migrant sex workers must be victims of trafficking or treacherous lawbreakers robs them of both their agency and subjectivity. We see documented examples of this happening with Thai sex workers’ documented testimony in the *Empower Foundation* report and in the media coverage of sex workers in Bragança, Portugal.

If translation also, as Baldo and Inghilleri (2018) articulate, can be an act of self-determination and capacity-building, what role does translation play in international sex worker activism? The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) is a sex worker-led membership organization that connects regional advocacy networks and operates according to the following values:

- Acceptance of sex work as work.
- Opposition to all forms of criminalization and other legal oppression of sex work
- Supporting self-organization and self-determination of sex workers (NSWP, 2021)

The website is available in 21 languages, accessible via a dropdown menu. In an effort to share resources between international and regional networks, and make information more widely accessible, the project Sex Workers and Allies Translate, Edit + Design (SWAT) was launched in 2016. This initiative, founded by Katherine Koster of Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP)-USA and Matthias Lehmann from Research Project Germany, endeavors to “become a network of sex workers and allies able to translate, edit and design reports, briefing papers, academic, blog and news articles, presentations, posters, or even photo captions to share sex work knowledge across cultural and language barriers” (NSWP, 2016). This kind of peer-led initiative is an example of the sex work community demonstrating its capacity to organize and create solidarity across national, regional, and linguistic borders. Koster underscores this importance as one of the motives for the formation of SWAT:

We've noticed that advocacy literature from certain parts of the world, especially in languages that aren't French, English, or Spanish, often isn't read or used by the global movement, which is unfortunate because there is amazing, important information in German or Hungarian or Polish or Korean or Hindi [...] We hope this project will increase information-sharing across languages. (NSWP, 2016)

A noteworthy aspect of the structure of SWAT is that, in their mission, they emphasize the fact that they pay their translators (translators are not volunteers). Even more, they prioritize paying translators who are also current or former sex workers, which helps uplift the community and build bridges between localized pockets of activism and organizing. As Baldo and Inghilleri (2018) point out, “Linguistic translations open up a space between

individuals and groups, while cultural translation facilitates the merging of information and sentiments across societal and national borders" (p. 297). This project does both, if we consider sex work as its own culture that is also embedded within the particular cultural contexts in which it occurs.

Future work on the intersections of translation, sex work, and globalization should continue to platform sex worker organizing that demonstrates how sex workers should not be framed as trafficking victims or dangers to society, but rather change agents and translators making meaningful contributions to global thought and information sharing.

6. Conclusion

This paper has offered an overview on translation and intimacy over different moments in history framed within the context of sex work, and translation. By employing a diachronic approach to theorizing on translation and intimacy, we can connect the dots between depictions of border crossers— like the yoginīs and the colonial construction of “sleeping dictionaries” and the stigma, taboo, and matrices of power that impact these areas. Exploring popular and recurring translation metaphors offers insight into how translation is viewed as both intimate and also pejoratively gendered at times, reinforcing harmful notions of translators, women, and sex workers. By focusing on places where translators speak about their own process, and sex workers are translating themselves, these metaphors can perhaps be repurposed and recuperated for a more progressive and liberated contemporary era that values intimate labor in all of its instantiations. Future research could delve more deeply into the linguistic origins of translation metaphors and how these metaphoric expressions themselves are translated (or remain untranslated). Another future direction could be to perform a textual analysis of the translation of the contents of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) website, translator compensation, and the translation choices employed within the multiple languages.

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BOOK REVIEW

PROSPEROUS TRANSLATION: ENDURING PRACTICAL ADVICE

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The Prosperous Translator. Advice from Fire Ant & Worker Bee, compiled and edited by Chris Durban, first edition, FA&WB press by Chris Durban and Eugene Seidel, 2010, 282 pp, \$25.00 (Paperback), ISBN 978-0-615-40403-5.

