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Contents

Personal names in English literary translations from Czech and Icelandic

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a select survey of the rendering of personal names in translation into English from European languages with different scripts from the turn of the twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. Works of prose fiction were chosen from Czech and Icelandic, which use characters that are not part of the English alphabet. Their original publication dates are from the middle of the nineteenth to the late twentieth century, with translations trailing by years or even decades. The authors of the original works were very well known and in some cases Nobel Prize laureates. This gives assurance that their works attracted good translators and, in some cases, multiple translators. The hypothesis was that over the course of more than a century, there has been a growing tendency to respect the original spellings of personal names in translations – that is, to employ the source language's script, even when the literary works belong to relatively peripheral European cultures. The explanations for this include increased cultural contacts, the expansion of what has traditionally been called world literature, and internet resources.

Keywords: personal names, literary translation, Czech literature, Icelandic literature, acoustic impression

Osebna imena v angleških literarnih prevodih iz češčine in islandščine

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je predstavljen izbrani pregled prevajanja osebnih imen v angleščino iz evropskih jezikov z različnimi pisavami od preloma dvajsetega do začetka enaindvajsetega stoletja. Izbrana so bila prozna dela v češčini in islandščini, ki uporabljata črke, ki niso del angleške abecede. Dela so bila izvirno objavljena od sredine devetnajstega do konca dvajsetega stoletja, prevodi pa so zaostali nekaj let ali celo desetletij. Avtorji izvirnih del so bili zelo znani in v nekaterih primerih tudi Nobelovi nagrajenci, kar zagotavlja, da so njihova dela pritegnila dobre prevajalce in v nekaterih primerih tudi več prevajalcev. Hipoteza je bila, da je bila skozi več kot sto let vse bolj prisotna težnja po spoštovanju izvirne pisave osebnih imen v prevodih – kar pomeni, da se uporablja pisava izvirnega jezika, tudi če literarna dela pripadajo razmeroma perifernim evropskim kulturam. Razlogi za to so med drugim okrepljeni kulturni stiki, širjenje tako imenovane svetovne književnosti in spletni viri.

Ključne besede: osebna imena, literarno prevajanje, češka literatura, islandska literatura, akustični vtis

1. Introduction

The names of literary characters are proper nouns and a subset of anthroponyms (Nuessel 1992, 38–39) that like other kinds of names (e.g., brand names) are created by individual humans (e.g. literary authors), at least in the modern period. Names refer to real people (or fictional characters) by sound alone; they have no dictionary value (Pulgram 1954, 45–46), even if in some cases the name matches a common noun (e.g., Russian Lev – lion) or meaning can be retrieved etymologically (e.g., Carl – man of low birth). A name is a necessary linguistic referent (Nuessel 1992, 2), and as such it is generally not translated as are the other linguistic items in the natural language surrounding it. This applies to the names of real people as well as to those of literary personages.

That having been said, graphically reproducing a personal name from the source language of a translation presents obvious challenges. For instance, despite centuries of translating experience, there are still competing systems of converting Classical Greek names (Connolly 2009). In translating the names of literary characters from Mandarin to English, phonemic transliteration and semantic rendering continue to be alternatives (Xiao and Huang 2016). Even transferring names between languages with similar Latin scripts can pose questions, such as whether English names should be inflected in a Slovene-language text (Grün 1959, 58–60). However a translator handles personal names, they ought to be transferred into the target language to preserve the person's – and I argue below literary character's – culture (Newmark 2003, 214). The acoustic impression a name produces on a reader is also important (Mossop 2017, 633–34). Translators' awareness of this feature is attested by the fact that some translations include pronunciation keys. The acoustic impressions of characters' names are but a small part of the expanding field of reader responses to literature in translation (Chan 2016, 147–54).

In weighing how to present a character to readers, translators may take into account a name's meaning and/or allusions. A character name's semantic load can be inherent, as is often the case in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels (Knapp 1998, 27–37), for instance, or exist by dint of allusion. The latter explains why, for example, a leading translator from Slovene to English who usually faithfully reproduces the original forms of personal names has opted to use the name Sebastian rather than Boštjan in the forthcoming English version of Florjan Lipuš's novel *Boštjanov let*: The allusion to the Christian Saint Sebastian, in this case, might elude many readers of the translation (Biggins 2024). In the former case, of course, translators have not attempted to render Prince Myshkin's (of *The Idiot*) surname in such a way as to convey the meaning of mouse; they have transliterated the Russian Cyrillic, and it is left to readers to determine the name's relation to the word *mysh'* 'mouse' if they are interested.

This article considers translations into English from languages that use a Latin alphabet but have some different characters and diacritic marks. The handling of personal names in translation even between languages with similar scripts can be a complex issue. The languages that were selected are Czech and Icelandic, which have been until recent decades peripheral among European literatures. The hypothesis was that over the course of more than a century there has been a growing tendency to respect the original spellings of personal names in translations – that is, to employ the source language's alphabet, even when the literary works belong to relatively peripheral European cultures.

Mossop (2017, 622) has called this operation (his term) copying and notes that, like phonoliterating, it can have a foreignizing effect for the reader of a translation (Mossop 2017, 633). I will argue in the conclusion that this effect may be desirable.

2. Procedure and materials

To test the hypothesis, the article looks at names of Christian origin, with minor exceptions, variants of which exist in language communities that developed in contact with Christianity. The article begins with an examination of personal names in the two most well-known modern Czech novels, Jaroslav Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* (1921–1923, *The Good Soldier Schweik* 1930 or *The Good Soldier Švejk* 1964) and Božena Němcová's *Babička* (1855, *The Grandmother* 1891 or *Granny* 1962). The two English versions of each novel show how translators handled personal names between the 1890s and 1960s. There are comparisons with other, Polish and South Slavic, translations around the turn of the twentieth century that reveal similarities and differences with practices in the Czech translations. Then novels in translation by two leading Czech writers of the post-1968 period, Milan Kundera and Josef Škvorecký, are examined to see how personal names are transferred in books by major publishing houses in the 1980s. Once again, there are brief comparisons with other sources. The article concludes with consideration of translated novels by the Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize Winner (1955) Halldór Laxness that suggest a decisive shift in the handling of personal names in favor of preserving their original forms.

2.1 Naming and names of fictional characters

This section of the article advances three reasons for preserving the original spellings of personal names in translation. In the first, colorful lines of Jaroslav Hašek's novel *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (1921–1923, translations 1930 and 1974), there are three instances of naming (note: Ferdinand in the Czech original):

> "And so they've killed our Ferdinand," said the charwoman to Mr. Švejk, who had left the military service years before, after having been finally certified by an army medical board as an imbecile, and now lived by selling dogs—ugly monstrosities whose pedigrees he forged. […]
>
> "Which Ferdinand, Mrs. Müller?" he asked, going on with the massaging. "I know two Ferdinands. One is a messenger at Průša's, the chemist's, and once by mistake he drank a bottle of hair oil there. And the other is Ferdinand Kokoška, who collects dog manure. Neither of them is any loss."
>
> "Oh, no, sir, it's His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Ferdinand, from Konopiště, the fat churchy one." (Hašek 1973, 3–4)

The two Ferdinands Švejk names in this humorous passage are fictional characters; the third Ferdinand refers to a real person, Franz Ferdinand, whom an educated reader of the novel can be expected to recognize. Švejk's point of view makes the three Ferdinands equivalent in the reader's eyes, and this equivalency erases the line between real and fictional referents. All three have a personal identity, fictitious or real.

Preserving the original spelling of Ferdinand in an English translation is simple. I will argue that it is best to do so whenever possible (i.e., between languages with similar scripts), though it has taken better than a century of translating prose fiction to reach that conclusion. The reason it is best to transfer the original forms of names is that naming fictional characters is like naming people and changing a name – from modifying its spelling (even between very similar Latin alphabets) to offering an English-language equivalent – is like changing a personal identity. This may sound like raising the status of fictional characters to that of existing humans, but as Philip Roughton, an accomplished translator of Icelandic literature put it, "It has always been my practice, in my translations, to leave the Icelandic spellings of names as they are; names are, to me (and many others) essential to a person's identity and therefore, I think, unalterable—an Icelander named Þorlákur is Þorlákur, not Thorlakur, or an Icelander named Sigríður is Sigríður, not Sigridur" (Roughton 2024). Roughton is referring to the letters thorn (Þ) and eth (ð), which are changed, respectively, to th and d, as well as the diacritics.

To see why the names of fictional characters might be likened to the names of existing people, we can briefly recall what is generally the starting point of classifying names, John Stuart Mill's assertion that personal names have no connotation or definition in the usual sense that words do (Schwartz 2013, 927). This view is understandable as it applies to real people (e.g., the archduke) but might be questionable as concerns fictional characters (e.g., the first two Ferdinands) that have connotations – that is, readers associate their names with certain characteristics rather than with a person who has existed.

In this regard, another important touchstone is the philosopher Saul Kripke's view, which differs from Mill's. In his 1970 lectures (Kripke 1980), he emphasizes the importance of the act of naming and the continuity of a name's association with its real referent over time. On this basis, the naming of fictional characters is inherently different from the naming of real people. However, others have argued that we can imagine a parallel act of naming and chain of witnessing to the link between name and referent for fictional characters through publishing and readers' discussions of characters (Thomasson 1993). Kripke's view can also be generalized by substituting a set of characteristics of a fictional character (e.g., Švejk's chemist assistant who drank hair oil) for a unique referent, a person existing in reality (Tiedke 2011).

If Kripke's authoritative view of naming people is accepted and extended in ways to apply it to naming fictional characters, then the translator, as part of the chain witnessing what Kripke terms a baptism and Tiedke a dubbing, ought to use the original form of a character's name in the same way that a historian uses the original form of a person's name, unless there exists a standard alternative (e.g., Eng. Catherine the Great for transliterated Ekaterina; Eng. Pope Francis for Latin Franciscus or Italian Francesco). This is a novel reason for preserving characters' names in translation.

A consideration of at least equal weight in addition to the one outlined from analytic philosophy involves the perceived sound of a name. Research into English and Slovene readers' perceptions of the sound qualities of personal names in translation based on findings from marketing and other fields has shown that readers across cultures receive similar impressions of characters based on the sounds of their names (Pogacar et al. 2017; Pogačar and Pogacar 2024). Altering spellings or using English-language equivalents of names from other languages risks disrupting the transmission of sound impressions contained in the original forms. Of course, this presupposes reader adaptation to a possibly unfamiliar script and may recommend a pronunciation key. It may be reasonable to expect readers to adapt; for example, some US media outlets now use the original spellings of National Basketball Association stars Nikola Jokić (Serbian) and Luka Dončić's (Slovene) names.

A third important reason for preserving original names is that they are part of the source culture, like place names, for example, and as such they should not be changed. In fact, in various cultures fiction with rural settings often combines character names with the names of locales along the lines of so-and-so from such-and-such a place. However, as with the names of prominent people, accepted (localized) usage for certain locations is an overriding factor. A translator will likely use Prague and not Praha and Moscow, not (transliterated) Moskva.

The following sections of this article will give examples of how personal names, and some place names for comparison, have been handled in translations from Czech into English. The examples will show a move, over the course of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, towards employing original spellings in translations.

2.2 Translations from Czech: *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*

The passage at the beginning of the article is taken from an unabridged translation published in 1974. The front matter includes a detailed "Guide to the Pronunciation of Czech Names". It shows the reader the use of all Czech diacritics and gives examples; for instance, the castle Konopiště in the passage above is glossed in the key as "Kon-o-pish-tyeh." The translator uses the original spellings of personal names throughout the novel, and the guide suggests the importance of the sounds of these names.

This is in contrast to the first, abridged edition of the novel (Hašek 1930), in which the protagonist's name is Germanized as Schweik, while the charwoman's German surname, Müller (original Müllerová, feminine form), has a diacritic mark. The novel contains many German names, of course, but the first pages deprive Švejk of his Czech identity. Elsewhere in the novel we encounter the surnames Slavik and Repa (Hašek 1930, 89) instead of Slavík and Řepa, but Polák (Hašek 1930, 142) is inexplicably spelled as in the original. Then the (1930) translator opts for a phonetic equivalent of Lieutenant Lukaš's last name (i.e., Lukash). Similar inconsistencies appear in place names, such as Vodicková Street (Hašek 1930, 150), with the correct diacritic, but Hradcany and Budjevovice instead of Hradčany and Budjěvovice. In short, the handling of personal (and place) names is inconsistent even though the publisher could have opted for original spellings (Hašek's name is spelled correctly on the title page but not the cover).

2.3 Translations from Czech: Božena Němcová's *Babička*

Božena Němcová's novel *Babička* (1855) is one of the most well-known works in Czech literature, and English translations came out in 1891 and 1962. This study compares the handling of personal names in ten of 18 chapters of both translations, capturing most all of them in the novel (Table 1). While the later translation preserves relatively more original Czech names, both show an overarching tendency to use English equivalents of Czech first and surnames. Of the 53 (43 first and ten last) names in the sampling, 35 or approximately 80% of Czech first names in both translations are rendered with an Anglicized form. There are eight instances in the 1962 translation where the spellings match the Czech (e.g., Madla, Šima, and Lehotský); the older translation uses transliteration (sh for š) in two cases, the surnames Prošek and Mikeš. Where last names of female characters are concerned, both translations use male forms instead of the marked (with -á) female form.

Table 1. Personal names in Božena Němcová's *Babička*.

First names		
Czech	**Frances Gregor (1891)**	**Edith Pargeter (1962)**
Adelka	Adelka	Adelka
Anča	Anna	Anna
Barla	Barla	Barbara
Barunka	Barunka	Babbie
Bertík	Bertie	Bertie
Bětca	Betty	Betsy
Bětka	Betsey	Betty
Cilka	Celia / Cilka	Cecily
Ctibor	Ctibor	Ctibor
Dorotka	Dorothy	Dorothy
Frantík	Frankie	Frankie
Héla	Hela	Helen
Honzíček	Jack	Jackie
Jan	John	John or Johnny
Jeník	Jacob	Jacob
Jiří	George	George
Jiřík	George	George
Johanka	Johanna	Joanna
Josef	Joseph	Joseph
Kašpar	Casper	Jasper
Kačenca	Katherine	Katherine
Kristla	Christina	Christina
Madla	Madeline	Magdalena
Mančinka	Mary	Molly
Mařenka	Mary	Mary
Mikeš	Mikesh	Mikeš
Mikuláš	Nicholas	Nicholas
Míla	Molly	Míla
Mojžíš	Moses	Moses
Rybrcoul	Rybercol	Krakonoš
Šíma	Simon	Šíma
Terezka	Theresa	Theresa
Terinka	Theresa	Theresa
Tomeš	Tomesh	Tom

Toník	Anton	Tony
Václav	Wenzel	Wenceslas
Vavřínek	Lawrence	Laurie
Viktorka	Victorka	Viktorka
Vilém	Willie	Willie
Vilímek	Willie	Willie
Vlach	Vlach	Vlach
Vorša	Vorsa	Ursula
Zuzanka	Susannah	Susan
Surnames		
Czech	**Frances Gregor (1891)**	**Edith Pargeter (1962)**
pan Beyer	Mr. Beyer	Mr. Beyer
Halášek	Halashkov	Halášek
Hortensie	Hortense	Hortensia
Kohoutek	Kohoutek	Kohoutek
Kudrna	Kuderna	Kudrna
Lehotský	Lehotsky	Lehotský
Novotná	Novotny	Novotný
Prošek, Prošková	Proshek	Prošek, Prošková
Stanický	Stanicky	Stanický
Tichánek	Ticanek	Tichánek

Granted, in some cases in which English equivalents are used the name initial sound(s), which research has shown is decisive in how readers or listeners respond to a word (Adelman, Estes, and Cossu 2018; Marslen-Wilson and Welsh 1978; Nooteboom 1981) or name (Pogačar and Pogacar 2024), are similar. Examples (Table 1) in which English equivalents are the same in both translations include Kristla > Christina, Frantík > Frank, Dorotka > Dorothy, and Terezka and Terninka > Theresa. However, in many cases the sounds of English equivalents that match in both translations differ substantially from the original – for example, Jan > John or Johnny, Kačenca > Katherine, Mikuláš > Nicholas, and Vilímek > Willie. Complicating matters is the occurrence of Czech diminutives, which are inconsistently conveyed in the English. The diminutive form is conveyed in Vilímek > Willie, but in the rendering Frantík > Frank, it is unclear that Frank (or Frankie) was once a diminutive of Frances (Czech František), and in Terinka > Theresa, the full English name is used just as it is elsewhere for Tereza. Likewise, both Jiří and (diminutive) Jiřík yield the full name George. Perhaps the most interesting case is that of Honzíček, diminutive of Honza (informal Jan – John), rendered as Jack (Němcová 1891) and Jackie (Němcová 1962), which captures the diminutive of Honza, but both are distant from the Czech original. The most puzzling diminutive is when the grandmother refers to Kristla as *smíšek* 'laughter' and the first translator turns the reference into a name, Smila, that is meaningless to the English reader, while the second translator coins a nickname, Miss Mirth (Němcová 1962, 43). The preponderant use of English equivalents in both translations distorts the sound impressions of most of the original Czech names and deprives characters of their personal and national identities.

Let us consider several cases of varying names in *Babička* that show additional problems with altering originals. A central character, Barunka's name is given as such in the 1891 translation, but she is called Babbie in the 1962 translation. It may be that the translator in the older version did not know that Barunka is a diminutive of Barbora (Eng. Barbara), which is evident in the later translation, though readers would likely have to research the Barbara – Babbie connection. Something similar happens to Vorša. It becomes Vorsa (here the 1891 translator does not supply sh as in the surname Mikeš > Mikesh above) and Ursula. In the case of Mančinka, the first translation gives Mary and explains, "but she was always called Manchinka" (Němcová 1891, 53) (ch for č), without noting that it is a diminutive form. On the other hand, the Czech Mařenka is Mary in the first translation, even though it is a diminutive of Marie or Mařena, and Molly in the second. Once again, it is doubtful that readers of English would make the Mary – Molly connection. (The older translation uses Molly for Míla but the newer one preserves the original Míla.) Finally, Václav is Germanized as Wenzel (Němcová 1891) and Anglicized as Wenceslas (Němcová 1962). The examples of Barunka, Vorša, Mančinka, Mařinka, and Václav suggest these translations hinder not only sound, identity, and cultural transference but introduce inconsistencies that may challenge and even mislead readers.

A word must be said about place names in the translations, because Němcova came from the Krkonoše Mountains and a tale is inserted that is set there, while a shepherd in the novel takes his name from the region. The older translation gives the German term Riesengebirge (Němcová 1891, 49) but in another place the Sudetic mountains (Němcová 1891, 46). The second translation uses the more familiar (in English) Giant Mountains for Krkonoše and Krkonošsky hory (Němcová 1962, 28). Then the shepherd is said in both translations to be a Riesenburg or Riesenburk man and a shepherd from Riesenburg or Riesenburk. The inconsistencies in the newer translation leave the reader to sort out how the names of the mountain ranges relate and the shepherd's association with them. Further, the prince is named Rybercoul (Rybercol in translation 1) in the tale but Krakonoš in the 1962 translation, which would have made sense if the Czech name for the range, Krkonoše, had been preserved in the translation. The 1891 translation makes attempts to translate place names (e.g., Červená Hůra > Red Hura) while the more recent translation sticks with Czech spellings (e.g., Červená Hůra).

The titles of the translations – *The Grandmother* (Němcová 1891) and *Granny* (Němcová 1962) – certainly convey differing views of the main character on the part of the narrators. The former holds her at greater distance while the latter names her in perhaps too colloquial or regional of a fashion for American English. The respective subtitles of the translations, "A Story of Country Life in Bohemia" and "Scenes from Country Life", differ as well. The Czech subtitle has *obrazy*, so scenes is a better choice; "in Bohemia" was probably added to the 1891 translation as an advertising explanation. The audience for this translation was an American readership that might have been curious about the land from which tens of thousands had immigrated by the late nineteenth century, with Chicago, where the translation was published, a primary destination. Given the audience, adapting or Anglicizing the majority of character names in the novel is understandable, though it comes with consequences for readers' impressions of characters, the sounds of their names, and perceptions of the source culture.

Evidence that the alternative of preserving the original forms of personal names in translation was an option in the late nineteenth century is found in volumes of the *Universal Anthology* (1899–1902). The anthology was intended to gather exemplary samples of literature from around the world as a way of combatting the rise of popular, low-brow literature (Garnett, Vallée, and Brandl 1899, xii–xxiii). For example, volume 29 (Garnett, Vallée, and Brandl 1899), contains translations of short prose works from Bohemian (Czech), Slovak, Slovenian, and Serbo-Croatian, all of which use original spellings – that is, for example, the character surnames Horlivý and Záloha in a story by the Czech writer Svatopluk Čech (Garnett, Vallée, and Brandl 1899, 299–310).

A compromise solution from the time is found in a translation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's (1905 Nobel Prize laureate) novel *Potop* (1886, *The Deluge* 1891). The front matter (Sienkiewicz 1891, xvii–xviii) contains a transliteration key because "the Polish alphabet has many phonetic combinations which are difficult for one who does not know the language". So, for example, cz > ch, szcz > shch, and rz > r, and > j followed by "the French j". The surname Czarnowski becomes Charnovski and Żyromski > Jyromski. The pronunciation of vowel sounds is also explained. However, the transliteration does not account for other spellings; for instance, the surname Sołłohub > Sollohub and Gościewicz > Gostsyevich. The name Andrzej > Andrei, "because of the extreme difficulty, for any one not a Pole, of pronouncing *r* followed by the French *j*"; the name Michał is simply Anglicized as Michael. Although the key is incomplete, what is interesting is the translator has in mind the sound impression personal names make on readers.

3. Translations from Czech: Milan Kundera and Josef Škvorecký

This section shows the handling of Czech personal names in English translations from the 1960s to the 1980s. Two of the Czech writers most widely read in English translation are Milan Kundera (1929–2023) and Josef Škvorecký (1924–2012), both of whom left Czechoslovakia after 1968. The translation of one of Škvorecký's earliest works, *Smutek poručika Borůvky* (1966, *The Mournful Demeanor of Lieutenant Boruvka* 1973), a collection of detective stories, does not preserve the original forms of Czech names. In the first story, "The Supernatural Powers of Lieutenant Boruvka", the surnames Šinták > Sintak, Málek > Malek, Semerák > Semerak, Pěnkava > Penkava, Bárta > Barta; the given names in the story are Anglicized: Pavle > Paul and Josef > Joe. In the second story, "That Sax Solo", diacritics are omitted but given names are not Anglicized, perhaps because they cannot be: Bedřich > Bedrich (nickname Benny), Marie > Marie, Mici > Mici, Gustav > Gustav, Slavka > Slavka, and Goliáš > Golias.

Škvorecký's Toronto publishing house brought out a sequel featuring Lieutenant Borůvka entitled *Hřichy pro pátera Knox* (1973, *Sins for Father Knox* 1973) with worldwide settings and thus fewer Czech names. Those that are found in the work are handled in the same way as in the 1966 book: for example, the female surname Kořenáčová > Korenac and the surname Hejduk > Heyduk. An interesting case of giving an English equivalent of a first name is Pepíček > Joey, presumably representing the diminutive and everyman meaning of the name in Czech and English. In Škvorecký's books about Lieutenant Borůvka published in Czechoslovakia (Škvorecký 1966) and Canada (Škvorecký 1973), the original spellings of Czech names are not preserved in translation. This still seems to be the continued practice in the 1960s–1970s, although there are examples of Czech literature in translation during this time that use source forms of names in translation throughout (Němcová 1967).

Kundera's *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí* (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*) was first published in French translation (1984) and the then in the original Czech (1985). Of the four main characters' names, only one, Tomáš, contains diacritics, and it appears in the English translation (Kundera 1984) as Tomas. Reproducing foreign words in the translation is not an issue, as the narrator's excursus on "compassion" shows (Kundera 1984, 19–20): he compares the words *pieté* (Fr.), *pietà* (It.), *soucit* (Cz.), *współczucie* (Pol.), *Mitgefühl* (Germ.), and *medkänsla* (Swed.). The 2004 edition of the English by the same translator updates the spellings of personal names other than Tomas and the Czechoslovak president, Novotny (Novotný). The composers Dvorak and Janacek (Kundera 1984, 93) become Dvořak and Janáček (Kundera 2004, 93), and the prime minister, Dubcek, is now Dubček; even the city Zurich (Kundera 1984, 27) becomes Zürich (Kundera 2004, 26). We can only surmise that the translator and/or author and publisher did not wish Tomas's name to stand out among those of the other main characters (i.e., Tereza, Sabina, and Franz).

When the journal *World Literature Today* devoted an issue to Škvorecký in 1980, however, the original Czech spellings were respected in all of the contributions, including a translation of an excerpt from the novel *Mirákl* (1972, *Miracle in Bohemia* 1980). Surnames like Řivnáčová, Doružková, and Chocholoušová are part of the translation, and a first name such as Evženie, with an obvious English equivalent, appears in the text. This issue of the journal points to the important role of publishers in preserving the original forms of personal names in translation. A good example is the Central European Classics series from the Central European University Press (CEU), which brought out, for example the Czech writer Jan Neruda's *Povídky malostranské* (1878, *Prague Tales* 1993), translated by Michael Heim (translator of Kundera's *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí*). The current CEU senior editor explained that it is their practice to use original spellings of personal names in literary translations into English from languages with Latin alphabets (Kunos 2024). The managing editor of Slavica Publishers in the US stated a similar practice, distinguishing it from how names are handled in social sciences publications (Polansky 2024). On the other hand, the editor at Istros, an independent British press specializing in translations from Central and Southern European countries, stated that they prefer modifying spellings in literary translations (e.g., Polish Andrzej > Andrey or even André) unless an author insists on the original spellings (Curtis 2024).

If we look, for the sake of comparison, at literary translations from Slovene to English in the late twentieth century in light of this current practice, we can date a widespread but not uniform trend towards preserving original personal names to the 1990s (Pogačar 2024), though there were harbingers. For instance, the journal *World Literature Today* used the original forms of personal names since its inception in 1977.

4. The evolution of translations of Halldór Laxness's novels into English

A premise of this article has been that the rendering of personal names in literary translations from relatively more peripheral European literatures into English has been less respectful of original forms until the late twentieth century. This would seem to hold to a greater degree for Slavic languages than for Germanic and Romance ones. For example, crime novels by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlööj – that were translated from Swedish into English starting in the 1960s and 1970s – reproduce the original spellings of personal (and geographic) names regardless of the fact that readers of English cannot be assumed to be aware of how to pronounce unfamiliar characters in the Swedish script. The original spellings carry the characters' identities and are part of Swedish culture.

I have argued elsewhere (Pogačar 2024) that the trend towards preserving the original forms of names in Slovene to English translations follows a course similar to that traced above for Czech during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The select examples from Icelandic literature show a similar trend. Icelandic is an appropriate choice because it, too, can be called peripheral but is Germanic. Dović and Helgason (2016) have shown the similarities in the way the Icelandic and Slovene nations have cultivated national poets as part of a nation-building enterprise. Recognition of prominent writers and a national literature beyond a land's borders depends, of course, upon translation (Juvan 2019, 61–76).

Iceland's most well-known writer in English translation is Halldór Laxness (1902–1998), whose novels involve the country's literature, history, and exotic geography. Examples of three novels in translation show how the reader of English has been progressively introduced to the original forms of Icelandic names. The first novel, *Sjálfstætt folk* (1934–1935, *Independent People* 1946) has been republished as recently as 2020 with English adaptations of the spellings of Icelandic names.

The second example is Laxness's *Öll réttindi áskilin* (1957, *The Fish Can Sing* 1966, 2000). The first translation uses English adaptations of the spellings of Icelandic names. The second English edition, by the same translator, differs from the first in that a map is added in the front matter along with a note on pronunciation of vowels and the voiced consonant eth (ð) because most all original Icelandic spellings are used in the translation.

The third example, Laxness's *Salka Valka* (1931–1932, *Salka Valka* 1936, 2022) is similar to the second: the first English translation does not use original Icelandic forms of personal names, but the latter one, by a different translator, does. However, this translation of the novel does not come with a pronunciation key, so the reader of English is left to figure out the sounds of the names. Incidentally, the front matter indicates that the first English translation was from the Danish, underlining Icelandic's pre-independence, peripheral status.

The fourth example is Laxness's novel *Íslandsklukkan* (1943, *Iceland's Bell* 2003). It comes with a much more detailed map (made by the translator) than that in *The Fish Can Sing* (Laxness 2000a) and one that uses original Icelandic spellings. *Iceland's Bell*, like the 2000 edition of *The Fish Can Sing*, has a pronunciation guide that includes one more consonant sound than the latter – the devoiced thorn (Þ) (also used in the spellings of names in *Salka Valka* 2022).

5. Conclusion

The article argues that reproducing the original spellings of characters' names respects personal identity in the way this concept is understood for actually existing persons, conveys the acoustic impressions of characters' names more reliably than Anglicizing them, and that names are an integral part of the source culture a translator ought to provide the reader. A look at how the names of literary characters in English translation from what until the late twentieth century can be called peripheral European literatures (i.e., Czech and Icelandic) shows a gradual trend towards carrying the original spellings into English.

Translations of Jaroslav Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka* (1930 and 1964) contrast the Anglicization (or Germanization) of the protagonist Švejk's (Schweik and Švejk, respectively) and other Czech personal names in the first translation with the reproduction of the original spellings in the second. The 1964 translation contains a complete pronunciation key for the Czech script, indicating the significance of names' acoustic impressions.

The practice of Anglicizing personal names is seen in translations of Božena Němcová's novel *Babička* from 1891 and 1962. It is notable that the latter translation uses the Czech spellings of place names (e.g., Žernov instead of Zernov) in what is a move towards transferring the source culture more completely. A comparison with a turn-of-the-twentieth century anthology (translation 1906) suggests that transference of original spellings was possible at the time of the first translation, at least for highly educated readers. The translation of a Henryk Sienkiewicz novel (1906) shows that the acoustic impression of personal names was a consideration, given that a partial pronunciation key is provided. Original spellings of Polish names are not used, but there is consistent rendering of names with equivalent English letters to enable the reader to mimic Polish pronunciation.

The handling of characters' names in translations of works by the prominent Czech writers Josef Škvorecký and Milan Kundera suggests that carrying the original Czech spellings into English was still not a practice of major publishing houses into the 1980s, whereas translations of the Icelandic writer Halldór Laxness's novels between 1936 and 2020 indicate a trend towards using the original spellings of names in translations. Translators have come to use Icelandic spellings, thus conveying characters' personal identities, the sounds of personal (and geographic) names, and the source culture in which they are embedded. Pronunciation guides are important in the second edition of Laxness's *The Fish Can Sing* (Laxness 2000a) and the translation of *Iceland's Bell* (Laxness 2003). A fresh translation of *Salka Valka* (Laxness 2022) uses original spellings but lacks a pronunciation key.

From a contemporary perspective, the practice of Anglicizing names, as was done in two translations of Němcová's *Babička*, is inconsistent and unwieldy if not misleading. Jiří or its diminutive Jiřík, for example, may have an English equivalent George in a shared Christian heritage but the graphic appearances and sound impressions are distant. Further, a reader might ask how does a George fit into a (rural and nineteenth-century) Czech context? The same can be asked to varying degrees about other Anglicized names in the novel. Unless there are overriding concerns about accurately conveying characterization (e.g., the use of Sebastian in the translation of Florjan Lipuš's novel *Boštjanov let*), literary translators should aim to carry the original spellings of personal names into English translations.

If there is indeed a trend towards using the original spellings of personal names in literary translations, then readers are receiving a more genuine impression of the source culture. As the translator Philip Roughton put it:

> I personally think that if a person is reading literature from a foreign country, they should be given every chance to learn more of and experience that place and its people and customs—personal names and place names are relatively "easy" foreign elements of foreign literature. Literature should be challenging [...] experiencing foreign cultures should be challenging, eye-opening, door-opening, uplifting, mind- and spirit-expanding. (Roughton 2024)

The cost in effort to the reader is offset by the experience of meeting more of the unfamiliar from a literary work from another culture.

There is also a possible gain as regards the acoustic properties of personal names, though a pronunciation key may be helpful. On the other hand, a reader can easily find the pronunciation of, for example, the names Boštjan (Slovene) and Michał (Polish) on the internet, even spelling them Bostjan and Michal. The Icelandic name Þorlákur may be more challenging, but its pronunciation is available, toom and the letters Þ and á can be inserted in a word processing program.

Publishing houses may have considerations regarding readership that differ from those of writers and translators – that is, they may see an advantage to making fictional characters' names relatively more familiar to readers of translations. But we might ask whether such considerations have been applied to translations from what have been relatively more peripheral literatures, especially given, for instance, the numerous translations of Sjöwall and Wahlööj's books from Swedish with original spellings of personal names by large US publishers like Bantam, Pantheon, and Vintage. A more thorough answer to the question may be had by looking at English-language translations from other peripheral literatures, such as ones from the Baltics and Southeastern Europe.

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Contrasting a semiotic conceptualization of translation with AI text production: The case of audio captioning

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ABSTRACT

Using a semiotically-informed material approach to the study of translation, this paper analyses an artificial intelligence (AI) system developed for automatic audio captioning (AAC), which is the automated production of written descriptions for non-lingual environmental sounds. Comparing human and AI text production processes against a semiotic framework suggests that AI uses computational methods to reach textual outcomes which humans arrive at through semiotic means. Our analysis of sound description examples produced by an AAC system makes it apparent that this distinction is useful in articulating the complex relationship between human and AI translation processes. Acknowledging the central role of semiotic meaning-construction in human text production and its arguable absence in AI computational processes allows for AI processes to be discussed under a translational framework, while still recognizing their fundamental differences from comparable human translation processes. Further, audio captioning provides a clear example of a translation task where non-lingual content must be considered on equal terms with lingual text, and our discussions illustrate how this can be achieved in computational and semiotic processes alike. Overall, this paper promotes a nuanced understanding of meaning in text production and suggests multiple fruitful points of convergence and divergence between translation theory and AI research.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, audio captioning, intersemiotic translation, natural language processing, semiotics

Primerjava semiotične konceptualizacije prevoda z besedilom, ki ga tvori UI: primer avdiopodnaslavljanja

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je s stališča semiotične materialne smeri v prevodoslovju predstavljena analiza sistema umetne inteligence (UI), ki je bil razvit za pripravo avtomatskih avdiopodnapisov (automatic audio captioning oziroma AAC), tj. avtomatsko tvorjenih pisnih opisov nejezikovnih zvokov okolja. Na podlagi semiotične primerjave človeškega in umetnointeligenčnega procesa tvorjenja besedila je mogoče sklepati, da UI uporablja računalniške metode za dosego besedilnega cilja, medtem ko človek besedilni cilj doseže s pomočjo semiotičnih sredstev. Analiza opisov zvokov, ki jih tvori sistem AAC, pokaže, da je to razlikovanje koristno, če želimo ubesediti kompleksni odnos med človeškim in umetnointeligenčnim procesom prevajanja. Hkrati predstavlja avdiopodnaslavljanje očiten primer prevodne naloge, pri kateri je treba nejezikovno vsebino obravnavati na enak način kot jezikovno besedilo. Razprava pokaže, kako je mogoče to doseči tako v računalniškem kot v semiotičnem procesu. V prispevku je poudarjen pomen podrobnega razumevanja pomena pri tvorjenju besedila, hkrati pa je izpostavljenih več plodnih področji, kjer se teorija prevajanja in raziskovanje UI stikata in razhajata.

Ključne besede: umetna inteligenca, avdiopodnaslavljanje, intersemiotični prevod, obdelava naravnega jezika, semiotika

1. Introduction

Two major conceptual issues are currently inciting debate and discussion across the field of translation studies (TS). The first is related to the advent of neural machine translation, large language models, and other artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for natural language processing (NLP). These developments challenge TS to account for the increasingly high-quality and widespread production of translations by machines, and in doing so raise conceptual questions about what kinds of phenomena should be understood as translation – "is machine translation translation?", as Kenny, do Carmo, and Nurminen (2022, 396–417; see also do Carmo, Kenny, and Nurminen 2022) put it. The second issue focuses on the question of whether the conceptualization of translation as a phenomenon should be based on linguistic information processing, or rather be developed within more generalized hermeneutic or semiotic frameworks (e.g. Venuti 2019; Bennett 2022; Zheng, Tyulenev, and Marais 2023) that would better account for different kinds of meaning and acknowledge the centrality of personal experience in the construction of meaning. Therefore, if TS is to take both of these issues seriously, it will need the ability to do two somewhat opposing things simultaneously: engage with instances of machine language generation as translation, and conceptualize translation as a decidedly non-mechanic and non-language-centred meaning-construction process.

In this conceptual paper, we seek to find some common ground between these two perspectives by applying a meaning-focused conceptualization of translation to the analysis of an AI text production process. Instead of asking whether machine translation is translation, or what translation is, we reorganize those questions into a discussion of how human and AI translation processes compare with each other against a semiotic understanding of translation. In order to articulate where human and AI text production processes diverge from each other and where they converge, we discuss the basic principles of AI text generation in terms of translation theory and contrast that discussion with a semiotic conceptualization of human translational processes. It is argued here that while human translation is understood predominantly as a process predicated on the construction of *meaning* through semiotic means (following e.g. Haapaniemi 2024), AI text production appears as a computational process of identifying and replicating aspects of lingual *form,* not of meaning-construction (as also argued by e.g. Bender and Koller 2020) – at least, not as meaning is understood in the semiotic sense. To illustrate what this fundamental difference means in practice and in terms of translation, we take the process of *audio captioning* – the production of verbal descriptions for non-lingual environmental sounds – as an example of a translation process which invites a non-language-centred, semiotic conceptualization of translation when studied as a human process, but which AI can nevertheless conduct computationally.

2. Translational perspectives on the convergences and divergences between human and AI text production processes

2.1 Audio captioning as an example of AI text generation

AI text generation today comprises of a wealth of techniques which produce texts of many kinds (e.g. summarizations, analyses, and translations between languages and distinct modalities, such as image descriptions), commonly employing algorithmic NLP models which analyse and/or produce strings of natural language based on identified relationships between language fragments. Generative AI systems can utilize language as input or as output, and use architecture similar to NLP models to work in non-lingual modalities at both ends of the process. One example of an AI text generation process that involves both lingual and non-lingual modalities is automatic audio captioning (AAC). NLP models are developed for the purpose of AAC in order to create computational systems that recognize the most important sounds in acoustic environments and produce written descriptions of those sounds. These written *captions* produced by the NLP model are formulated as descriptive sentences similar to how a human would describe their perception of the sounds they hear. For example, an audio caption for a scene recorded at a busy airport could be "people are talking and somebody whistles in the distance" (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Scheme of an encoder-decoder system for AAC.

In contrast to many conventional methods of computational audio analysis, NLP-based AAC systems do not simply place sounds into pre-existing categories (as in e.g. Virtanen, Plumbley, and Ellis 2018) but describe them verbally in order to convey an acoustic scene. Further, NLP-based systems do not map auditive features to existing linguistic features (as e.g. spoken phonemes are mapped to written language strings in automatic speech recognition, see Mei et al. 2022) but generate original descriptions for each audio clip. The specific AAC system discussed in this paper is developed by the cross-disciplinary GUIDE research project of Tampere University, Finland (for more on the development of GUIDE's AAC system, see Martín-Morató, Harju, and Mesaros 2022).

As it involves the production of verbal content from non-verbal content, AAC can be treated as an example of *intersemiotic* machine translation (after Jakobson 1959). GUIDE's NLP model is one of many such AI systems developed for AAC, and these models often employ the same fundamental principles as interlingual machine translation systems (Martín-Morató, Harju, and Mesaros 2022). As a process, audio captioning combines non-lingual, multimodal and intersemiotic aspects of translation, raising the question of how different forms of expression relate to the meaning derived from them during translation; and AAC conducted by AI complicates this further by raising the question of how these complex translational phenomena relate to the computational processes of NLP systems. These aspects make audio captioning an especially interesting example for the discussion of the differences between how humans and AI systems translate.

NLP models require *training* to be able to produce captions similar to human outputs. AAC systems are trained on human-produced texts that correspond to its input audio sequences, which allows the NLP model to analyse and identify the dependencies between its inputs and expected output captions. In recent years, a few AAC datasets have been collected through various crowdsourcing solutions for training and testing purposes (e.g. AudioCaps, in Kim et al. 2019; Clotho, in Drossos, Lipping, and Virtanen 2020; MACS, in Martín-Morató and Mesaros 2021; see also Hodosh, Young, and Hockenmaier 2013 on the drawbacks of using crowdsourcing for gathering AI training data). When gathering training data for an AAC dataset, human annotators are asked to listen to a short audio clip and describe what they hear in one complete sentence (see the examples discussed in section 3.3; for more details on how data was gathered for specific datasets, see the sources mentioned above; for more details on the dataset analysed in this paper, see section 3.1). From these audio clips and their corresponding captions, the AAC system learns the mappings between the statistical features of the recordings' acoustic content and the language used to describe the scenes human listeners have identified from the recordings.

In AAC, the NLP model treats both the audio clip and its written caption as a sequence of statistical *tokens*, each of which has their own probable relationships to each other as well as to the specific sequences they make up in the system's inputs and outputs. The most common contemporary model for these sequence-to-sequence tasks is the *transformer* (Vaswani et al. 2017). Transformers involve an *encoder*, which transforms the input content (in this case, an audio file) into a sequence of tokens, and a *decoder,* which transforms the token sequence into corresponding output content (written language). Due to their ability to assess the relevance of individual tokens and their connections not just between the input and output sequence, but also within the same sequence – in translational terms, not just target language in relation to the source text, but also target text elements in relation to each other – transformer models have been deemed especially useful for machine translation tasks (as discussed in e.g. Vardasbi et al. 2023) and other NLP tasks that involve the production of a language sequence based on an input sequence, such as AAC output.

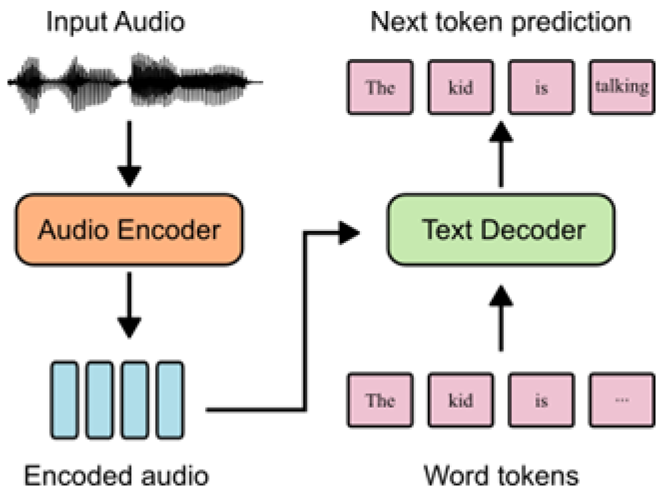

Figure 2. Encoder-decoder framework overview: the decoder predicts the next word token from the partly generated sentence and the encoded audio.