Twelve years have passed since the publication of *The Prosperous Translator*, a serious yet humorous compilation of agony aunt style correspondence between Fire Ant (Chris Durban) and Worker Bee (Eugene Seidel) and readers of their translator advice column. Their column was published in the *Translation Journal* between 1998 and July 2010.¹

The authors are professional translators with, at the time of publication, over 50 years of combined experience on the translation market. Chris Durban has since continued to share her advice and fought strongly against the *poverty cult*, in which translators are seen to be responsible for perpetuating their “low status” and feelings of being ‘underpaid’ (Lambert & Walker, 2022). When the compilation appeared, it was groundbreaking, as it was the first time, as far as I am aware, that hard-hitting clear advice was provided in a humorous format to translators. It sought to prevent translators from being “mere ant(s) toiling in an anthill”, to encourage them to become part of the larger picture, of a “glorious project that connects you with an unbroken line of workers from time immemorial” (Durban, 2010, p. 266).

Covering topics ranging from how to get into the industry, to finding clients, ethics, and rates and tips for clients on how to treat translators, readers are taken on a whistle-stop tour of the *dos and don'ts* of the freelance translation industry. Through the bitesize snippets of invaluable advice, solace, praise and even at times harsh words admonishing the very naivety of their correspondents, budding and more seasoned translators gain an insight into what the industry may hold for them.

Fast forward to 2022, and this compilation is just as relevant as it was in 2010 when it was first published. How then, with the changes in technology, in particular the advent of machine translation, is it all still so relevant?

The title *The Prosperous Translator* encourages the reader to consider the very essence of the word “prosperous”, and upon consultation of the list of contents, it is soon clear that as defined by *The Oxford Premium English Dictionary* (2022), “prosperous” is not just about flourishing financially but about being “successful in material terms”. In the

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introduction, the authors explain that they have not written “*the A-to-Z guide to translation*” (Durban, 2010, p. VII) but there is no escaping the no-nonsense, often very direct, advice, and that this profession is not for everyone. Becoming a professional translator requires the honing of skills, training, investment, time and patience. For those that persist, the rewards are multifold.

The compilation is divided into 12 easy-to-read sections, the first of which, entitled “Is this a real option for me?”, aims to dissuade those that see translation as a “hobby” or way of earning some money while on a gap year, but also highlights the importance of perfecting one’s source language skills:

You need money? Look around: if you like kids apply for childcare positions (a great way to hone foreign language skills). Wait on tables. Flip the local equivalent of burgers. Pick grapes. Pump iron and sign up as a bouncer at a salsa club. **But whatever you do, live and talk in Spanish—only Spanish** (Durban, 2010, p. 7). (emphasis added)

The importance of language skills is exemplified in the very first correspondence chosen for the compilation. On the first page, the authors dispel the often-cited myth that being bilingual is synonymous with being a good translator, “bilingualism, while enormously impressive to monolinguals, is not on its own enough to guarantee a successful career as translator” (Durban, 2010, p. 1). Further into the same chapter, when faced with questions about English grammar and the struggles faced by a translator working both into and out of Arabic and English, the authors are quick to question whether the translator in fact has full command of the languages with which they are working (Durban, 2010). They also highlight the importance of working into one’s “native language” (Durban, 2010, p. 11). This is something that is now widely debated and it is of note that organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Linguists have removed references to “native language” or “language of habitual use” from their code of conduct (CIOL, 2017). In a recent update (September 2022), the clause on native language/language of habitual use was. This is telling of advances in the concept of language competence, acknowledging that not only is native competence almost impossible to measure, but that overall linguistic competence is more important, whether one is a native speaker or not.

Despite the list of contents offering a multitude of topics, one cannot avoid being drawn to the section on “Pricing and value” a topic that appears consistently in surveys of the industry. The 2022 European Language Industry Survey cites that 37% of freelance translators believe they do not earn enough (Elia et al., 2022), while unstable earnings are listed as a reason for not preparing for retirement. The chapter devoted to pricing is divided into four sub-sections focusing on how to negotiate and how to price translations as well as on the upward and downward pressure facing the market. In response to a letter from a head of translation at a corporation, the authors seize the opportunity to describe what they consider to be “premium customer” etiquette (Durban, 2010): “paying promptly”, crediting translators and “expressing thanks”. This is complemented by more practical advice for ab initio translators, “Intriguing, isn’t it, how many translators get the vapours

when rates come up” (Durban, 2010, p. 99). This comment resonates, as still today ‘rate-setting is a problematic area for newcomers to translation and established practitioners alike’ (Lambert & Walker, 2022), thus suggesting that Fire Ant’s advice in response to Baffled continues to ring true: “If you’re a supplier, aim high... if translation is poorly done it is too expensive at any price; if well done, it is usually worth every single cent” (Durban, 2010, p. 90).