In processing its training data, GUIDE's AAC system therefore seeks to find the best alignment between the sequence of statistical features representing the audio input and the string of natural language which comprises human-produced captions (Figure 2). Over the course of its training, the NLP model's probability calculations are constantly weighed towards making more accurate predictions in order to consistently produce language-strings that are reasonably close to human-produced captions. One part of this is the *evaluation* of the system's outputs in comparison to corresponding human text products. Evaluation metrics tend to focus on measuring the overlap between AI-generated captions and human-produced reference captions. There have been recent attempts to develop metrics specifically designed for evaluating AAC (e.g. CB-score, in Martín-Morató, Harju, and Mesaros 2022; FENSE, in Zhou et al. 2022; SPICE+, in Gontier, Serizel, and Cerisara 2023), but the most commonly used metrics are the ones that were originally designed for machine translation (e.g. BLEU, in Papineni et al. 2002) or image captioning (e.g. SPIDEr, in Liu et al. 2017). What these metrics do not reveal, however, is whether the AI caption actually relates to the sounds heard in the recording in a meaningful way. For example, the BLEU or SPIDEr metrics might give high ratings to sentences that just repeat the most common sentence fragments in the reference data, or ones that are structurally valid but semantically nonsensical. In other words, these metrics evaluate the NLP model's *formal* linguistic competence (i.e., its mastery of linguistic rules and patterns, Mahowald et al. 2023, 3) but not its *functional* linguistic competence (i.e., the ability to understand and use language to accomplish communicative goals, ibid.; see also the distinction made between the formal "deep syntax" of language and "communicative intent" in Bender and Koller 2020, 5192).

This difficulty in devising reliable evaluation metrics beyond assessing just the formal aspects of language reflects how computational systems relate to language and other human forms of expression. Transformer-based NLP models, like the one employed by GUIDE's AAC system, do not treat their inputs and outputs as meaningful expressions serving a communicative function, but as sequences of statistical relationships between tokens, regardless of what forms of expression or textual modes their inputs and outputs contain. Indeed, and as noted above, besides language processing transformers can be used for many kinds of data, from images (Radford et al. 2021) and video (Iashin and Rahtu 2020) to audio (Gontier, Serizel, and Cerisara 2021; Elizalde et al. 2023) – the same sequence-to-sequence methodology can be applied to any kind of digital input or output, since all digital data is reducible to sequences of values. In AAC and in other text production tasks, then, the fundamental operating principles of transformer-based AI systems are the same regardless of the modalities utilized: in all cases, the model maps the probable correspondences between sequences of input tokens and sequences of output tokens from training data. When the model is presented with a new input sequence, it predicts the most probable sequence of output tokens in response. At its core, AI text production is a process of *statistical modelling* and *probability calculation*; or, in other words, a process of comparing instances of lingual *form* in its training data to the formal aspects of its input and compiling a sequence of lingual form as output. This indicates a fundamental difference from the semiotic conceptualization of human text production processes, including translation, which, as we will discuss below, are seen as being predicated on the construction of *meaning* – although some interesting parallels between the two processes can also be identified.

2.2 Form, meaning, and AI: Fundamental points of divergence

On the level of generalizations, it is easy enough to find common denominators between TS and NLP research. Various AI systems, developed with the ambition of creating more human-like machine intelligence (Bisk et al. 2020; Lake and Murphy 2021), are indeed capable of different kinds of translation tasks. These range from machine translation between natural languages (e.g. Sutskever, Vinyals, and Le 2014) to lingual descriptions of images, audio and video (e.g. Drossos, Adavanne, and Virtanen *2017;* Mogadala, Kalimuthu, and Klakow 2019; Aafaq et al. 2020). Speaking in very general terms, it could be said that TS research and NLP development share an interest in questions of how the relevant features of an initial textual entity (source text or input) are retained or replicated in a subsequent textual entity (target text or output) with some recognizable relationship of correspondence to the initial entity. As noted, in both fields this interest extends from interlingual exchanges to instances of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1959) between different kinds of semiotic systems, such as between verbal and non-verbal forms of expression – as in audio captioning.

However, these parallels become more ambiguous when we move from generalizations to details and start to question terms such as "semiotic system" and their implications for the translation processes studied by TS. The *material approach* to translation (Haapaniemi 2024) is an example of a semiotically-informed theoretical framework that explores these implications. Based on the concept of materiality (Littau 2016) and a Peircean understanding of semiotics (Peirce 1994; Short 2007; see also e.g. Robinson 2016; Marais 2019; Sealey 2019), the material approach sees translation as the construction of meaning from a material source text, consisting of different kinds of semiotic *signs* and their material forms, and the subsequent compilation of the target text, which includes a new semiotic sign-complex to be communicated in new material forms to a new set of recipients in a new context of reception (Haapaniemi 2024, 30–33). The role of translators is therefore that of mediators between their interpretation of the source text in the source context and their perception of the target context, compiling a complex of signs that allows for the target text's recipients to construct the desired kinds of meaning from it (Haapaniemi 2024, 30–33). Meaning-construction from texts is seen as a relational process that involves the recipient's sensory perception of material forms, interpreting those forms as signs, and relating the signs to their knowledge and experience of the world and of any communicational conventions concerning those signs (Haapaniemi 2024, 14–17; compare, for example, with the notion of "sense" discussed in Risku and Pircher 2008, 158–157, or the concept of "functional linguistic competence" in Mahowald et al. 2023). In contrast, as discussed in the previous section, AI text generation is fundamentally a process of calculating probabilities of correspondence between statistical patterns in its input and output (also discussed from a TS perspective in e.g. Asscher 2022, 4–5). This means that, in semiotic terms, AI operates on form where humans operate on meaning (as also proposed in Bender and Koller 2020, 5186–5188). The intermodal or interlinguistic computations in AAC – or in image captioning, video description, or machine translation – can find and produce correspondences between two or more instances of tokenized form (Bender and Koller 2020, 5192), but the meanings that humans derive from those forms (what is termed "communicative intents" in Bender and Koller 2020) are, arguably, beyond the current grasp of NLP (see also De Deyne et al. 2021; for arguments to the contrary, see e.g. Søgaard 2023, 39–45).

If we accept that AI does not engage with form as signs, then AI does not construct meaning from that form, and the mode in which that form is presented is not a semiotic system to the AI – it is a dataset comprised of statistical relations between tokens, between aspects of form. In Peircean semiotics and in material translation theory, meaning is constructed through a holistic sign-process involving the perspective and experience of a specific semiotic actor. Meaning is therefore not just the established relationship between two forms of expression, or even the relationship between an expression and whatever that expression is considered to refer to; rather, in the semiotic conceptualization, meaning is ultimately specific to the individual semiotic actor constructing it, although still informed by and dependent on community, context, and convention (as discussed e.g. in terms of "icosis" from a Peircean perspective in Robinson 2016; for an overview of meaning as both a personal and social phenomenon in TS beyond explicitly semiotic theories, see e.g. Muñoz Martín and Rojo López 2018). It appears to be possible to computationally identify some aspects of the conventionalized relationship between an instance of language and the way in which language users are likely to utilize that instance of language for the purposes of meaning-construction (veering from the general sign-processes of semiotics to the language-focused area of semantics; for more on what kinds of semantic relations NLP can arguably learn from form alone, see e.g. Søgaard 2023; for more on the specific quantitative kind of distributional semantics employed by NLP models, see e.g. Lenci and Sahlgren 2023). Nevertheless, meaning itself – how lingual forms are treated as signs and engaged with semiotically – is grounded in an individual language user's situated experience of material reality and socio-cultural context (as argued in e.g. Haapaniemi 2024; see also the similar distinction made between "sense" and "meaning" e.g. in Risku and Pircher 2008, or between "formal" and "functional" linguistic competence in Mahowald et al. 2023). Ultimately, this means that the meaning different communicators express through and derive from language is not inscribed or deposited in linguistic form, and therefore cannot be learnt from form alone by computational models. This view is supported by, among others, Bender and Koller (2020), who argue that the semantic similarities identifiable from linguistic form are "only a weak reflection of actual meaning" (Bender and Koller 2020, 5193).

2.3 Parallels between TS and AI studies: Points of convergence beyond fundamental differences

Using the semiotic terms of the material approach to the study of translation, the process of audio captioning when conducted by a human is as follows:

- The translator (annotator) receives a material text (audio recording).
- The translator identifies the relevant sign-complex in it (noteworthy sounds separated from noise and other textual or medial aspects deemed irrelevant).
- The translator constructs meaning from these signs (interprets what is making the sounds or conceives of other ways to describe them).
- The translator produces a new complex of signs based on the whole process (verbal language describing what was heard is used in a way the translator assumes will be understandable to the reader of the caption).

There is a precedent for the use of the material approach for the study of translational processes such as audio captioning: this framework has been previously employed in case studies focused on the meaningfulness of non-lingual auditive elements (Haapaniemi and Laakkonen 2019 on song translation) and on the production of informative texts (Haapaniemi 2023 on institutional communication). In other subfields of TS, translation from non-verbal signs to verbal signs is of a particular concern to studies in the multimodality of translation (see e.g. Kaindl 2013) and in audiovisual translation and media accessibility (see e.g. Remael, Reviers, and Vandekerckhove 2016), for example, in cases like audio description, when visual content is translated or interpreted into verbal descriptions for people with visual disability (e.g. Maszerowska, Matamala, and Orero 2014; Hirvonen and Saari 2024) or when written descriptions of non-verbal sounds are provided in subtitling for d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences (e.g. Zárate 2021). Furthermore, a number of studies on translations of natural sounds have utilized similar semiotic perspectives in recent years to highlight the role of non-lingual signs and non-human actors in different semiotic processes (e.g. Vihelmaa 2018; Sealey 2019; Taivalkoski-Shilov and Poncharal 2020). Analysing audio captioning in TS terms, and specifically from the semiotic perspective on translation as articulated by the material approach, is therefore a logical development.

The combination of material, non-lingual, and intersemiotic concerns with AI positions AAC at an interesting nexus point between semiotic conceptualizations of translation and the arguably non-semiotic mechanics of NLP models used in accomplishing AAC tasks. This, in turn, draws out parallels between TS and AI studies that go beyond the fundamental differences that a semiotic perspective sees between the human translation processes generally studied by TS and the computational processes discussed in AI studies. To start with, it is worth pointing out that some of the most foundational texts in TS speak of human translation processes in terms very similar to how computational language processing works. For example, Nida (1964, 146) considers translation a process of *decoding* and *encoding*, anticipating the structure of modern transformer models (Figures 1 and 2). In this sense, both fields share some ancestors in the information processing models of the 1940s (e.g. Shannon 1948). At the same time, it should be noted that while these classical definitions are still widespread within and especially outside TS (see e.g. Pym 2010, 19–20), in contemporary TS scholarship translation is usually seen not as transfer between codes, but as a more complex process predicated on factors like the translator's linguistic expertise, cultural considerations, and the different purposes of use for which translations are created (for a general overview, see e.g. Pym 2010; for how different TS approaches relate to NLP, see e.g. Asscher 2022; Asscher 2023). However, despite the nominal acknowledgement of other forms of expression in the concept of intersemiotic translation, classical understandings are sometimes argued to be fundamentally language-focused (Marais 2019, 19), and as such ill-suited for exploring translational processes that involve non-lingual content. In contrast, approaches that focus on materiality (e.g. Littau 2016), multimodality (e.g. Kaindl 2013; Ketola 2018; Tuominen, Jiménez Hurtado, and Ketola 2018) or experientiality (e.g. Campbell and Vidal 2024) incorporate various kinds of non-lingual meanings and meaningful relationships between lingual and non-lingual signs into the range of phenomena that can and must be considered in translation. On a more conceptual level, translation has been identified as a fundamental part of all forms of meaning-construction (Marais 2019) and as an aspect of various kinds of transformational processes (Robinson 2017; Blumczynski 2023).

Among these approaches seeking to redefine the concept of translation and widen the scope of its applicability, those informed by semiotics should be highlighted (for an overview, see e.g. Marais 2019, 28–30, 39–82). These approaches provide an alternative to language-focused conceptualizations by focusing on the basic principles of meaning-construction identifiable in all kinds of meaningful exchanges, lingual or otherwise – including translation from non-lingual to lingual systems, as in audio captioning. And yet, despite translation theories identifying semiotic processes as playing a central role in human translation while also identifying completely different kinds of processes as being the basis for AI text production, there are also significant similarities between the operating principles of NLP models and the proposed general semiotic mechanics underlying all different kinds of translational phenomena. The material approach, for one, sees translation as a generic process whose semiotic mechanics are fundamentally the same, regardless of the specific sign-system applied on the source or target side (Haapaniemi 2024, 24–27, 30–33); what varies is the way in which each text's modalities and forms of expression enable the text's recipient to construct meaning from them. On the level of mechanics, this is not completely different from how NLP models get from their input to their output. For one, AI is similarly agnostic in its approach to different sign systems or modalities: regardless of whether its input is linguistic, visual, auditive, or multimodal, the NLP model goes through the same process of identifying statistical patterns and calculating probabilities, and these patterns can just as well be converted into linguistic, visual or auditive output (see e.g. Geng et al. 2022 on unified multimodal encoders for vision and text).

By conducting their translation tasks through token patterns and their probable relationships – the "interlingua" (Raley 2022, 35) which machines use to pivot between input and output sequences – NLP models create generic rules of dependency applicable to all kinds of input and output, similar to how semiotics seeks to identify the universal mechanics of sign-based activities undertaken by semiotic actors. Further, transformer models employ attention mechanisms (Bahdanau, Cho, and Bengio 2016) which assess the relevance of individual tokens in relation to the entire input and output sequences, enabling an effect that resembles contextual awareness: in a mass of language data containing multiple instances of lingual communication, the material realities and socio-cultural conventions affecting human text production are reflected as probabilistic relations between expressions and the communicative purposes for which they tend to be used (Søgaard 2023, 41–43). As suggested in the previous section, these relations can be identified and replicated by NLP models (Søgaard 2023, 41–43), but again, these relations are not in themselves meaning in the semiotic sense.

It appears, then, that the text production phenomena which TS and AI studies are interested in are outwardly similar, but the processes behind these phenomena are based on completely different principles. One is based on the construction of meaning by semiotic actors, whereas the other is computational and probabilistic. There are functional or mechanical similarities between these processes, but there are also fundamental differences in what kind of processes they are. And yet there are also further connections between the two processes despite these differences. For example, as illustrated by the discussions of the development of GUIDE's AAC system in section 2.1, NLP models are trained on data produced by humans and therefore by semiotic means; the evaluation of NLP output involves assessing whether it is meaningful in the expected way, i.e. whether it resembles corresponding textual products of human meaning-construction; and, finally, NLP systems and their outputs are utilized as part of human semiotic processes, in the interpretation and production of texts. As discussed earlier, GUIDE's AAC system is a great example of how interwoven and complicated the practical and the conceptual relationship between meaning-based human translation processes and form-based computational translation processes is. Next, we will analyse some captions produced by GUIDE's AAC system to illustrate how the similarities and differences between the two processes appear in practice, and to see if the combination of a semiotically-informed TS approach with an AI-based subject of analysis can help disentangle the knotty conceptual issues discussed above.

3. Analysis: Comparing GUIDE's AAC system's processes and products with semiotic text production

3.1 How this study utilizes AAC data to contrast semiotic and computational translation processes

In this conceptual paper, our main aim is to discuss the differences between how semiotic and computational text production processes relate to meaning. We therefore use GUIDE's AAC system's captions only as illuminating examples. As such, the following should not be taken as a systematic evaluation of the AAC system's output quality: the analysis is not evaluative in a quantitative sense, and the examples discussed are not necessarily representative of how the system operates in general. Rather, in this section our goal is to illustrate how the theoretical juxtapositions discussed in the previous section are manifested in real texts. To achieve this, we have picked examples that clearly exhibit the distinctions between human-produced and AI-generated texts which are in the focus of this study. As such, the following analysis makes no claims or judgments about the quality or value of GUIDE's AAC system compared to other NLP models, or of AI language generation processes compared to human text production processes. More systematic analyses which contribute to the development, training, and evaluation of GUIDE's AAC system and other NLP models have been carried out elsewhere (Martín-Morató, Harju, and Mesaros 2022), and the analysis conducted here is intended purely as an extrapolation of the theoretical discussions above.

For the purposes of the analysis, we used a section of the Clotho NLP training dataset (Drossos, Lipping, and Virtanen 2020) that is specifically intended for testing AAC models. The full dataset from which our examples are picked consists of 1,045 audio files and a set of 1,045 caption predictions produced by GUIDE's AAC system, including the highest-rated prediction for each file according to the SPIDEr caption quality evaluation metric (Liu et al. 2017), as well as several corresponding human-produced captions for each file, totalling over 5,000 captions with which the AI-generated captions can be compared. Both the human and AI captions were compiled based on the acoustic contents of the audio files alone, and neither human annotators or the AAC system had access to the file name or other contextual clues as to the scene or event described. The file names and captions are presented in Tables 1–3 exactly as they appear in the dataset.

It should also be noted that, as mentioned in section 2.1, collecting training data for NLP models for the purposes of AAC is difficult and relatively little of it is available. As a result, the outputs of AAC tasks tend to vary in quality more than the textual output of NLP models used in machine translation and other more conventional sequence-to-sequence tasks; the fundamental transformer architecture is the same, but the quality of the output is highly dependent on the volume and quality of the training data that is available (Wu et al. 2023). In the context of this study, however, this variance in quality is beneficial: as the examples discussed below illustrate, the difference between human and AI text production processes can be seen most clearly in the unintuitive, strange, or otherwise unsuccessful captions – not necessarily in formal terms like grammar or syntax, but in terms of what elements of the audio clip in the captions stand out as relevant or meaningful.

We begin the analysis by examining example captions that function well as descriptions of auditive scenes, i.e. captions where GUIDE's AAC system has successfully imitated the products of human meaning-construction processes through computational means. We then examine examples of captions which are not convincing imitations of the products of meaning-construction, and discuss how they reflect the non-semiotic nature of their production process. Finally, we compare human-produced and AI-produced captions for the same audio file and summarize how the differences between the two processes are reflected in these examples and what that implies about the relationship of each process to form and meaning in texts.

3.2 Contrasting convincing and unconvincing predictions by AAC system

As already mentioned, NLP models generate verbal contents through statistical analysis and probability calculation. The strings of language that the AAC system's NLP transformer model produces as output in response to the acoustic contents of audio files are compiled as a prediction of the most probable response to the input sequence, with the prediction process being based on statistical patterns found in human-produced language data containing similar pairs of input and output sequences. In this way, the AAC system is often able to produce perfectly understandable captions that resemble those produced by human annotators (Table 1).[1]

Table 1. Examples 1–4 of the AAC system's captions that resemble human-produced captions.

No.	Name of audio file	Automatic caption predicted by AAC system
1	Car Driving Interior.wav	a car is driving down the road with the wind blowing in the background.
2	Diesel Engine Rattle.wav	a machine is running at a constant speed.
3	Door Creaking 01.wav	a door creaks as it is opened and closed.
4	young artists.wav	people are talking in a large room with each other.

However, despite its ability to produce structurally convincing language, some of the AAC system's predictions look very foreign to a human reader (Table 2):

Table 2. Examples 5–10 of AAC system's captions that fail to resemble human-produced captions.

No.	Name of audio file	Caption predicted by AAC system
5	C Minor Chords Musical Soundscape.wav	a synthesizer is playing a synthesizer with a synthesizer.
6	cookieSheetWiping.wav	a door opens and closes, closes, and closes, and closes a door.
7	20160506_sharpening.02.wav	a person is using a cater to make a cat.
8	Garden chimes.wav	a person is playing a strimy sound in a compppompompppppppppppppppppppppppppppppass.
9	coffee.wav	a person is flipping a bag of wood with a knife.
10	Blade sharpening.wav	a person is hitting a metal container with a clock.

1 In Tables 1–3, any unconventional language, spelling or formatting errors, etc. are replicated from the dataset.

In Examples 5 and 6, the described events overlap and repeat in unintuitive ways, and the subjects and objects of actions are mixed up: the synthesizer plays another synthesizer with a third synthesizer (Example 5); the door is opened only once but closed multiple times, and it is another door doing it (Example 6). In Examples 7 and 8, the system has produced unconventional, even straightforwardly erroneous language that is of little help in describing the scene, such as the word "cater" (Example 7) or the words "strimy" and "compppompomppppppppppppppppppppppppppppppass" (Example 8). Examples 9 and 10 are perhaps most interesting in that they use understandable vocabulary and convey an image of a scene, but the scene they describe is bizarre – not something that a human would probably imagine in an honest attempt to describe a real auditive scene. Further, these scenes are not ones that a human would be able to derive from sound alone: how does the act of "flipping a bag of wood" with "a knife" sound distinct from flipping it with any other instrument (Example 9), and how is it possible to tell by ear that it is "a clock" that is hitting the "metal container" (Example 10)?

What makes Examples 1–4 (Table 1) convincing captions and Examples 5–10 (Table 2) less so is how they relate to human meaning-construction processes. Examples 1–4 successfully predict a textual composition that a human could conceivably produce in a similar communicative situation, because the scene they describe and the way they describe it are comparable to what could be arrived at through constructing meaning from signs perceived through sound. Examples 5–10, on the other hand, do not resemble the results of human meaning-construction – either the scene they describe or the way they describe it is strange. In these instances, the results of the AI's computational process fail to convincingly imitate the results of a human meaning-construction process. And indeed, as noted in section 2, the goal in training, evaluating, and developing the AI system is to coach it to get better at predicting which kinds of results would be closest to human-produced texts, and thus to derive from form through statistical analysis the kind of response that would otherwise be arrived at through meaning-construction.

3.3 Comparing AAC system's predictions with human-produced descriptions

Since comparison to human textual products is such an essential part of how NLP models are developed, it is worth taking a closer look at a specific example caption produced by the AAC system and comparing it to the human-produced captions used for evaluation (Table 3). This will allow for a more detailed discussion of how AI processes and produces language as form, in contrast to how humans interpret and express meanings from and through linguistic form. Again, the difference between Example 10 and its evaluation pairs 11–14 is most simply explained as the consequence of the different processes that have preceded their creation.

Table 3. Human-produced descriptions (Examples 11–14) compared to AAC system's caption prediction for the same file.

No.	Human annotators' descriptions for audio file "Blade sharpening.wav"	AAC system's prediction (Example 10)
11	A knife is scraped a dozen times across a sharpener	a person is hitting a metal container with a clock .
12	A knife is scraped against a sharpener over a dozen times.	
13	A person sharpens a knife, the blade is clicking on the sharpening surface of the tool repeatedly.	
14	A type of knife is being sharpened continuously.	

As discussed in section 2.2, the material approach provides one framework for describing the translation process that humans and other semiotic actors engage in, as the annotators who produced Examples 11–14 have done. According to this framework, translators interpret the source text by relating the signs they perceive in it to their experience of the source context and produce the target text by relating their interpretation to their experience of the target context. It is conceivable how this process of relating source-side experience to target-side experience results in the caption "A knife is scraped a dozen times across a sharpener" (Example 11) for the sound of metal coming repeatedly into contact with a rough surface, but how such a process would result in the caption "a person is hitting a metal container with a clock" (Example 10) is less conceivable. Based on human experience of living in a society and being familiar with how humans derive meaning from acoustic sounds and from verbal language, describing a sound as that of a knife being scraped across a sharpener makes sense; describing that sound as that of a clock hitting a metal container makes less sense, because the act being described is improbable in human society and because it requires making distinctions humans are unlikely to make based on sound alone. However, to an AI that is disconnected from that experience, the latter option is no less sensible than the first, as long as the language fragments the description is comprised of fit together into a probable sequence.

As shown in Examples 1–4, through probability calculation and statistical modelling the AAC system is able to produce passages of verbal text that could conceivably convey the desired message to a human reader. The flipside of this, as shown in Examples 5–10, is that the meanings that are derivable from these forms may just as well make no sense. This is because, from a semiotic perspective, no sense-making – in other words, using situated experience to relate signs to personal interpretations and communicative conventions – was involved in their production. As an NLP model, the AAC system only deals with aspects of form: it segments the input sequence of acoustic content into smaller units, and calculates the probable correspondences between these units and the linguistic units that make up its output sequence. Through training and evaluation, during which the system's outputs are assessed by humans according to how convincing they are in terms of both form and meaning, these probability calculations may become accurate enough to predict and produce strings of linguistic form that are very similar to human-produced captions. However, as illustrated by Examples 11–14, human annotators' captions are the product of a completely different kind of text-production process: a semiotic process based on meaning-construction, on the reception and interpretation of material forms as signs and the communication of the interpreted meanings through linguistic form. From a semiotic perspective, computational text generation appears only as the analysis and manipulation of form in relation to form, essentially skipping the meaning-construction stage seen to be at the heart of the human translation process and jumping directly from input source sequence to output target sequence. As seen in Examples 5–10, sometimes this leads to target texts that suggest meanings human interpreters would not have derived from the source text; on the other hand, as seen in Examples 1–4, sometimes the end result is perfectly adequate for the purposes of human meaning-construction, despite the fact that no semiotic construction of meaning took place in the text's production.

4. Discussion

The theoretical discussions and analyses conducted in this paper suggest that a semiotic perspective brings out a stark contrast between human and AI translation processes. According to the semiotically-informed TS framework utilized above, human translators produce texts through a semiotic process of meaning-construction by perceiving material forms as signs and constructing meaning from them. Conversely, AI systems – such as GUIDE's AAC system – produce texts by identifying and reproducing patterns they find within form through statistical computation, not by engaging with form as signs, and as such may not be considered to engage in meaning-construction in the semiotic sense. This pair of statements has a number of implications for the fields of TS and AI studies in general, and suggests that TS may be able to offer some new perspectives to the study and development of AI systems.

The differences revealed between human and AI text production processes are certainly noteworthy in themselves. Recognizing the fundamental difference between semiotic and computational processes helps identify and analyse the similarities and dissimilarities between how translation tasks are conceptualized in TS theory and how AI systems conduct those tasks. Acknowledging this difference allows TS and AI studies both to remain cognizant of the fact that even when AI is able to produce texts that are conducive to meaning-construction in much the same ways as human-produced texts are, the actual routes by which the two processes arrive at similar endpoints are wildly different. It seems that, in favourable conditions, NLP models can indeed emulate the products of semiotic processes without actually engaging in semiotic processes, which is itself a testament to their efficiency and complexity. However, the fact that the end products of AI and human text production processes can be very similar, or even identical, does not mean that the processes themselves are necessarily at all alike. Using semiotic theory as the lynchpin for the distinction between human and AI translation processes could provide a fruitful framework for a number of crossover studies between TS and AI studies. This distinction would allow either delving deeper into the material approach or other modern-day semiotic theories from an AI perspective, or going back to reassess early translation theories (e.g. Nida 1964) to see if some of those frameworks subsequently deemed too mechanical for the complexity of human translation processes might still have something to provide to the study of computational translation processes.

As important as it is to acknowledge the fundamental differences between meaning-focused semiotic text production and form-focused computational text generation, it is just as important to recognize the myriad connections between human and AI translation processes. For instance, it is worth noting that the computational process undertaken by AI and the semiotic process undertaken by a human translator inhabit a similar mediatory role between source input and target output. Further, even if AI is considered to arrive at its outputs in a fundamentally different manner than human translators, it is undeniable that human semiotic processes intertwine with AI development, training, and use, and in doing so affect its calculations. The NLP model of a generative AI system may not be a semiotic actor, but it can play the part of one, and in order to function in that role it is trained so that the results of its computational processes approximate the results of human semiotic processes as closely as possible. Producing similar results does not make the two processes the same, but it may make them analogous enough to make some established TS concepts useful for AI studies (as discussed in e.g. Krüger 2022; Asscher 2022; Jiménez-Crespo 2023). This crossover appeal would benefit TS, too: transformer models are the current state-of-the-art in generative AI, and if the operation of transformer-based models can be treated as analogous to the kinds of human translation tasks already studied by TS and if NLP tasks can therefore be incorporated within the scope of TS inquiry, then TS is in a position to contribute to some of the timeliest discussions in all academic research, and perhaps even influence the development of future AI systems.

Finally, the semiotic conceptualization of the relationship between form and meaning utilized in this paper provides both TS and AI studies with novel perspectives on how the initial and subsequent textual units studied in both fields relate to one another. For TS scholars, the analysis conducted in this paper – concerning a subject that, as noted in the introduction, stands at an interesting nexus between two timely topics of academic discussion – suggests that a semiotic perspective may be fruitful in studying AI translation processes, perhaps allowing for some common ground in ongoing conceptual debates. For AI scholars, this combination of semiotics and TS concepts offers an alternative perspective to what meaning is in human translational text production processes (in contrast to the semantics- or linguistics-based understandings, for example, Lenci and Sahlgren 2023; Søgaard 2023; Mahowald et al. 2023) and why that kind of meaning might be what makes those processes so different from comparable AI processes. Having such a perspective is important because the interaction between humans and AI is a fundamental component of AI development, and this interaction will likely continue to gain prominence in both translation research and practical translation work. A clear conceptualization of how language and meaning relate to each other, and how AI and humans both relate to them, will contribute to a realistic picture of how humans and AI systems conduct translational processes and identify the similarities and dissimilarities between these processes. As human and AI tasks continue to converge, it is essential to construct a deep understanding not only of how humans and AI systems relate, but also of how scholarship on human processes like translation relates to scholarship on comparable AI processes.

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"Human soft skills and connection will never be replaced." Perceptions of paraprofessional translational competence in a multilingual business environment

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ABSTRACT

Paraprofessional interlingual translation is a common and everyday task of contemporary white-collar workers. The aim of this article is to investigate whether the workers practising paraprofessional translation in their business environment are aware of the competences that they need for these translation and interpreting tasks, and how they describe and perceive these competences. In order to find the answers to these questions, six employees of a Finnish sports equipment company working in a multilingual business environment were interviewed. As the interviewed employees were not professional translators, the data were analysed using Byram's (2021) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model, which made it possible to describe not just translational, but also other aspects of their intercultural communicative competence. The results showed that the employees' perceptions reveal a receptive attitude towards otherness as well as experiential knowledge gained through living abroad. Their multilingual professional contexts pose challenges that prompt them to solve problems through empathic reflection. And finally, the research also suggests that, in general, the employees were not aware that they have translational and intercultural competences despite the fact that these prove to be very valuable, in both professional and personal contexts.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, Intercultural Communicative Competence, Translation Competence, reflective empathy, workplace studies

“Človeških mehkih veščin in medčloveških vezi nikoli ni mogoče nadomestiti.” Pogledi na paraprofesionalno prevajalsko kompetenco v večjezičnem poslovnem okolju

IZVLEČEK

Paraprofesionalno medjezikovno prevajanje je pogosto vsakodnevno opravilo v sodobnem poslovnem okolju. Namen članka je raziskati, ali se delavci, ki se ukvarjajo s paraprofesionalnim prevajanjem v poslovnem okolju, zavedajo kompetenc, ki jih potrebujejo za to, da se lotijo paraprofesionalnih prevodnih in tolmaških nalog, ter kako te kompetence opisujejo in jih doživljajo. Odgovore na omenjena vprašanja podajajo intervjuji, opravljeni s šestimi uslužbenci finskega podjetja za športno opremo, ki delujejo v večjezičnem poslovnem okolju. Ker intervjuvani uslužbenci niso bili poklicni prevajalci, so bili pridobljeni podatki analizirani z uporabo Byramovega (2021) modela medkulturne komunikacijske kompetence (Intercultural Communicative Competence oziroma ICC), ki je omogočil opis ne le prevodnih, temveč tudi drugih vidikov medkulturne komunikacijske kompetence. Rezultati so pokazali, da uslužbenci v svojih opisih sprejemajo drugost, hkrati pa imajo tudi izkustveno znanje, ki so ga pridobili z bivanjem v tujini. Večjezično poslovno okolje prinaša izzive, ki uslužbence spodbujajo k reševanju problemov z empatično refleksijo. Iz raziskave je prav tako mogoče sklepati, da se uslužbenci svojih prevodnih in medkulturnih kompetenc ne zavedajo, čeprav se te izkazujejo za zelo dragocene, tako s poklicnega kot tudi s človeškega vidika.

Ključne besede: paraprofesionalno prevajanje, medkulturna komunikacijska kompetenca, prevodna kompetenca, refleksivna empatija, raziskave delovnega okolja

1. Introduction

In today’s business world, multiple languages are naturally present in most workplaces. Not surprisingly, paraprofessional translation is commonplace in this context, and thus one finds skilled employees who are not translators by profession carrying out interlingual translation (Tuylenev 2014, 74–78). Although very common, and most probably not a new phenomenon, paraprofessional translation has received little attention to date in Translation Studies (TS). The research reported in the article investigates a workplace where employees are naturally engaged in paraprofessional translation and interpreting (T&I), and therefore provides an opportunity for improved understanding of modern business life and the competences it requires with regard to this practice.

The present research sets out to address the following questions: Are the workers practising paraprofessional translation in their business environment aware of the competences that they need for paraprofessional translation and interpreting tasks, and how do paraprofessional translators perceive the competences that they need for paraprofessional T&I? As paraprofessional T&I is dynamic and often tacit, i.e. not explicitly expressed and described as translational competence (see e.g., Piekkari et al. 2019), this study adopts a broad understanding of translation to capture its diversity. The term translation here thus refers not only to interlingual transfer, but also to summarizing, elaborating or explaining information in another language in such a way that the meaning is conveyed successfully in the interlocutor's language and the target cultural setting (see e.g., Koskela et al. 2017). This study reports on six white-collar employees' perceptions of the competences they need for translational practices at work. Although none of them were hired as linguists, they all engage in T&I, making them paraprofessional translators.

The research was carried out in a Finnish sports equipment company whose business environment is multilingual. Employees engage in translation as a regular part of their daily work, seeing T&I as a necessity for maintaining the workflow. Typically, as the employees note, only texts of a formal nature or texts to be archived, such as annual reports, are sent to a professional translator, and in all other multilingual settings professional interpreters are not used. Everyday communication, which is global and multilingual, lies in the hands of the employees who have the necessary translation or mediation skills.

The daily working life of the employees can be described as a translation ecosystem (Westney et al. 2022); their communication across languages is both internal and external, occurring with colleagues, collaborators in subsidiaries, retailers and new business contacts. Since the employees continuously work in a multilingual environment and are quite successful in it, it can be assumed that the employees have translational competence. Consequently, they can be defined as paraprofessional translators.

The following section will present the Translation Competence (TC) models of the PACTE (Proceso de Adquisición de la Competencia Traductora y Evaluación) research group (Hurtado Albir 2017) and the EMT (European Master's in Translation) Expert Group (EMT 2022). These models of translation competence will then be compared to the competences needed for the successful work of the employees in the observed Finnish company, whose translational work is not shaped by the norms of professional translation. Because of the paraprofessional nature of the observed practice, the PACTE and EMT TC models will be complemented by Byram's (2021) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model. The ICC model will then be used as a methodological tool for analysing interview data to see which competences the employees believe they need for paraprofessional T&I.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

This section provides an overview of the theory on paraprofessional translation and translators. It first presents TC as described in the models of the PACTE research group (Hurtado Albir 2017) and the EMT Expert Group (EMT 2022) and then proceeds to summarize the framework for ICC put forward by Byram (2021). The section concludes with a discussion of overlaps between TC and ICC.

2.1 Paraprofessional translation and paraprofessional translators

Paraprofessional translation was identified in TS over a decade ago (e.g. Pym 2011; Tuylenev 2014, 74–78). Since then, the phenomenon has been further explored through research on the translational flows of meetings (e.g. Koskela et al. 2017), and on journalistic translation (see e.g. van Rooyen’s (2018) study on the daily life of a radio station). More recent work is that by Pisanski Peterlin (2019) on self-translation, by Muñoz Gómez (2020) on multilingual office life, and by Penttilä et al. (2021) on translatoriality in academia. Interest in translatoriality has risen not only in TS, but also in Management and Organization Studies. For example, Piekkari et al. (2019) have conceptualized the act of moving organizational practices across language boundaries as metaphorical translation. And more recently, Westney et al. (2022) have proposed a model of translation ecosystems in business highlighting the role of paraprofessional translators.

Paraprofessional translators are employees who are not hired as translators but who, often for practical reasons, end up carrying out translational tasks – and accepting them as their proper responsibilities. Paraprofessional translation is ubiquitous in modern business and has doubtless existed as long as the international trade itself. In fact, one may claim that the phenomenon dates back at least two thousand years, when people plied ancient trade routes traversing different linguistic communities (Izdebski et al. 2020; Wood 2002), as this naturally required communication across languages. These routes ranged from Asia to Europe (Wood 2002) and from the Roman Empire and Ancient Greece to the Black Sea (Izdebski et al. 2020), and the languages used included, at the very least, Latin, Ancient Greek, Aramaic, and Chinese. Paraprofessional translation must have been practiced in its early forms then, and to no surprise it remains a core capability for doing international business today. Despite its long historical presence, Tietze et al. (2022) notice that the lack of research on paraprofessional translation has been "a serious omission" in Organization Studies, therefore the present research aims, at least partly, to fill this gap.

2.2 Translation Competence (TC) according to PACTE and EMT

Since paraprofessional translation is a form of translation, different definitions of Translation Competence (TC) will first be briefly presented. TC has been discussed in TS, in terms of training and professional practice (see e.g. Quinci 2023). This section will present TC as theorized by the PACTE research group (Hurtado Albir 2017) and further refined for translator training by the EMT Expert Group (EMT 2022).

Based on long-term empirical research, the PACTE group has determined TC as consisting of six interrelated sub-competences: bilingual sub-competence, extralinguistic knowledge sub-competence, instrumental sub-competence, knowledge of translation, strategic sub-competence, and the sixth sub-competence which comprises a series of psycho-physiological components activated in translating (Hurtado Albir 2017, 39–41).

The bilingual sub-competence refers to the ability and procedural knowledge required for communicating between two languages, including the sociolinguistic dimension of comprehending proper formality in a given situation and acting accordingly (Hurtado Albir 2017, 39–40). The extralinguistic knowledge sub-competence includes bicultural knowledge and "encyclopaedic" (Hurtado Albir 2017, 40) knowledge about the world in general. This sub-competence includes field-specific knowledge, pivotal when translating texts in special fields.

The third is the instrumental sub-competence (Hurtado Albir 2017, 40), which is manifested in the translator's skills of knowing the appropriate dictionaries, grammar and style guides, search engines and machine translation tools for a given translation task and, secondly, of the ability to use them. The fourth sub-competence is the knowledge of translation, an understanding of what translation is, of how translation functions and of the problems the process of translating typically poses. This sub-competence also requires knowledge of the translation market and its target audiences.

The fifth component is strategic sub-competence, that is, knowledge of the translation process and the ability to strategically plan and devise the optimal method for carrying out a translation project. This means that a translator should be able to dynamically evaluate the text to be translated, foresee problems and, when a problem is identified, solve it – and repeat this routine until the end-result, a translated target text, is produced. A very important function of the strategic sub-competence is to activate and sustain the operation of the aforementioned four sub-competences in a balanced way (Hurtado Albir 2017, 40–41).

The sixth sub-competence contains psycho-physiological components which are psychomotor, cognitive and attitudinal skills. Examples are reading and writing, attention span and memory, and intellectual curiosity and rigour.

In addition to the PACTE model discussed above, another influential TC model was created within the European Master’s in Translation network (EMT 2022), a network of institutions offering MA-level translation education, established in collaboration with the European Commission to ensure that certain shared educational standards are met. Their most recent TC model (EMT 2022) comprises five areas: language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal, and service provision competence.

The first area, language and culture, encompasses the ability to comprehend the function of social, geographical, or historical language variations, as well as the ability to identify cultural elements, values and references in written or spoken genres. These entail the ability to produce a target text or spoken language “in accordance with cultural conventions and conventions of genre and rhetorical standards” (EMT 2022, 6).

To continue, the area of translation (EMT 2022, 7–8) constitutes a description of expertise in the practice of translation. Understood broadly, in addition to meaning transfer the translation component encompasses “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” (EMT 2022, 7). Here the framework mentions specific intra- and intercultural contexts (EMT 2022, 8).

The area of technology (EMT 2022, 9–10) comprises knowledge of and the ability to use sources and tools, including familiarity with machine translation and its application. The personal and interpersonal area (EMT 2022, 10) includes soft skills, such as the ability to manage workload, stress, cognitive load and critical professional situations. The other skills in this area are generic soft skills such as time management and the ability to work independently and in groups, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

The service provision area covers skills relevant for providing language services “in a professional context” (EMT 2022, 11). These encompass abilities such as awareness of the translation market, codes of ethics and good practice, having evaluation processes in place and participating in professional networks of service providers.

If these definitions of TC are applied to paraprofessional translation, it may be assumed that the bilingual and extralinguistic components of PACTE are foundational for paraprofessional translators as well. One may also assert that field-specific knowledge – in the PACTE extralinguistic component – is one of the strengths of paraprofessional translators. Similarly, the EMT's language and culture component seems to largely cover both the bilingual and extralinguistic components of PACTE, and could also be considered as a necessary component of translational competence of paraprofessional translators.

However, the instrumental sub-competence of PACTE, similar to the EMT's technology component which defines how extensively translators use translation aids and tools, is perhaps the sub-competence that is not as fundamental for paraprofessional translators as it is for professional translators. The PACTE component of knowledge of translation is focused on both practice-based and theory-supported perceptions of translation, largely corresponding to the EMT's translation component, which has relevance for paraprofessionals as well.

The EMT's personal and interpersonal sub-competence contains soft skills. To a limited extent, it corresponds to PACTE's strategic sub-competence. These sub-competences have a clear relevance to the work of paraprofessional translators, in particular when they dynamically evaluate the need for translating/interpreting and initiate a translatorial procedure when they see it fit.

2.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Paraprofessional translators' work is embedded in intercultural[1] communication. To further explain this connection between intercultural communication and paraprofessional translation and to provide more details on theoretical underpinning needed for the analysis of the paraprofessional translators' competences, this section will present the core definitions of ICC as provided by Byram (2021). Byram (2021, 84–90) divides ICC into five areas: starting from the attitudes and knowledge of an intercultural speaker, he moves on to the skills of interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness/political education.

Although Byram (2021, 84–90) admits that there are overlaps between the areas, since they are inevitably intertwined in real-life situations, he offers the following core definitions for each of them:

1 In this study, the concept of "culture" refers to ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, passed on through generations in a cultural setting and absorbed through socialization in an organizational setting.