Value, be it monetary or the value of a professional translator in terms of what they can contribute to a project, is addressed directly and indirectly at various points throughout the compilation. Of note are the references to the ‘sandwich’ technique, which can be employed when translators want to show their added value to a client or perhaps increase rates. Here one places the criticism/new rates/new terms and conditions between two compliments or positive points. As the authors reveal, this could be framed within the context of explaining “how much you enjoy working with them” and as the final slice of bread in the sandwich. In other words, even though “you are raising your special rate” it will still be at the “low end of your pricing scale “because you enjoy their texts so much” (p. 116). Of all the advice given in the book, it is this that stands out as it is practical and implementable. After all, who does not like being complimented on their work?

But be there no mistake, Fire Ant and Worker Bee are clear that there are no “fairy godmothers to wave [their] wand and bring you high-paying work without you having to do a thing” (p. 120). Becoming a translator requires “the nuts and bolts” (p. IV) membership of professional associations, language training, business skills, computer literacy “specialisation”, “ethics” and determination.

There is no doubt that this compilation continues to be of relevance. Technology may change, but the key to success remains the same: language competence, specialism, determination, business know-how and computer literacy. If you are reading this and contemplating changing your modus operandi as a translator or if you are an academic and considering delving into the freelance translator field, you could do a lot worse than exploring Fire Ant and Worker Bee’s excellent advice.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD OF TRANSLATION AS SEEN BY DANIEL GOUADEC

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Translation as a Profession, Daniel Gouadec, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007, 409 pp, €110.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9789027292513

Translation as a Profession by Daniel Gouadec aims to paint a picture of the translation world, describing and defining translation as a profession while also serving as a guide to anyone interested in joining this field of activity.

On a macro level, the volume is divided into 6 sections and 17 chapters, for a total of roughly 383 pages, walking a thin line between being a scientific book and a practical manual. Even the language used corroborates its dual nature, dancing to the tune of the chapter or section's objective. In the scientific parts, the language is methodical and rigorous, whereas in the more practical parts the author engages with the reader, giving advice in a way that feels natural and familiar.

The key word to describe the book is its comprehensiveness, as every single conceivable aspect of translation as a professional topic is covered at considerable length. However, comprehensiveness is also a double-edged sword. It is no secret that the translation market is not a big, clearcut circle divided into other smaller circles. It is rather a collection of splatters and odd shapes that overlap, converge, and intersect to form a large abstract painting.

The book can be grossly divided into two parts with two different objectives. The practical part aims to aid the reader in carrying out specific tasks and advise them on how to achieve their goals, while the scientific part describes the many different areas of translation as professional work.

In the more practical part, the author offers help and clears up misconceptions. This section is filled with tables and questions for self-assessment to guide the reader to success. The range of advice is massive, from simply helping the reader become a translator, to setting up a company, to even offering the author's opinion on how to manage a translation course and how future translators should be taught. Gouadec spreads his net very wide, so there is literally something for everyone.

The scientific part focuses on capturing the translation process and the translation market. Although it is no replacement for area-specific books, the descriptions it offers are far from shallow and serve as great entry points for anyone interested in a specific sub-area.

The book was released in 2007 and is, for better or worse, a product of its time. Both the practical and the scientific parts to some extent bear witness to this, as the landscape

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painted has now largely faded away. It is amusing and even nostalgia-provoking to read about "burning a CD/DVD" or PRAT (pencil and rubber-assisted translator). In other words, as time goes by, these pages will gain historical value, acting as a reminder of how much the market has changed and will continue to change, thus adding an additional layer.

Despite this, Gouadec's book still has much to offer anyone working in the field. Whether the reader is someone experienced in the field, a curious amateur, a researcher, a translation professional, or anyone in between, this work will undoubtedly have something for everyone to learn and is therefore worthy of being dubbed a bible of the field.

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