> 1. Attitudes: Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.
> 2. Knowledge: Of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
> 3. Skills of interpreting and relating: Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own.
> 4. Skills of discovery and interaction: Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
> 5. Critical cultural awareness/political education: An ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of a systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own and other cultures and countries.

According to Byram's (2021, 84–90) definitions, areas 1 and 2 (attitudes and knowledge) are foundational for the intercultural speaker and need to be present for the subsequent competence areas. An open attitude towards otherness is a prerequisite for learning about intercultural matters, while having essential knowledge of "social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Byram 2021, 85) enables interaction between the parties.

Byram (2021, 87) underlines the importance of being able to "to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's own". Indeed, this allows the paraprofessional translators to see their subjectivity in the intercultural world and help others find a constructive solution in a potential cultural clash or a conflict. This is the core of area 3, the skills of interpreting and relating.

In area 4, the skills of discovery and interaction, one has the "ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (Byram 2021, 88). This means that one is acquainted foreign culture well and is therefore able to act appropriately and in a timely manner in real-time communication.

The essence of area 5, critical cultural awareness/political education, is the ability to think critically, to evaluate, to make quick analyses and act appropriately in the jumble of conflicting ideologies that one may find in documents or situations. In operational terms, it means that one is able to discern subjective ideologies while communicating, comprehend the big picture and go on to find a constructive solution through systematic reasoning and interacting with others. In sum, the first two areas, attitudes and knowledge, are foundational, but an interculturally well-versed expert must have a command of all five (Byram 2021, 84–90).

2.4 Translation Competence (TC) vis-à-vis Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Translation and intercultural communication are interrelated, therefore, unsurprisingly, both TC descriptions described above partially overlap with the areas of ICC. However, since PACTE and EMT descriptions of TC focus on professional translation, some of the sub-competences are completely different from certain areas of ICC.

Since both TC and ICC are relevant for paraprofessional translators, the frameworks will be compared below. Table 1 provides a visual juxtaposition of the three models.

Table 1. The partially overlapping ICC areas and TC components.

PACTE TC sub-competences	ICC areas	EMT TC competence components
bilingual	attitudes	language and culture
extralinguistic knowledge	knowledge	translation
instrumental	skills of interpreting and relating	technology
knowledge of translation	skills of discovery and interaction	personal and interpersonal
strategic	critical cultural awareness/political education	service provision
psycho-physiological	-	

As Table 1 demonstrates, three PACTE sub-competences overlap partially with areas of the ICC model, namely those entailing bilingual knowledge, extralinguistic knowledge and psycho-physiological processes. The bilingual sub-competence encompasses procedural knowledge on how to communicate in two languages, including sociolinguistic knowledge (Hurtado Albir 2017, 39). As such, the bilingual sub-competence and area 2 of ICC (knowledge) overlap.

The extralinguistic knowledge sub-competence of TC includes bicultural knowledge and knowledge about the world in general (Hurtado Albir 2017, 40). It therefore partially overlaps with ICC area 2 (knowledge). The extralinguistic knowledge sub-competence of TC differs from ICC in that it includes field-specific knowledge, which is important when translating texts in special fields.

The psycho-physiological sub-competence of TC includes attitudinal qualities (Hurtado Albir 2017, 40) that to a limited extent overlap with area 1 in ICC (attitudes). In ICC the focus is on openness and curiosity towards otherness, whereas in the psycho-physiological sub-competence of TC the attitudinal qualities mentioned are intellectual curiosity, critical spirit, confidence, motivation and rigour. The two frameworks clearly overlap in highlighting openness and curiosity towards otherness as essential qualities.

The comparison of competence models, however, also shows that the instrumental, knowledge of translation and strategic sub-competences are unique to TC (Hurtado Albir 2017, 41). From the viewpoint of paraprofessionals, it should be noted that these sub-competences are nor irrelevant, as their focus is on the processes of T&I. The strategic sub-competence would seem to have affinities with ICC area 3 (skills of interpreting and relating) as both entail responsibility for recognizing and solving T&I problems. Paraprofessional interpreting situations may pose unexpected challenges that require the paraprofessional to mediate between parties where a conflict arises between them. This may cause ethical stress, particularly when it is not clear which role the paraprofessional should take, that of organizational expert or that of a language service provider.

The five main areas of the EMT (2022) model – language and culture, translation, technology, personal and interpersonal skills, and service provision competence – were defined with translator training in mind, and they seem to lean on the empirically created PACTE model (Hurtado Albir 2017). There are partial overlaps between two of the five main areas of the EMT (2022) and ICC (Byram 2021) models.

Table 1 shows that the EMT's area of language and culture and the area of personal and interpersonal competence partially overlap with two areas of ICC: the area of language and culture overlaps with areas 2 (knowledge) and 5 (critical cultural awareness/political education). The area of language and culture includes comprehending the function of social language variations and identifying cultural elements, which are also core elements of ICC area 2 (knowledge). The area of language and culture also entails the ability to identify cultural values and references in a text or speech and to produce a target text or speech "in accordance with cultural conventions and conventions of genre and rhetorical standards" (EMT 2022, 6), which is similar to the key idea of ICC area 5 (critical cultural awareness/ political education) (Byram 2021, 85, 89–90), with the exception that Byram (2021, 89–90) refers to interaction and mediation.

The personal and interpersonal area of TC (EMT 2022, 10) includes the ability to manage critical professional situations. For a professional in T&I this may mean, for example, managing stressful interpreting situations. In a similar vein, ICC area 3 (skills of interpreting and relating) includes the ability to "mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena" (Byram 2021, 87). Paraprofessional interpreters could face conflicting loyalties in a bilingual meeting where they have the dual role of interpreter and company expert.

The three remaining areas of TC – translation, technology and service provision – are related to professional translation and do not overlap with the areas of ICC (Byram 2021, 84–90). After considering the descriptive adequacy of the models for the description of paraprofessional translation and on the basis of the observed practice in a company where employees work in a multilingual environment, ICC seems more applicable as an analytical tool for studying paraprofessional translators' perceptions of their translational competence.

3. Research design: Material and method

The research setting was a Finnish sports equipment company with a multilingual business environment. The employees interviewed see paraprofessional T&I as a necessity for maintaining their workflow. They have not been hired as linguists but, nevertheless, have translation or mediation skills.

The data consist of interviews collected between 17 January and 26 April 2023. Six employees consented to be interviewed. Each interview took approximately one hour, resulting in some six hours of audio data. Five interviews were conducted online, and one took place face-to-face; each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed.

The interviewees were selected based on a discussion in autumn 2022 with a contact person in the company. Each interviewee:

- is in a white-collar position,
- has lived abroad,
- has a multilingual daily routine at work, speaking and writing in several languages,
- is an organizational expert in sales, communication or accounting,
- has been hired primarily for work other than providing linguistic support.

All interviewees, profiled in Table 2, work at the company headquarters or its other office in Finland. Pseudonyms protect their identities but reflect their nationalities. She/her has been used throughout as a generic pronoun, including in the interview excerpts.

Table 2. Interviewees' profiles.

Interviewee	Position	Education	International mobility	Working history in company	Mother tongue(s)	Other languages used at work	Further languages at more elementary level	Interview language	Interview duration (min:sec)
Raija	manager	linguistics & communication, economic sciences	yes	15 years	Finnish	English, Swedish	German, French	Finnish	57:05
Olivia	manager	cultural management, programming	yes	circa one year	Portuguese, Russian	English, Spanish	Italian	English	55:05
Aino	manager	business administration	yes	11 years	Finnish	English, Estonian, Swedish	Swedish, French	Finnish	56:26
Angela	coordinator	linguistics	yes	2.5 years	German	English, Spanish, Italian	Portuguese, Finnish	English	52:19
Kaja	manager	IT, logistics, international business	yes	15 years	Estonian	English, Russian, Finnish	German	Finnish	57: 05
Martina	manager	international business	yes	3 years	German	English	French, Swedish, Finnish	English	53:50

As Table 2 shows, five interviewees are managers, and Angela is a coordinator. Their work history in the company varies from one to 15 years. Their mother tongues are Finnish, Portuguese, Russian, German, and Estonian. Olivia had a bilingual, Portuguese–Russian, childhood. Kaja grew up in a monolingual Estonian-speaking home but she was also significantly exposed to Russian in the wider society. Others had monolingual childhoods. All have lived abroad. The interviewees' linguistic repertoire extends beyond their mother tongues and English. Those at the beginning of their careers are learning additional languages, as they believe this knowledge could be helpful in the future. The interviews were conducted in Finnish or English, depending on the strongest shared language with the researcher. Raija and Angela have education backgrounds in linguistics and were therefore able to spontaneously verbalise and describe their translation practice. All have moved abroad from their home country at some point in their lives.

The interviews were semi-structured, with 10–15 minutes set aside for each part. Key examples of the questions are presented below:

- 1/4 Introduction and background
  Shall we begin by you telling a bit about yourself first: What kind of work do you do and how did you come to work for the company? How long have you worked here? How long have you worked in your current position?
- 2/4 Tasks and stakeholders
  What are your duties? How does your team work? Do you meet clients? Other stakeholders? Has your work changed over the years?
- 3/4 Multilingual situations and cooperation parties and a typical paraprofessional translation process
  In what kind of situations do you use other languages? With whom do you use other languages? How is the language selected? Do you or someone else engage in translating – summarizing, repeating or explaining – in these situations? Give me an example.
  Describe your typical translation process. What aids do you use (tools, dictionaries, MT)? What do you think translation is?
- 4/4 Language ideologies (roles) and possible language policies.
  How do you feel about conveying messages between languages and your organizational role in your work community? What words would you use to describe it? Do you feel your role has changed over the years? Do you think it will change in the future? Elaborate.
  Are there guidelines for working across languages or translating? Are there any company-specific vocabularies? If yes, where are they produced? Are they official or unofficial?
  Feedback and quality. Successes and setbacks: discussion on a successful multilingual situation on the one hand, and a situation where things went awry on the other.

The structure and implementation of the interviews were planned to mirror Pienimäki's (2021, 66, 286–291) procedure in her ethnographic dissertation on language professionals as discourse regulators. First, time was allowed for the interviewees' linguistic awareness to unfold (parts 1 and 2), then their perceptions of ICC and TC were discussed (parts 3 and 4).

The transcribed data were subjected to a thematic analysis using the ICC areas as a tool. The analysis sought to discover the employees' perceptions of their translational competences. Using a concept-driven approach, the data were manually examined for excerpts representing each ICC area. Naturally, the expressions used by the interviewees differed from the wording of the theoretical concepts, whereby it was necessary to go below the surface level and determine what the interviewees meant with their responses vis-à-vis the theory.

The position of the researcher inevitably affects the research design (see e.g. Berger 2015). Therefore, openness about the researcher's role has been regarded as crucial in the present case. In an approach similar to van Rooyen's (2018, 265), an internal bulletin describing the aim of the research project was circulated in November 2022 to familiarize the potential interviewees with the study.

4. Results

This section reports the findings from the analysis of the interviews. It will first establish how the interviewees perceive translation, because translation as a practical activity in their work is at the core of this study. The second focus is the implicit nature of paraprofessional T&I. Lastly, the section describes the interviewees' perceptions of their competences.

4.1 Premise: Interviewees' translation concept and the invisibility of paraprofessional T&I

When asked how they perceive translation, the interviewees answered without hesitation that they see it as transfer. They also mentioned cultural considerations and the intended affective tone. Raija's view is provided in Excerpt 1, below.[2]

Excerpt 1. Translation concept, Raija.

> Raija: Well, in my opinion, it's about making the message understandable in the relevant language and in a way that it works in that culture.

2 The Finnish transcriptions were translated into English by the author of the article.

Raija's view of translation reflects a practical need to transfer meanings. Martina, on the other hand, defines translation as conveying "the same thing from one language to another", that is as a transfer of meaning, much as the others did. Raija, Olivia, Aino, Kaja and Martina also mention the importance of conveying the intended affective tone.

It was also observed that the interviewees had not paid particular attention to their translational competences. In fact, in many cases, language transfer was not even given conscious thought in the process. Olivia verbalized this implicit role of paraprofessional T&I by saying that she just goes "with the flow"[3] across languages, and other interviewees made similar comments.

4.2 Competence area 1: Attitudes

Competence area 1 encompasses the attitudes of an interculturally seasoned person (Byram 2021, 84–85). Having moved and lived internationally, all the interviewees have gone through different stages of relocating and adapting to another cultural setting, and thus have developed their skills in dealing with otherness, including communicatively. All the interviewees regarded translation as a positive way to engage with otherness, which gives their work added value. Angela's open attitude and appreciation for translation is illustrated in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2. Attitudes, Angela.

> Angela: And I think not many people can just come here to Finland not speaking their language so well and really work in the profession what they had before. So, I consider myself kind of like, lucky. […] I think it's a really cool work what I do because, of course, the task somewhere is always the same, but every day is so different. […] You are in touch, like, with many people from all around the world and this is always what I wanted to do in my professional life – to be with people from abroad, from around the world. And, yeah, now I'm even living abroad. [Laughs] Yes.
>
> Interviewer: So clearly you're enjoying this role, really blossoming in it.
>
> Angela: Yeah. Mm-m. Yes, of course, if there would come a bit more translation, then I would be super happy. […] So, I had to check with my direct supervisor "If there is any need of translating the website, let me know." [Laughs]

3 Excerpt 4, shown in section 4.3, presents this quote in context.

Excerpt 2 shows that Angela genuinely likes to engage with otherness, particularly by doing translation. While her main task is in sales, it became evident that translation contributes to her satisfaction at work. The next excerpt is from the interview with Aino, who even turned down a job offer from another company because it entailed a more limited range of linguistic tasks.

Excerpt 3. Attitudes, Aino.

> Aino: Then I came to the conclusion that I don’t want to be in a workplace where you only speak Finnish all the time. You’re kind of used to use those languages and it’s a nice aspect of this job.

Aino states the use of different languages is an added value and an element of work satisfaction for her, as it is for Angela. Both interviewees seem to experience self-efficacy through using different languages. In this context Raija also mentioned cost savings, as the company seldom needs professional T&I.

4.3 Competence area 2: Knowledge

All the interviewees also have essential knowledge of their interlocutors’ social settings in general (Byram 2021, 86, 97), which they acquired by living in different cultures, although not in all the countries where their interlocutors are situated. Their familiarity with these different cultures, traditions and history makes it possible to better connect with their interlocutors.

Following a discussion on her competence, Olivia – a bilingual with a Portuguese-Russian childhood – quite vividly explains the implicit nature of such knowledge in her intellectual toolkit, as shown in Excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4. Knowledge, Olivia.

> Olivia: It’s something that comes with you on a natural basis; you don’t, just, you don’t think about that at all. You just go, you go with the flow. But when you speak and when you think about it, it’s actually incredible [laughs] at the same time, because you can learn so many things about other cultures, other people, even how people think, emotionally speaking. Erm, emotions are different per language, I feel sometimes as well. So I think. So it’s a very interesting tool. But the awareness of people who speak different languages, we don’t actually think about that so often.

Olivia had not paid particular attention to her knowledge of the two languages and cultures gained by living in both Russia and Portugal as a child. Her skills are deeply ingrained in her consciousness, and during the interview one could observe how she became more aware of her knowledge competence and started to see herself differently. The exact moment when Olivia becomes aware of this competence is clear in Excerpt 4, when she laughs for a moment. The interview thus also represented a form of self-reflection for Olivia.

The other interviewees have lived in different countries as adults and acquired their knowledge over time. Raija lived in Sweden for a decade, building a robust knowledge of the society. She is also very competent in Standard Swedish[4], as Excerpt 5 shows.

Excerpt 5. Knowledge, Raija.

> Raija: I worked in Sweden for ten years […] and then in the early 90s I returned to Finland. […] At the moment, I mainly use three languages: Finnish, Sweden Swedish and English. And the language then changes as needed [Laughs]. When we're dealing with, for example, the Swedish subsidiary, then I use a lot of Standard Swedish, because it's a bit like my second mother tongue. And I also exchange letters or emails or chat in Teams in Swedish as far as possible, but of course if there are people in the group who don't know Swedish, then one must use English.

Undoubtedly, working and studying in a country for ten years means that one also gradually gains extensive experiential knowledge of the way of life and language of that country. Communicating in Standard Swedish enables Raija to maintain the feeling of belonging to her former country of residence, in addition to adding to her feelings of self-efficacy.

4.4 Competence area 3: Skills of interpreting and relating

The skills of interpreting and relating (Byram 2021, 87–88), that is, area 3 of ICC, include an ability to mediate in a conflict or, as Byram puts it, "to help interlocutors overcome conflicting perspectives" by aiding them "to identify common ground and unresolvable difference" (Byram 2021, 88). The interviewees highlighted that they typically encounter collaborative situations more often than conflicts. However,

4 Raija makes a distinction between Sweden Swedish, i.e. the variant spoken in Sweden in particular (the term used by Raija in Finnish: *riikinruotsi*), and Finland Swedish, i.e. the variant spoken in Finland (*suomenruotsi*). This highlights Raija's identification with Swedish culture.

Martina reported a case illuminating the role that language may sometimes play in conflicts (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 6. Skills of interpreting and relating, Martina.

> Martina: The owner speaks only [language A], like only [language A], nothing else. […] And that definitively causes some issues. [Laughs briefly] Umm, because my [language A] isn't that good that I could communicate with [business owner] and with [business owner] only speaking like one language also limits any other options. So, then, for example, me and [identification removed] were visiting them and we just couldn't, we just couldn't get our message out and [business owner] couldn't get [business owner's] message to us. It was lost in translation between us talking to [business owner's] colleagues, them translating back, and then going back. And to us again. So that was a very difficult situation. And I think that harmed or that is harming our relationship because we don't understand each other. […] our main contact person, he speaks [language B], but there were some messages we should have been getting across to the owner of the company to get also [business owner's] commitment and, like, engagement. So that was, yeah, that's still difficult and they don't perform as we want them to perform, but that might be exactly because of the language issue.

Excerpt 6 describes a conflict in the company's network of collaborator companies. The conflict occurred with a business owner who would communicate in only one language, her mother tongue. The lack of a shared language with the business owner seems to be the key problem hindering fruitful collaboration, despite the presence of helpful colleagues providing paraprofessional interpreting. Later in the interview, Martina said there was going to be another meeting but that she would then bring along an employee who speaks the same language as the business owner. This was planned in the hopes of improved interaction and smoother collaboration. The employees have thus faced problems with regard to area 3, and worked together to come up with constructive solutions.

4.5 Competence area 4: Skills of discovery and interaction

Area 4, the skills of discovery and interaction (Byram 2021, 88–90), highlights the contextuality and difficulty that real-time human encounters entail. Given the immediacy of such situations, it is more challenging to consistently come up with appropriate solutions. Here, Olivia has found background work helpful (Excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7. Skills of discovery and interaction, Olivia.

> Olivia: I think the added values as well are perhaps understanding cultural background, because if you want to do business, for instance, in South America, you have to understand and connect with people there. Otherwise it's almost impossible.
>
> Interviewer: So in order to be successful in, let's say, making sales?
>
> Olivia: Yes. The connection is different. If you work with South America, as I mentioned with Spain, we speak about [Spanish collaborator's] family first and [Spanish collaborator's] personal life. It's the same with South America. We connect through, I don't know, we can speak about things that are happening in the country, for instance. This is something that I also do. I try to do a research of the country and see what's going on there so that I can have some conversation topics.

As Olivia explains above, she navigates between small talk and shop talk as a way of building trust across cultures and, when necessary, initiates a conversation on topics outside the business issues at hand as a way of maintaining and building trust. She reported that she prepares by reading the news about her business contacts' countries and by reflecting on discussion topics that may be suitable for upcoming business meetings. Thanks to her competence in area 4, Olivia is undoubtedly a valuable worker when negotiating new business deals or building on existing ones with interlocutors from the cultures and languages she is familiar with. The other interviewees did not report making such preparations, but of course they may very well do so.

4.6 Competence area 5: Critical cultural awareness / political education

Competence area 5, critical cultural awareness / political education, is analysing cultural ideologies or values relating to situations or documents via systematic and conscious reasoning. Such reflectiveness was demonstrated by several interviewees, whose reports were characterized by a sense of empathy toward their interlocutors and peer paraprofessional translators.

In Excerpt 8, Kaja reflects on situations where mediation through the lens of critical cultural awareness was necessary; sometimes through trial and error. An immigrant from Estonia who has lived in Finland for two decades, Kaja can engage in ontological reflection, perhaps partly because of her background, in which otherness was, and still is, ever-present.

Excerpt 8. Critical cultural awareness/political education, Kaja.

> Kaja: So, of course, most of the world knows the Finnish way of doing things. It’s a very straightforward and honest way of doing things. But there are so many different cultures in the world, where someone’s feelings might get hurt because of this straightforward way of working. There have been cases in my career when customer relationships have gone awry if certain people write in the Finnish way, in a way so direct; you’ve had to soften the approach, so to speak, to approach the customer carefully step by step with an issue, not just cold email them. Some require you to be there in person when you bring a more important message. Others read that message in their email and that’s it. They feel that they’ve received enough attention from you. Others require more attention and a different approach. We are aware of that and know how to react to them. But it’s not just a matter of the language. Of course, it’s about possible misunderstandings if a Finn writes in English, let’s say, to Mexico. Just because of cultural differences. There may be problems just understanding the language as well.

Demonstrating critical awareness of herself and her ways of communicating, Kaja calls such reflectiveness “sensitivity” (in Finnish: *herkkyys*). Kaja is retrospectively talking about her personal growth in her 15-year career, emphasizing the relevance of empathy in intercultural communication and also its importance when building an empathic workplace culture.

In her observations, Kaja stresses the need of possessing a sense of empathy towards peer paraprofessional translators and target readers, as she acknowledges that consistently conveying the intended affective tone is difficult and misinterpretations are commonplace. Competence in area 5 of ICC has enabled her to identify and to reflect on the difficulty. Maybe such awareness diminishes emotional stress experienced by Kaja, as she can see beyond the primary affective reaction, prompting herself to adopt an empathic approach.

5. Discussion

The research question of this study was: How do paraprofessional translators perceive the competences that they need for paraprofessional translation and interpreting (T&I)? Interviewees’ perceptions of their translational competences were categorized in terms of Byram’s (2021) ICC descriptions, informed by TC descriptions of two TC models (Hurtado Albir 2017; EMT 2022), which only partially cover paraprofessional T&I competences. An overview will be discussed in 5.1, followed by a discussion on competence in reflective empathy in 5.2.

5.1 Overview of perceptions

The interviewees regard their TC and ICC as key to their expertise, typically arguing that this competence allows them to save time and costs, manage business relations well, and create new contacts. Paraprofessional T&I can be perceived as a virtuous cycle in which the employees gladly participate, because it generates feeling of self-efficacy and work satisfaction and maintains their impression of belonging to a culture different from the one they now live in and they had once experienced at some length. The pride employees take in their work nourishes this cycle. Through "reflective empathy" (Persson and Savulescu 2018), they have recognized contexts where sensitivity and foresight are needed regarding languages, communication style and pace.

The interviews indicate that ICC areas 1 and 2 (attitudes and knowledge) are the foundation of the interviewees' ICC. As was to be expected, they felt areas 3, 4 and 5 to be more complex and demanding, prompting them to engage in collaborative problem-solving to overcome difficulties. The results imply that nourishing foundational areas 1 and 2 may be crucial to ensure that the employees thrive when called upon to use the more advanced competences in areas 3, 4 and 5.

The employees had largely overlooked the knowledge they had gained through mobility, and their awareness of that asset was raised in the interviews. This finding could mean that translational expertise is more extensively present in the company but in a tacit way. In other words, paraprofessional T&I is overlooked as a basic competence, being harnessed by the company in an agile way when needed. I argue that this valuable paraprofessional translational competence – in financial as well as human terms – is also not visible enough in the ICC model. In order to more adequately reflect the observed competence, I therefore suggest that the following points be added to ICC areas 3 to 5:

- Having a shared language with stakeholders has been found to be pivotal (area 3: skills of interpreting and relating).

- Building trust through non-business topics is expected in cultures that value social relations (area 4: skills of discovery and interaction).

- Empathy is vital in particular because it is difficult to consistently convey the intended affective tone in paraprofessional translation (area 5: critical cultural awareness / political education).

5.2 Reflective empathy vis-à-vis translational competence

Based on the data, it seems that the employees' work requires empathy, a skill necessary in taking a different world-view (Koskinen 2020, 167–172) or an "ability to negotiate otherness" (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 20). Koskinen (2020, 167) defines empathy in translation as follows:

> a set of skills or practices that one can use in situations that evoke compassion. […] being attentive to the affective "temperature" of oneself and others, taking the other's perspective, withholding judgement, understanding how the other is feeling, communicating that understanding, and being reflexive about one's feelings and the overall situation.

Empathy enables the translator/interpreter to see the other's viewpoint, their emotional state, while remaining focused as a professional. Persson and Savulescu (2018, 183–86) make a clear distinction between spontaneous empathy and in their view a more justified form of empathy that is reflective, thus informed by reasoning gained through voluntary reflection (Persson and Savulescu 2018, 191–192).

In the work of the paraprofessional translators interviewed as part of this study, empathy skills are an asset when harnessed to gain the optimal outcome in negotiating a business deal, or foreseeing, avoiding or mitigating an expensive conflict. This amplifies the importance of life-long learning as an opportunity to develop and automatize empathic thought processes, enabling the employees/paraprofessional translators to respond more easily to complex communicative challenges in real life (ICC area 3). Importantly, training in reflective empathy could perhaps even diminish the "emotional stress" (Koskinen 2020, 161–162) of paraprofessional translators, as problem-solving in intercultural situations would take up less cognitive capacity. In a line of work such as translation, which is very much based on human interaction, reflective empathy cross-cuts daily encounters, highlighting the importance of soft skills. Olivia crystallized this aptly in the interview, as evident in Excerpt 9, below.

Excerpt 9. Empathy, Olivia.

> Olivia: Human soft skills and connection will never be replaced. Even by technology, because I think we [humans] are more compassionate, we need each other.

The way professional translators ethically empathize (see e.g., Chesterman 2018) as part of their work may differ from the approach taken by paraprofessionals. However, paraprofessionals, in general, possess more in-depth knowledge of their target audience and working environment than professional translators, who may be less familiar with a particular business setting if they are not employed by the company. Moreover, professionals have been trained to stay focused in stressful interpreting settings, whereas in such a setting paraprofessionals are likely to try to manage the overall situation and, when necessary, step into their dual role as organizational experts and language support providers. Here too, the existing ICC or TC models fail to capture an important aspect of what is a distinct feature of the paraprofessional profile.

6. Conclusion

This study has outlined and analysed six paraprofessional translators' perceptions of their translational competences. All had a similar conception of translation as an activity primarily focused on meaning transfer but also entailing an ability to negotiate cultural differences, which includes conveying the intended affective tone. The data did not reveal whether the similarities in their conceptions was due to the organizational culture of the company, where the need for paraprofessional T&I is constant.

The data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically using Byram's (2021) ICC descriptions. While none of the interviewees were hired as a linguistic service provider, all engage in paraprofessional T&I at work. The results indicate that all have an open, empathic attitude towards otherness and that using different languages generates the feeling of self-efficacy in paraprofessional translators and contributes to their work satisfaction. The analysis also reveals that the interviewees had a limited awareness of the competences required by their dual role. Significantly, the interviews served to improve this awareness. Moreover, the interviewees' approach to their work was found to be particularly empathic. Although empathy is a facet of human nature, it was surprising that it plays such a considerable role in paraprofessional translation practice in a business context, and this is a finding that deserves further investigation.

The employees' reports prove that their paratranslational competence creates a virtuous cycle, as they enjoy their translation work. This finding suggests that nourishing their paratranslational competences could help maintain or enhance their work satisfaction.

The analysis of the interviews also reveals that there is a gap in the theoretical literature, inasmuch as neither the ICC nor TC models prove to be directly applicable to paraprofessional translational competence. An expanded model would help in better understanding the requirements of modern business life.

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Note-taking competence in the learning process: Results of a pilot study

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ABSTRACT

The article reports on a pilot study designed to support a longitudinal study of the development of note-taking competence among second year master's degree students in an interpreting training programme. The research reported in this article analysed note-taking units, while semi-structured interviews were also conducted with six interpreting students in order to determine the language and frequency of the different types of note-taking units they used. The results show that the students used a mixture of the source and target languages in their notes, they have predominantly used full words and that they were aware that there was still room for development in their note-taking techniques. The pilot study produced results that will be used to optimize further research: it was established that all participants should interpret the same text, that the experiment should be conducted outside of classroom interpreting sessions, that no feedback should be given to the students prior to the interviews, that the students' interpretation should be audio-recorded, and that the category "full words" should be split into further subcategories.

Keywords: consecutive interpreting, note-taking, teaching note-taking, semi-structured interview, note-taking competence

Kompetenca zapisovanja v procesu učenja: rezultati pilotne študije

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je predstavljeno poročilo o pilotni študiji, ki je bila zasnovana kot podpora longitudinalni študiji razvoja kompetence zapisovanja pri magistrskih študentih drugega letnika študija tolmačenja. Raziskava se je osredotočila na analizo enot zapisovanja; poleg tega so bili narejeni intervjuji s šestimi študenti tolmačenja, da bi identificirali jezik in pogostost različnih vrst enot zapisovanja pri študentih. Rezultati so pokazali, da študentje v zapiskih uporabljajo mešanico izhodiščnega in ciljnega jezika, da večinoma uporabljajo cele besede in da se zavedajo, da bi lahko svojo tehniko zapisovanja še izboljšali. Pilotna študija je dala rezultate, s katerimi bo mogoče optimizirati nadaljnje raziskave: pokazalo se je, da bi morali sodelujoči tolmačiti isto besedilo, da bi bilo treba eksperiment izvesti izven učnega okolja tolmaške učilnice, da študentom ne bi smeli dati povratnih informacij pred intervjujem, da bi bilo treba študentska tolmačenja posneti v obliki tonskega zapisa in da bi bilo treba kategorijo »cele besede« dodatno razčleniti v podkategorije.

Ključne besede: konsekutivno tolmačenje, zapisovanje, pouk zapisovanja, polstrukturirani intervju, kompetenca zapisovanja

1. Introduction

A good note-taking technique has proven to be a useful support for interpreters engaged in consecutive interpreting. Its main function is to make the cognitive effort of remembering easier. A good note-taking technique allows the interpreter to record numbers, relations, proper names, or even the structure and logical organization of thoughts. Note-taking is therefore a skill that every consecutive interpreter should master. For this very reason, most interpreting schools today emphasize the importance of teaching the basics of note-taking and encourage interpreters to develop their own systems, while following certain general rules.

In terms of content, however, no two interpreters' notes are the same: in fact, when listening to the same text, every interpreter takes different types of notes, which are not interchangeable. Because of the highly individual nature of the interpreter's notes, there are different views in interpreting studies as to what should be put into notes, how extensive the notes should be and in what way the notes should be taken. Setton and Dawrant (2016, 170) suggest that in the first six weeks of a two-year interpreting course no note-taking should be taught, and that it should be introduced as late as from training week 6 onwards. They encourage interpreting students to familiarize themselves with the basic principles of note-taking (concerning the layout, economy, clarity, and structure of notes) while also leaving room for their own preferences (Setton and Dawrant 2016, 186). The Paris School (Seleskovitch 1975), on the other hand, encouraged the students to practice "deverbalization", that is to abstract from the linguistic form and to take notes directly in the target language rather than using a wider range of symbols (Matyssek 1989).

The pilot study reported in this article is a part of a larger research which aims to carry out a longitudinal study of the nature and development of note-taking techniques used by interpreting students over four semesters. In the pilot study I used mixed method approach to data collection, which means that besides examining the notes of six second-year master's students in Translation and Interpreting at the Eötvös Loránd University taken during specific interpreting assignments. I also conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with them.

The planned longitudinal study will aim to respond to the following research questions:

a. Do interpreting students take notes in the source or target language? In which language do they predominantly create note-taking units?

b. What kind of note-taking units do the interpreting students use?

c. Does the number of notes taken on paper depend on the interpreting experience? Do more experienced interpreters take less notes and create fewer note-taking units?

Due to the limited timeframe, the pilot study focused only on questions related to the language of the notes and the nature of the note-taking units.

2. Consecutive interpreting

Daniel Gile (2021) adapted the effort model, one of the best-known theories in the field of interpreting, to a number of interpreting modes, including to consecutive interpreting, and specified the necessary components for each type of interpreting.

In his effort model of consecutive interpreting, Gile divides it into two stages: the stage of understanding the spoken text and the stage of rewording (Gile 2021, 144). The interpreter may either write down the elements of the source language text or not – if not, the element is either forgotten or committed to memory (Gile 2021, 145). Gile notes that because handwriting is a slower process than speech production, the interpreter often lags behind the speaker. This "lag" is referred to in interpreting theory as décalage, or pen-ear-span (Setton and Dawrant 2016, 206).

According to Gile (2021, 145), the comprehension stage in consecutive interpreting could be written as the equation of listening + memory + production of notes + coordination. It is important to note that it is not the arithmetic "sum" of the components that determines the way in which comprehension is achieved, the comprehension is rather achieved through the coordination effort that allows the interpreter to manage the three central resources in the equation.

The same is true for the second stage, where the interpreters can support their memory by reading the notes while recalling what has been said. The notes can also assist the interpreters in speech production in the target language, but Gile (2021, 145) adds that care must be taken to avoid linguistic interference. The equation for the reformulation stage therefore includes the following components: note-reading + reconstruction from memory + production + coordination.

Note-taking does not occur in all types of interpretation. According to Pöchhacker (2004, 18), consecutive interpreting can be seen as a "continuum which ranges from the rendition of utterances as short as one word to the handling of entire speeches" in one go. Longer speeches are sometimes categorized as "classic" consecutive that involves note-taking (Pöchhacker 2004, 18). Note-taking is thus mainly used in the so-called long consecutive interpreting, which continues to play an important role in diplomacy and business (Setton and Dawrant 2016, 82) and where the interpreter interprets a longer passage of speech immediately after it has been delivered, using a systematic note-taking technique. The length of these passages is not fixed, but it is typically around three to five minutes long, although in some cases it can be close to eight to 10 minutes (G. Láng 2002). This allows both parties to maintain their attention in the communicative situation, even if the interpreter is speaking in a language they do not know, and allows for the smooth transmission of more complex, longer sequences of ideas.

In order to introduce students to the classic consecutive note-taking technique, most interpreter training institutions have for many decades used Jean-François Rozan's ([1956] 2002) work on note-taking *La Prise de Notes dans L'Interprétation Consécutive*. Rozan formulated seven basic principles for interpreters' note-taking, which set out the methodological considerations behind the technique.

As a first principle, he defined "noting down the idea instead of words". Merely recording words in context can lead to misunderstandings, so "the interpreter should concentrate on the main idea and how to note it clearly and simply" (Rozan [1956] 2002, 16). The second principle concerns abbreviations: "the interpreter should note words in abbreviated form unless the word is shorter than 4-5 letters". According to Rozan ([1956] 2002, 17), it is preferable to abbreviate the first and last letters of a word rather than to try to write down as many letters as possible from the beginning of the word. Rozan ([1956] 2002, 18) also suggests indexing the last letters of the word to avoid mixing up words that have the same beginning. Other types of grammatical information can also be captured by using indexing, such as grammatical gender or verb tense. Another way of shortening words is to omit the vowels of the word (see Andres 2002).

The third principle concerns the annotation of links between individual speech units. Rozan considers links to be an important element, since a statement "can be completely distorted if it is not clearly indicated how it is related to the previous idea". Regardless of the direction of interpretation, certain English conjunctions are still commonly used in other languages to indicate such relations because of their brevity, e.g. but, tho (=though), if, Y (=why), etc.

In the fourth and fifth principles, Rozan ([1956] 2002, 19) provides notational solutions for negation and emphasis. Negation can be indicated by a "no" in front of the word to be negated, and emphasis can be indicated by underlining.

The sixth criterion, and the pillar of Rozan's note-taking principles, is verticality, the reading of notes from top to bottom (Rozan [1956] 2002, 20). Verticality allows for the order of information in the original speech to be preserved, and to maintain "the logical grouping of ideas, the immediate, complete summary of the notes as they are read". Rozan ([1956] 2002, 21) also stresses the importance of parentheses: a possible way of arranging information is to note the explanatory, supplementary elements of a given idea in parenthesis below the main idea.

The seventh principle, which is also considered one of the fundamental principles of Rozan's note-taking technique, is shift. By shift, Rozan ([1956] 2002, 22) means "writing the notes one line down", "where they would have been if the line above had been repeated", resulting in a "staggered notation".

3. Empirical research on note-taking techniques

Empirical research on note-taking techniques in interpreting typically examines the effectiveness of various strategies employed by interpreters to capture, retain, and accurately render spoken information (e.g. Chen 2020; Dam 2021). With the intricate demands of interpreting, from real-time processing to the problems of conveying linguistic and cultural nuances, the significance of efficient note-taking cannot be overstated. By employing rigorous methodologies, such as controlled experiments or observational studies, interpreting studies researchers aim to uncover insights that can inform interpreter training programmes, refine professional practices, and enhance the field's understanding of optimal note-taking strategies.

Helle V. Dam (2004), for example, studied the note-taking techniques of eight practising professional interpreters with Danish A and Spanish B or C language. During the experiment, all the participants consecutively interpreted the same Spanish text into Danish. Dam then divided the elements of the notes into four categories: source language elements, target language elements, third language elements and indeterminate language elements. The results showed a strong preference for Danish, which was both the participants' mother tongue and the target language of the interpreting task. The notes tended to contain source language elements only when the content of the source utterance was difficult to interpret. According to Dam, this could be explained by the increased cognitive load of the interpreters, who tended to revert to source-language note-taking in order to reduce this load, which seems to support Gile's argument.

In 2021, Helle V. Dam repeated the above research on a larger sample, with ten participants: this time, the subjects involved in the consecutive interpreting task into Danish had five Indo-European languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Danish) as their A languages. The A language of the five student interpreters and the B or C language of the five professional interpreters in the study were Danish (all these subjects also had a master's degree in conference interpreting with a Danish language combination). Interestingly, the results showed that both students and professional interpreters preferred to use language A in their notes. Note-taking in language B was mostly observed only when it was used as the source language in the task. In the light of this, Dam argues that the familiarity of the language also influences the language of the notes.

Csilla Szabó (2005) was the first in Hungarian translation and interpreting studies to conduct her doctoral dissertation research on the language choice of interpreting students' notes, the formal characteristics and means of expression of the notes, and the identification of the so-called note-taking strategies, work that was done almost simultaneously with Dam's pilot research. Eight student interpreters participated in the research, all of whom had Hungarian as language A and English as language B. In contrast to Dam's experiment, in this case the students already had interpreting experience at the time of the study. A total of 16 notes were analysed, half of which were taken in class and half of which were taken during the final state examination for the conference interpreter training at ELTE. There is therefore a significant difference in the circumstances under which the notes were produced, since in one situation the students were presumably under greater stress, and the other was in the regular classroom situation. The analysis of the notes showed that when interpreting from English to Hungarian, 63% of the students took notes in language B, i.e. English. Qualitative analysis showed that a surprisingly low proportion of students (16%) used abbreviations, and roughly equal proportions used whole words (45%) and symbols (39%).

After the interpretation task, they had to complete a questionnaire with three main questions:

1. Which languages did you use for note-taking in these specific tasks?
2. Which languages do you usually use when taking notes?
3. Why? What factors influenced your decision?

The questionnaires showed a similar picture to Dam's results: only half of the participants could justify why they used the specific language for note-taking. Furthermore, four out of eight participants contradicted themselves when answering the questions in the questionnaire. It is interesting to note, however, that the vast majority of the participants, six out of eight, indicated that English was the most suitable language for note-taking.

Chen (2017) investigated the cognitive aspects of note-taking in the Chinese-English language pair. Compared to previous research, Chen used electronic tools for note-taking: a special software called Eye and Pen, which records pen movements, allowed interpreters to take notes with a digital pen on a tablet-like device. Chen deliberately did not recruit student interpreters for his experiment, as he felt that they were not yet sufficiently skilled in note-taking techniques. The participating professionals, experienced interpreters, were all working in Australia, with Chinese (Mandarin) as their A language and English as their B language. First, the participants were given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the software and the tool. Second, a Chinese-English and an English-Chinese interpretation task followed. Chen then asked the interpreters to analyse the notes verbally, which allowed the researcher to clearly identify symbols and clarify things when the translators' handwriting was illegible. He divided the distinguishable elements of the notes into three categories: numbers, linguistic elements and symbols. The results showed that the interpreters predominately used English in their notes, which Chen, like Szabó, attributes to the structural differences between Chinese and English and to the fact that the Chinese language is not Indo-European and uses syllabic writing instead of alphabetical writing. Chen believes that the Latin script in English is faster to write than the Chinese script, which may be a decisive factor in the efficiency of note-taking. Chen repeated the study in 2020, where a similar preference for the usage of English was observed.

The research reported in this article will not focus on the issues discussed above, but on the development of note-taking techniques in interpreting students.

4. Methods

Since the aim of this study is to compare students' note-taking habits and strategies, as well as the quality distribution of notes, it is first necessary to define a "unit of measurement". The question arises whether the translation unit, as it was defined in translation studies, can be uncritically used for note-taking units in interpreting studies as well.

The concept of the translation unit was introduced into translation studies in 1958 by Vinay and Darbelnet, who defined it as the smallest element of communication that still has cohesive power and cannot be translated in isolation. Almost forty years later, Nord (1997, 141) defined it as:

> A unit of verbal and non-verbal signs that cannot be broken down into smaller elements in the translation process. According to the linguistic approach, translation units can be morphemes, words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs in a text. The functionalist approach attempts to create functional translation units.

Based on these definitions of a translation unit, a note-taking unit in this research thus refers to any unit of a handwritten interpretive note that denotes a word or an idea. In terms of form, they may be whole words, abbreviations (acronyms or abbreviations of part of a word), numbers, symbols or punctuation marks (arrows, lines, bullets, margins, etc.)

Our definition is similar to that of Chen (2017), who used a similar term "note unit", which allowed him to distinguish between numbers, elements of language and symbols when describing and analysing notes. In a 2020 study (Chen 2020), abbreviations were added as a separate category.

4.1 Participants and setting

In my research, I collected data in a mixed-method study, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, which allowed me to study the complex phenomenon of the note-taking technique in consecutive interpreting from several angles.

The pilot study described in this paper took place between November 2021 and February 2022, among second-year master's students, specializing in interpreting. The aim was to assess the note-taking techniques of students who were about to take the final examination in interpreting. A total of six interpreting students participated in the survey. In order to make the composition of the group as homogeneous as possible, all students needed to have the same B language, where the B language was defined following the criteria of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), which is still used by many interpreter training institutions (Gile 2009, 219). The B language, defined as the active working language to and from which the interpreter works, was in our experiment English. The C language of the students was predominantly German (4 students), one student's C language was French, and one participant had Dutch as their C language. All but one of the participants started their studies in the academic year 2020/2021.

I manually identified the units in the students' notes, grouping them and colour-coding them by category (Eszenyi 2022, 87). The categories included full words, symbols, abbreviations, punctuation marks and numbers. Proper nouns and geographical names were included in the category of full words.

In addition to the analysis of the notes, interviews were conducted with all the participants, with the following questions forming the framework:

> (A1) How did you prepare for the interpreting assignment?
>
> (A2) What materials did you use?
>
> (A3) Do you have a general "place of storage" for note-taking symbols? (An online document or an exercise book)
>
> (A4) Have you invented your own symbols for some speech-specific key concepts?
>
> (A5) How well did you manage to divide your attention between the notes and the interpretation during the task?
>
> (A6) Do you think that you made too many, too few or the right number of notes?
>
> (A7) Were there any points in your notes that proved to be particularly useful for your interpreting task?

In all cases, audio recordings of the interviews were made and later transcribed for ease of processing, retrieval and review. I recorded the names, gender, and language combination (student profile) of the interviewees and stored them separately in order to assure confidentially, informing the student about this (on the ethical handling of research data, see Seresi 2021). I marked the profiles of the six students who participated in the research with a code consisting of a letter and a number to preserve their anonymity and avoid identification. I took photographs of the notes taken in class, which I then used to identify and count the note-taking units.

The language of the speeches was English and the students were instructed to take notes and then interpret the speech into Hungarian with the help of their notes. The pilot study was conducted during a four-week period of classroom observations which were taught by a native English language teacher and a native Hungarian teacher with interpreting practice who provided feedback on the interpretations. The language teacher was responsible for preparing the speeches which covered a variety of topics: religion, poverty and social mobility, work, separation of powers, legislation, elections. The length of the six speeches varied between one minute 16 seconds to two minutes 41 seconds.

5. Results

Although note-taking is seen in the literature as a highly individual thing (see Setton and Dawrant 2016), there is an agreement among scholars that the interpreting routine encourages the creation of a personal note-taking style, similar to handwriting, with the difference that an interpreter's notes are less universally readable.

The analysis of all the notes created by the students participating in the experiment showed that the students had used a mix of both languages, Hungarian and English, which confirms Szabó's findings (2005). There seem to be two reasons why English was also used in their notes: first, the nature of the languages used, and second, the demands of the market. Compared to Hungarian, which is a non-Indo-European and agglutinative language, the use of simpler abbreviations for shorter words in English was most probably more practical. And since there are very few Hungarian B-language interpreters on the market today, it is most often the case that Hungarian A-language interpreters are expected to have a good command of English as their B language, which means that it is essential for students to master their B language to the highest possible level in order to find a place on the market.

5.1 Analysis of the notes

In terms of the number of note-taking units, the two students who used abbreviations most often also had the highest number of note-taking units. In contrast, the students who used more symbols than average typically had fewer note-taking units in their notes. Table 1 shows the number of note-taking units.

Table 1. Number of note-taking units.

Participant	Full words	Symbols	Abbreviations	Punctuation marks	Numbers	Total
2A	51	14	14	18	6	103
2B	107	14	58	28	12	219
2C	159	0	38	0	0	197
2D	124	11	32	10	3	180
2E	113	5	27	22	20	187
2F	124	20	14	32	6	196
AVG.	**113**	**10.7**	**30.5**	**18.3**	**7.8**	**180.3**

Table 2 contains the percentage of note-taking units per category which indicates which type of note-taking unit the students used more often. The percentage is calculated from the number of separate note-taking unit types divided by the total amount of note-taking units used by the student for that specific speech. These figures can give us further insight into whether individual students have difficulties with using symbols and abbreviations and therefore tend to note down more full words or phrases.

Table 2. Percentage of note-taking units.

Participant	Full words	Symbols	Abbreviations	Punctuation marks	Numbers
2A	49.5%	13.6%	13.6%	17.5%	5.8%
2B	48.9%	6.4%	26.5%	12.8%	5.5%
2C	80.7%	0%	19.3%	0%	0%
2D	68.9%	6.1%	17.8%	5.5%	1.7%
2E	60.4%	2.7%	14.4%	11.8%	10.7%
2F	63.3%	10.2%	7.1%	16.3%	3.1%
AVG.	**61.9%**	**6.5%**	**16.5%**	**10.7%**	**4.5%**

It is important to note that five of the six students had not attended any specialized seminars on note-taking in interpreting, but had learned the basics of the technique from their lecturers in their respective B and C languages, which might explain the usage of different note-taking strategies and techniques. Two students, who spent a semester at a foreign university – in the same county, albeit in two different institutions, were the only ones using the left-hand margin that can be used for noting structural elements, dates and to mark the speaker's point of view (Gillies 2017, 146). One of these two students also took a specialized class dedicated to note-taking, where more attention was paid to fine-tuning note-taking techniques.

One participant used a very different, individualized way to make their own notes. Since tablets and other electronic devices are now often used in interpreting practice, and have therefore also been researched in interpreting studies (Kuang and Zheng 2022; Chen 2020), it is no surprise that digital pens and tablets have also made it into the interpreting classroom. As such, one of the students used a tablet — although not to make handwritten notes in digital form, but to capture the main ideas by typing on the tablet's keyboard, using it like a smartphone. The student explained this unusual choice by saying that they have difficulty writing legibly. In this particular case the student did not follow the guidelines regarding the spelling and linking of the ideas as suggested by Rozan ([1956] 2002), but instead used spaces and returns after hard paragraphs.

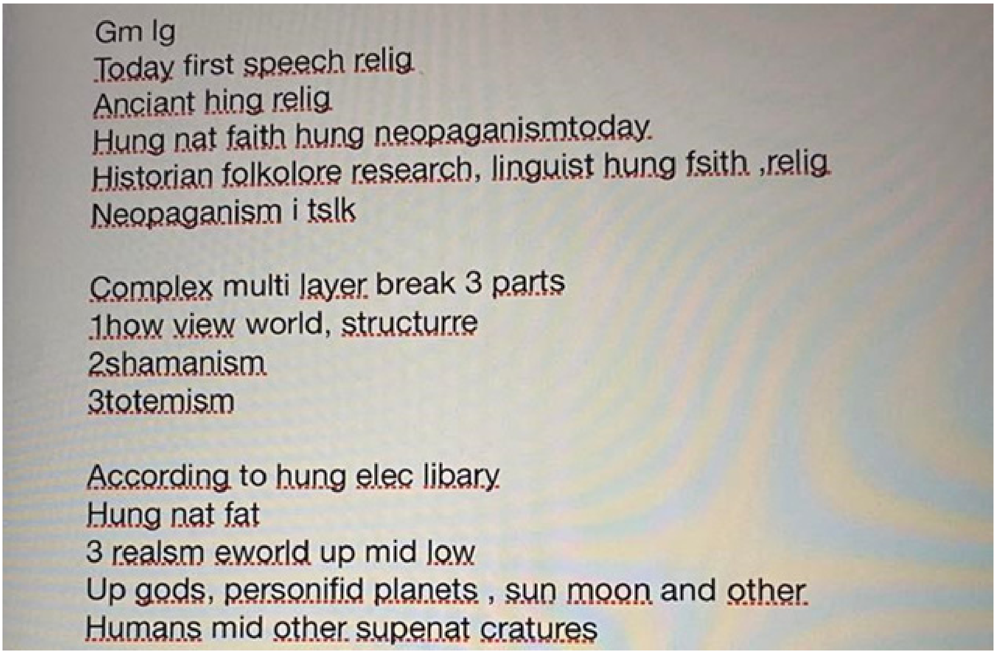

Figure 1. Notes taken using a virtual keyboard.

Another interesting case was that one of the participants, who speaks Chinese at an advanced level, used a third language in their notes –Chinese characters. The student explained that using Chinese characters makes it easier to "abbreviate" longer words while still capturing and maintaining the intended meaning. Figure 2 shows an example of the word "dead" marked with a Chinese character, and the use of other Chinese characters in the notes.

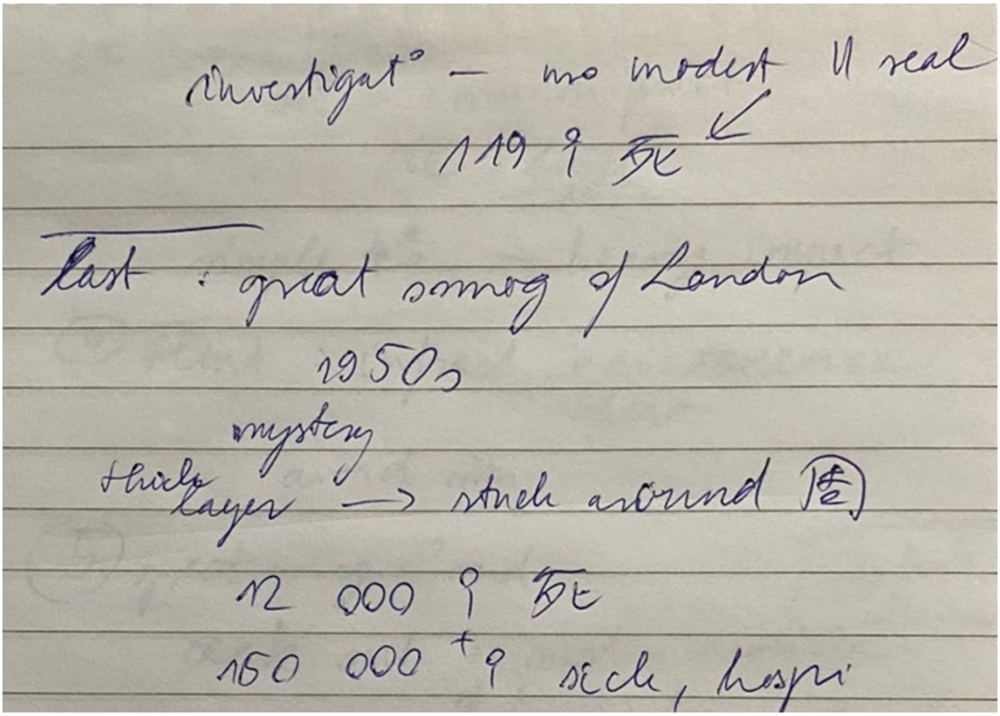

Figure 2. Usage of Chinese characters.

5.2 Qualitative findings of the interviews

An interview survey of the second-year students found that half of the interviewees (three of six) felt that the number of notes they had taken was too high. They also reported difficulties in using symbols after having approximately one year of note-taking experience. Therefore, they tended not to have made up their own, specific symbols but instead were trying to apply those they had been shown by their instructors. They all confirmed that they had either a paper-based or an online storage kit where they could access the symbols they had learned, but reported that their use of these could still not be considered automatic at this point.

The participants also mentioned that they regard their notes as a matter of the “here and now”, as ephemeral, and that they do not feel the need to record their interpreting performances, despite the fact that these recordings and their notes could be beneficial for their autonomous learning. Out of six students, only two sometimes record and listen to the recordings of their interpretation. When asked whether they correct or complete their notes during or after the trainer’s feedback, the students replied that they tended to do so if more idiomatic expressions were used, or if their notes were inaccurate (e.g. they noted down the wrong numbers).

It is also important to note that all subjects participating in the research were trained to develop their own note-taking techniques in the academic year 2020/2021 through distance learning (for more on distance learning in interpreting at the Eötvös Loránd University, see Seresi et al. 2021). The constraints of this particular teaching format did not provide sufficient opportunity for the instructors to adequately monitor the students' note-taking performance, and this is in contrast to the usual training practice, where the instructor often went around the classroom after each speech, giving individual feedback on the notes. Face-to-face teaching also provided more opportunities for students to learn from each other, exchanging symbols or even learning from each other's mistakes by comparing their own notes with those of their peers.

One particular note-taking strategy was mentioned in all of the conducted interviews: the students were reluctant to rely solely on their memory when reproducing the utterance in the target language. Some of them argued that the fact that their interpretation was graded put an additional mental and cognitive load on the act of interpreting. The participants therefore opted to "play it safe", and tended to take more notes so as not to forget anything and thus risk a lower grade.

6. Conclusion

The present research aims to serve a larger-scaled longitudinal study on changes in the note-taking techniques employed by interpreting students during a four-semester long master's degree programme in interpreting. The aim of the pilot study, which analysed note-taking units and conducted semi-structured interviews with six interpreting students in order to determine the language and frequency of the different types of note-taking units they used, was to identify any problems before starting the longitudinal research.

The results showed that the students used the source and target languages (Hungarian and English) when noting down full words and abbreviations. Analysing the types of the notes, the results showed that the use of full words was predominant, followed by abbreviations. However, in the interviews that were conducted the students were aware of this shortcoming in their note-taking techniques.

The pilot study provided results which could be used to optimize the conditions of further research. First, consideration should be given to designing the interpreting task and the subsequent interviews in such a way that the participants all interpret the same text. This is because the results of the pilot study clearly show that a negative factor affecting the objectivity of the survey was a wide variation in the speeches, not only in terms of duration but also in terms of topic. Second, since the interviews took place immediately after the teacher's feedback discussion on the students' interpreting, the interviewees often repeated the comments made by the teacher in the interviews and thus partially distorted the data. This led to the conclusion that the experiment should be conducted in its entirety outside of the classroom interpreting sessions, and that no feedback on the interpreting should be given to the students prior to the interviews. Third, the interpretation itself should also be audio-recorded, since the recording might provide an additional insight into the participants' performance, and, most importantly, a more objective basis for comparison with the other participants' note-taking techniques. And finally, if different languages are used in the experiment, the category "full words" might be split into further subcategories.

As voiced in the interviews, it might also be beneficial to include a separate seminar in the interpreting curriculum that would be devoted only to note-taking. The students felt that they had little time to practice the basics of note-taking techniques outside of their regular interpreting classes, and that they would still need additional support in this area from an experienced instructor in a more institutionalized framework.

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Code-switching as a translatorial practice within the Italian national minority in Slovenia

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the occurrence of code-switching as a form of translatoriality among members of the Italian national minority in Slovenia. As a continuation of a wider sociolinguistic study, which brought a comprehensive analysis of 1,389 instances of code switching between Italian and Slovene among bilingual speakers, the paper examines the intersection between code switching and self-translatoriality by studying 85 instances of bilingual reiteration in spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech. By observing these instances from the perspective of translatoriality, the paper presents a case study on the translatorial actions that occur in such bilingual utterances, i.e. summarizing, duplicating, expanding and complementary language practices, as well as their underlying motivation and purpose, while also highlighting the practice of intercomprehension among bilingual speakers within the culturally and linguistically diverse community of the Slovene coast. The data show that self-translatoriality occurs both in in-group and out-group bilingual communication, although more frequently in the context of public events aimed at the broader multilingual community. While duplicating language practices occur in all settings, speakers often only repeat the nearest element, which leads to a fragmentation of the message. Translatorial action types are also frequently combined, producing fluid bilingual utterances that presuppose a plurilingual competence among all participants.

Keywords: linguistic minority, code-switching, translatoriality, self-translatoriality, intercomprehension

Kodno preklapljanje kot primer prevajalskosti med pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek obravnava kodno preklapljanje kot obliko *prevajalskosti* med pripadniki italijanske narodne skupnosti v Sloveniji. Izhajajoč iz obsežnejše sociolingvistične obravnave 1389 zgledov kodnega preklapljanja med italijanščino in slovenščino pri dvojezičnih govorcih, prispevek proučuje presečišče med kodnim preklapljanjem in *samotolmačenjem*. Analiza 85 zgledov dvojezičnega ponavljanja v spontanem in delno pripravljenem govoru z vidika *prevajalskosti* prinaša pregled prevodnih dejanj, tj. povzemanje, podvajanje, razširjanje in dopolnjevanje sporočila, do katerih prihaja v obravnavanih dvojezičnih izjavah, ter razkriva temeljne razloge zanje. Prispevek obenem osvetljuje pomen medjezikovnega razumevanja med dvojezičnimi govorci v večjezični skupnosti v slovenski Istri. Čeprav do *samotolmačenja* prihaja tako pri dvojezičnem sporazumevanju znotraj manjšinske skupnosti kot tudi s pripadniki večinske skupnosti, je veliko pogostejše v okviru javnih dogodkov, namenjenih širši večjezični skupnosti. Podvajanje sporočila se sicer pojavlja v vseh položajih, vendar govorci pogosto ponavljajo le najbližje elemente, zaradi česar prihaja do fragmentacije sporočila. Prevodna dejanja se v dvojezičnem govoru pogosto tudi prepletajo, kar se izraža v tekočih dvojezičnih izjavah, iz katerih je razvidno, da se govorci zanašajo zlasti na večjezično zmožnost vseh udeležencev.

Ključne besede: jezikovna manjšina, kodno preklapljanje, prevajalskost, samoprevajalskost, medjezikovno razumevanje

1. Introduction

In the historically mixed, multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual area of Slovene Istria,[1] particularly in the bilingual municipalities of Ankaran, Koper, Izola, and Piran, there are two official languages, Slovene and Italian, the use of which is codified due to the presence of the autochthonous Italian national minority (see Kompara Lukančič, Lenassi, and Paolucci 2023, 12–20).[2] In addition to the two official languages and the colloquial coastal variety of Slovene, two dialects are spoken – the Slovene Istrian dialect and the Istro-Venetian dialect (see Todorović 2018, 33–35), along with other languages and linguistic varieties "imported" by immigrant communities.

Regarding the linguistic situation of the Italian national minority, Baloh in her studies (Baloh 1995; Baloh 2003) notes that most of its members speak both official languages

1 For a complete history of this long-contested territory, where the Romance and Slavic cultures and languages coexist, see Darovec (2023a), Darovec (2023b), Corni (2015), Hrobat Virloget, Gousseff, and Corni (2015), Hrobat Virloget (2021), and Pupo (2015).

2 The Italian national community is a constitutionally recognized national minority in Slovenia. In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the autochthonous Italian national community is guaranteed special collective rights in various areas (e.g. language, culture, and education) to preserve its identity, provide equality and promote social inclusion, regardless of the number of its members (Benedetti et al. 2015).

– alternating the codes as required in various domains and settings – as well as the Istro-Venetian dialect, which has become "a bond of solidarity among members of the Italian national community and a central part in the socialization process of the Italians living in Slovenia" (Todorović 2021, 229, my translation from Slovene). The linguistic repertoire of the community is characterized by proficient bilingualism (Baloh 1995, 143) as well as dilalia,[3] since the communicative settings in which standard Italian and the Istro-Venetian dialect are used often overlap (cf. Umer Kljun 2024; Todorović 2021).

This situation of intense contact gives rise to an inevitable series of contact phenomena – code-switching between Italian and Slovene being one of the most prominent consequences of language contact in the speech of the members of the Italian minority and the broader multicultural community of Slovene Istria (Filipi 1995; Buić 2011; Buić 2012; Buić 2014; Buić 2020; Umer Kljun 2015; Umer Kljun 2023).

To borrow from Koskinen (2020, 2–3), if the multilingual, multiethnic environment of the Slovene Istria is seen as a *translation space* (Cronin 2006, cited in Koskinen 2020), "i.e. a space where translation needs to happen for mutual comprehensibility and where multilingual repertoires meet and mix", the Italian minority exists in a "climate of constant movement between different languages" (Koskinen 2020), a situation that Koskinen defines as *translatoriality*.

Based on previous research on language contact between Italian and Slovene within the Italian national minority in Slovenia, this article aims to observe and discuss the occurrence of code-switching as a *translatorial action* in the speech of bilinguals within the Italian national minority in Slovenia. While others have explored the overlap between code-switching and translation (see Harjunpää and Mäkilähde 2016, on multilingual reiteration in everyday conversations between Brazilian Portuguese and Finnish speakers and in early modern drama; Alvarez de la Fuente, Fernandez Fuertes, and Arratia Garcia 2019, on natural interpreting among bilingual children; Chirsheva and Houston 2020, on interlingual duplicating and childhood bilingualism), the relation between the two terms has not yet been sufficiently explored. In this respect, I believe that the broad concept of translatoriality provides a sufficiently adaptable methodological framework for analysing code-switching as a self-translatorial practice.

3 According to Berruto (1999, 6) the term dilalia denotes a situation in which the hierarchical boundaries between higher and lower codes, especially when it comes to the relationship between language and dialect, are completely blurred.

2. Translatoriality and code-switching

2.1 Translatoriality

Deriving from Holz-Mänttäri's concept of *translatorial action* (Holz-Mänttäri 1984, cited in Koskinen 2020) – the primary function of which is to enable functionally adequate communication across cultural barriers (Schäffner 2011) and which denotes a professional translator's "activity that transgresses the boundaries of equivalence-based search for optimal correspondence between two texts" (Koskinen 2020, 2) – Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017) extended the scope of the term to include contexts of paraprofessional and non-professional translation, in which the role of the translator or interpreter is taken up by bilingual speakers who are not formally trained in translation.

Translatoriality, which "presupposes that something is repeated, reworded, revoiced, or recommunicated" (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 9), is seen as a characteristic feature of multilingual communication, in which there are two message carriers (i.e. two communicative elements) that share a relevant similarity (Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017, 2). Translatoriality has therefore been proposed as a clarifying term, coined to identify and study a wide range of practices "within a wider spectrum of operating across and within several linguistic codes" (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 11). As Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017) observe, translatoriality often manifests in self-translation among bilinguals who switch between codes, providing partial summarizing translations and fragmentary reiteration of their own utterances (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 12).

Since the concept of translatoriality has already proven its usefulness in describing bilingual contexts in which para-professional interpreting seems to be the norm (see Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017 on translatoriality in bilingual formal meetings; Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022 on translatoriality in FL and learning; Havumetsä 2020 on translatorial actions by journalists), it is also certain to provide further insight into bilinguals' code-switching patterns, as those observed within the Italian national minority in Slovenia. Especially considering that, according to Kolehmainen, Koskinen, and Riionheimo (2015, cited in Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 12), in contexts where all participants share the same linguistic resources, the notion of translatoriality is not restricted to aiding comprehension, but can also be linked to identity display, emphasis, and even humour – some of the features that have also been identified in code-switching.

2.2 Code-switching

Following Thomason's definition, code-switching (CS) is understood here as the "use of material from two (or more) languages by a single speaker in the same conversation" (Thomason 2001, 132). The juxtaposition of elements from two or more codes "by the same speaker in the course of a single microtext or communicative event"(Dal Negro and Guerini 2007, 42) has been extensively studied (Auer 2005; Auer and Muhamedova 2015; Dal Negro 2005; Dal Negro and Guerini 2007; Dal Negro and Molinelli 2002; Di Sciullo, Muysken, and Singh 1986; Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007; Gardner-Chloros 2010; Gumperz 1973; Gumperz 1977; Gumperz 1982; Isurin, Winford, and De Bot 2009; Myers-Scotton 1993; Myers-Scotton 1997; Myers-Scotton 2002; Pfaff 1979; Poplack 1980; Poplack 2004; Poplack, Wheeler, and Westwood 1989; Poropat Jeletić 2019; Poropat Jeletić, Moscarda Mirković, and Bortoletto 2021; Sankoff and Poplack 1981) and remains one of the most prominent and discussed contact phenomena. A brief overview of the literature on CS shows it takes many forms and patterns that do not necessarily depend only on linguistic factors, but can be explained if we take into account extra-linguistic factors, such as "the political balance between the languages involved, the duration of the contact and the origin of bilingualism; the functional configuration of the linguistic repertoire, patterns of language use, functions, socio-symbolic meanings and the relative prestige and status of the two languages; attitudes towards CS and bilingualism in general; the type of interactional setting, social network and conversational context; the degree of bilingual proficiency, gender and, last but not least, age" (Alfonzetti 2005, 96).

The transitions from one code to another, which used to be (wrongly) considered as random, disorganized, and even chaotic (Berruto 2003, 217) indicators of a speaker's lower linguistic competence, usually fulfil specific functions in the conversational context and are characterized by *a certain degree of intentionality* (Dal Negro and Guerini 2007, 42). A comprehensive approach to CS revealed it to be a particularly useful language skill (Coulmas 2005, 113), as bilingual or plurilingual speakers who code-switch adapt to each other more easily and have a wider range of discourse strategies at their disposal than monolingual speakers (cf. Grosjean 1985). The bilingual speakers' repertoire is therefore characterized by a diverse range of linguistic resources that they can alternate, adapt, combine, and merge, especially (but not exclusively) in informal communication with other members of the same linguistic community.

In his seminal work on bilingual discourse strategies, Gumperz (1982) identified *reiteration* as one of the six fundamental functions of CS (along with quotation, addressee specification, interjection, message qualification and personalization/objectivization). According to Gumperz (1982, 78), reiteration is a strategy by which "a message in one code is repeated in the other code, either literally or in somewhat modified form" to *facilitate comprehension* or *emphasize* what has been said, e.g. "The three old ones spoke nothing but Spanish. Nothing but Spanish. *No hablan ingles* (they did not speak English)" (Gumperz 1982, 78). From the perspective of this article, this is the point at which the study of code-switching most evidently converges with the concept of translatoriality, as proposed by Koskinen and Kinnunen (2022, 11), since the repetition of overlapping content in different codes or message-carriers highlights "the role of self-translatoriality in many contexts beyond professional translating and interpreting" (Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 11).

3. Aim, data and method

The aim of this article is, therefore, to observe and discuss occurrences of *reiterative code-switching as turn-internal translatorial practices* in spontaneous spoken discourse by bilinguals within the Italian national minority in Slovenia.

The article is a continuation of a broader sociolinguistic case-study on code-switching between Italian and Slovene, which proved to be a very prominent contact phenomenon in the spoken language of bilingual speakers within the autochthonous Italian national minority in Slovenia (Umer Kljun 2015; Umer Kljun 2023). The overarching goal of the research was to provide a comprehensive view of the phenomenon. To do so, three main objectives were set: to determine the typology of code-switching between Italian and Slovene among bilingual speakers within the Italian national minority on both structural and functional levels; to observe how conversational settings, as well as the age and ethnicity of the speakers influence the occurrence of code-switching; and to explore the community's attitudes towards the individual codes of their linguistic repertoire and towards code-switching. The fieldwork, carried out in collaboration with members of the community, consisted of collecting recordings of authentic spoken language in informal (in-group private discourse), formal (public discourse, events hosted by the Italian minority), and semi-formal settings (interview interaction with bilingual speakers). To observe extra-linguistic factors that might motivate language choice and code-switching, 18 bilingual speakers were interviewed about their perceived competence, language use and attitudes towards the various codes of their linguistic repertoire, bilingualism, and code-switching. These interactions form part of the corpus. All recordings were then transcribed, annotated, and analysed using the EXMARaLDA software suite (Schmidt and Wörner 2022). The *ad hoc* corpus of spoken language comprises 62 recordings and approximately nine hours of transcribed speech. In the context of the study, a total of 1,389 instances of intersentential, i.e. switching at sentence boundaries, and intrasentential code-switching, i.e. switching within a single sentence, clause, phrase and even within a word (Gardner-Chloros 2010; Winford 2003), were further analysed in accordance with the research objectives (see also Umer Kljun 2024).

For the purpose of this article, 85 instances of *reiterative code-switching*, i.e. cases in which there is an obvious overlapping of meaning between the spoken text segments expressed in different codes by a single speaker, have been extracted from the above-mentioned corpus. The CS cases, in which a reiterative function has been observed, occur within a conversational turn, i.e. within a speaker's speech sequence that ends when the speaker stops or is interrupted by another speaker (Verdonik and Zwitter Vitez 2011; Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke 2017). Only 11 such cases were identified in the sub-corpus of spoken language in informal settings, which consists mainly of transcriptions of recordings of private in-group conversations in Istro-Venetian, Italian or a mixed Italian-Slovene sociolect. There were 26 instances of turn-internal reiterative CS in transcriptions of interviews, conducted in Italian, and 48 cases from transcriptions of recordings gathered at public cultural events, aimed at a broader local audience, in which the working languages were Italian, Slovene and in two instances even Croatian. While such events might require the presence of a professional interpreter in other multilingual contexts, the events observed here presuppose a certain degree of plurilingual competence among the audience, as "knowledge of all the languages involved is required to understand the whole message" (Reh 2004, 14), and the role of the interpreter is only occasionally taken up by the moderators or speakers themselves.

To observe these bilingual utterances through the lens of translatoriality, the following research questions were proposed:

> (A) What types of translatorial actions occur in this specific bilingual context?
>
> (B) What is their underlying motivation and function?

To determine the type of translatorial action involved, the cases were classified in accordance with the model proposed by Reh (2004, 10–12) for the analysis of multilingual writing in a linguistic landscape and adapted for the study of bilingual spoken discourse by Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017, 471): namely, as a *duplicating language practice*, when the content or message expressed in the first code is fully reproduced in the second code; a *summarizing language practice*, when part of the content is condensed, omitted or otherwise fragmented; an *expanding language practice*, when there is some overlapping in meaning, while new information is added in the second code; and a *complementary language practice*, where there is seemingly no explicit overlapping of content expressed in the two codes. These instances of *self-translatoriality* were then observed in their context to understand their underlying motivation and function, and six categories have been identified: *aiding comprehension*, *correction, emphasis, humour, addressee specification* (cf. Gumperz 1982) and *identity signalling*.

4. Reiterative code-switching as self-interpreting

4.1 Types of actions in turn-internal translatoriality

While many of the observed cases fall neatly into one of the established categories, others are not as easily definable, especially when considering the wider context of the single turns. Cases that fall between two categories (e.g. summarizing and expanding, duplicating and complementary language practices, or expanding and complementary language practices) were counted in both and some examples are presented at the end of this section. In the bilingual utterances extracted from the corpus, the content produced in Slovene always appears in bold to showcase the transitions from one code to another. The utterances are equipped with gloss translations in square brackets and the observed translatorial actions are underlined or otherwise emphasized.[4]

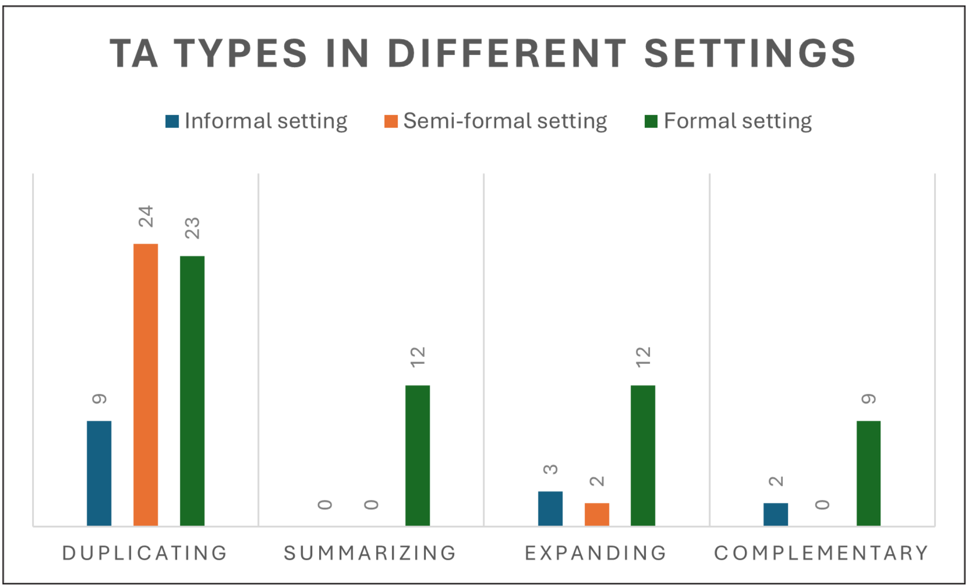

Figure 1. Types of translatorial action in different bilingual settings.

4 See the additional transcription symbols in the Appendix.

4.1.1 Duplicating

Duplicating, i.e. reproducing or repeating content in another code, is the only translatorial action that occurs in all of the observed settings. While code-switching – in general – is most prominent in informal settings, there are not many cases of duplicating in the sub-corpus. Examples 1a-c include some cases of duplication in informal conversations among peers, in which self-translatoriality serves to clarify the message (1a-b) or to illustrate an appropriate expression after some perceived miscommunication (1c).

Example 1a

> **Šunka sir**´va bene` <u>prosciutto e formaggio</u>. Di quello là c' è solo: **šunka sir.**
> [Ham, cheese, okay, <u>ham and cheese</u>. Of that one there is only <u>ham, cheese</u>.]

Example 1b

> non so` se lei la sa` se non la sa` • • questo iera´ • • ə • • / noi paghemo l' agiun´/ la / l' asicurazion agiuntiva. ((1,3s)) **Dodatno zavarovanje.**
>
> [I don't know if you know it or not, it was this/ we pay supplementary insurance. <u>Supplementary insurance</u>.]

Example 1c

> Speaker 1: Vabbe che´ come te disï` **mi bi rade**?
>
> [Okay that, how do you say we would like?]
>
> Speaker 2: Non stame domandar` adeso mi` non so!
>
> [Don't ask me now, I don't know!]
>
> Speaker 1: Non so. • • Perché mi volevo dir` **mi bi rade**´ …
>
> [I don't know. Because I wanted to say we would like …]
>
> Speaker 2: No:. Noi volesimo ordinar. Ordinar. **Mi bi želeli**` **naročiti**´no´ non … Attenta ((ime)) che ṡe il birillo´ in strada! ((smeh))
>
> [No. We would like to order. Order. <u>We would like to order</u>, no, not … Careful ((name)) there is a traffic cone on the road! ((laughter))]
>
> Speaker 1: Dovevo dì "**mi bi rade naročile**"´e inveze go dito "**mi bi rade dobile**." ((smeh))

[I should have said we would like to order and instead I said we would like to get." ((laughter))]
Speaker 2: **Dobile**. Che ṡe un sinonimo no´ • però diṡemo che podessi esser anche mal interpretado.
[Get. Which is a synonym no, but let's say it could be also misinterpreted.]

As presented in Examples 2a-d below, in semi-formal settings, i.e. interviews, conducted in Italian, duplicating consists mostly of single words insertions, usually accompanied by commentary (e.g. *per farti capire* "to make you understand, for you to understand") or pauses. Knowing that the interviewer is a native speaker of Slovene, the interviewees tend to repeat single concepts in Slovene, to make sure they are understood.

Example 2a

La ((ustanova))´ è un' associazione. • • Per farti capire´ **društvo.**
[The ((institution)) is an association. To make you understand, an association.]

Example 2b

E: io in questo momento sono in pausa parto • • • in **porodniška**.
[And at this moment I am on maternity leave … on maternity leave.]

Example 2c

Sempre di questo: br: i/ m: ingegneria civile´ **gradbeništvo**´ sarebbe´ e dopo ha fatto anche la facoltà.
[Still about this civil engineering civil engineering that would be and then he went to university.]

Example 2d

È belissimo´ perché ə: già il: / ə: il bando´ il **razpis**´ no´ lo mete fuori in istroveneto.
[It's beautiful because the call the call, no, is published in Istrovenetian.]

In formal settings, especially in the case of three cultural events, co-hosted by Italian and Slovene associations, and aimed at a wider local audience, duplicating is most clearly discernible in opening greetings and closings.

Example 3a

Grazie´ • • **hvala lepa**´ al • • direttore del ((ustanova))` • • **direktorju** • • • ə ((ustanove))
[Thanks … many thanks to … the head of the ((institution)) … the head of the ((institution))]

Example 3b

Stimati` • • ospiti´ spettabile pubblico´ • • • permettete di porgervi il saluto a nome della ((ustanova)) di capodistria. • • • **Cenjeni gostí spoštovana publika ´ lep pozdrav´ • •in dobrodošlí na sedežu ((ustanove)) Koper.**
[Dear guests, esteemed audience … allow me to greet you on behalf of the ((institution)) of Capodistria. <u>Distinguished guest, esteemed audience, greetings and welcome to the ((institution)) headquarters in Koper</u>.]

Example 3c

Najprej lep pozdrav vsem´ • • un cordiale saluto a tutti quanti.
[First, a warm greeting to all. <u>A warm greeting to all.]</u>

Example 3d

Vi ringrazio. **Hvala lepa.** ((aplavz))
[Thank you. Thank you very much.]

After these brief bilingual introductions, addressing both Italian and Slovene speakers and audience members, each speaker is free to continue in their preferred code and there is little to no further explicit translatorial activity on their part. In doing so, the participants rely on *receptive multilingualism* or *intercomprehension*, which entails reciprocal understanding between speakers of two different mother tongues, where each participant uses their own language while understanding the language of others. Although intercomprehension is traditionally seen as a process that takes place between languages within a language family (Schlamberger Brezar 2020, 104), in the context of the broader Slovene-Italian linguistic community in Istria this bilingual practice signals a respectful attitude towards the language and culture of the other, as it allows all participants "to be on a fairly equal footing" (Perko 2020, 156). According to Zeevaert (2007, 105, emphasis added), receptive multilingualism can be defined as:

> (…) a reasonable option of communication between languages that are unrelated or only remotely related – **under the condition that all speakers involved are familiar with both languages**, and provided that the speakers have only a passive competence at their disposal (either because only a passive competence was acquired, because one or more of the speakers are less advanced learners or because of a lack of language practice) or that **the interlocutors prefer to use their own mother tongue in spite of an available active competence** (either because they feel able to express themselves better in their first language or **to mark their linguistic identity in a multilingual environment**).

In the context of the wider bilingual community of the Slovene coast described here, such practices can be seen as a conscious effort by members of the two national groups to overcome past conflicts and even as a means of preventing linguistic discrimination and assimilation of the linguistic minority (see Umer Kljun 2024).

4.1.2 Summarizing – fragmentary multilingualism

Example 4 below illustrates the fragmentary nature of summarizing as a turn-internal translatorial action in a lengthier excerpt of spoken language in a formal setting. The purpose of the event, hosted by a local Italian cultural association, was to present the Italian national minority to university students of Italian and Slovene. As some of the students did not speak Italian, one of the presenters, who is of mixed Italian-Slovene ethnic background and fluent in both languages, engaged in self-translatoriality by either interpreting only the nearest elements (effectively duplicating single phrases or key words) or omitting commentary and information, thus condensing the presentation of several cultural associations to a simple enumeration of their activities, and producing a highly fragmented text.

Example 4

Presenter 1: Cominciamo dalla musica´ **začnemo z glasbo**´ abbiamo i piccoli´ i minicantanti` • • •ə: **mlade glasbenike**´ che m::: • • più che venire in comunità´ • • è la comunità ad andare da loro´ quindi • • si fanno a scuola. • • Le loro / Le loro prove si fanno a scuola´• • poi abbiamo il coro´ • • **zbor** ´ • • poi abbiamo: ə: il gruppo di mandolini ´/
[Let's start with music <u>let's start with music</u>, we have the little ones, the little singers, <u>the little musicians</u>, who … it's not that they come to us it's the community that goes to them, so they take place at school. Their lessons take place at school. Then we have the choir <u>the choir</u> and then we have the mandolin group /]

Presenter 2: La filodramatica.

[The theatre group.]

Presenter 1: Cominciamo dalla musica perché se no` comincio a dire ((neraz.)) • e dimentico tre quarti. • • • I mandolini´ • • e poi abbiamo in casa Tartini ´ un corso di` • **tečaj** `pianoforte´ • • **klavir**´ violino´ e • • chitarra. • • • Poi /
[Let's start with music or I'll start to say ((unintelligible)) and will forget half of it. The mandolins and then we have in the Tartini house a course of <u>a course</u> piano <u>piano</u>, violin and guitar.]

Presenter 3: E mandolino.

[And mandolin.]

Presenter 2: E: ma ha già deto.

[She already said that.]

Presenter 3: Ah sì perché l' ha già dettò scusami.

[Ah, yes, because you already said that, sorry.]

Presenter 1: Ho detto mandolino? • • • ((smeh)) Poi c' è il gruppo dei pittorí • • • ə **slikarjí** il grupo dei ceramistí • • ((pokaže izdelke)) di **keramiká** • lí e:h? • • • E:: il gru/ un gruppo etnograficó la famea dei salinerí • ə: **se pravi solinarska družiná** che è quel gruppo che dovrebbè / • • che mantienè le tradizionì • ə della vita e del lavoro l/ legato alle saline di piranó

[Did I say mandolin? ((laughter)) Then there's a group of painters, <u>painters</u>, a group of ceramists, ((points to the artwork)) of <u>ceramics</u>, there. And the ethnographic group, the salt makers family, <u>that is to say, the salt makers family</u>, which is the group that should/ that preserves the traditions of the life and work at the salt pans of Piran.]

Listener 1: E si esibiscé nó anche?

[And they perform as well?]

Presenter 1: E si esibiscé • • əm:: il gruppo della filodrammaticá **dramska skupiná** che anche ogni anno::́ • • • fa una propria produzioné • • in dialetó • • vero? O in dialetó o in linguà ma • per la maggior parte gli ultimi anni almenó da quando • sono io quá e: in dialettó • • • **se pravi dramska skupina v dialektu in v italijanščinì** • • e poi insomma quelli che dimenticò no? ((neraz.)) Il gruppo fotograficó ((1.5s)) e: il gruppo al tempo di tartini. Perché quest'annó ə: • • ma già dagli ultimi:̀ • • paio d/ anní abbiamo deciso di dedicarcì un • • po' di più al settecento venezianó e alla vita di tartini e cerchiamo dì • • ripercorrere la sua vitá e • • fare anche dei percorsí guidatí attraverso • • gli ambienti che: gli ospiti possono visitare. • • • **Torej zadnja leta se ukvarjamò / se ukvarjamo • •imamo novo skupino:́ ki se ukvarja z • • oblačilí in Tartinijevim življenjemè in delom.** • •

[And they perform. The theatre group, <u>the theatre group,</u> that makes a production every year, in dialect, right? Either in dialect or in Italian, but at least in the last few years mostly, since I've been here, in dialect,

> that is to say, a theatre group in dialect or Italian. And then in short all those who I forget, no? The photography group and the group In Tartini's time. Because this year, but in the last few years as well, we decided to focus more on the Venetian 18th century and to Tartini's life and we try to retrace his life and also make guided tours through the environments that guests can visit. So, in the past years we have been focusing / we have a new group dealing with the clothing and Tartini's life and works.]

These single-word switches that are intended by the speaker as a form of translation into Slovene are frequently preceded by pauses (*un corso dì̀* • ***tečaj*** *`pianoforte´* • • ***klavir´*** "a course of … course piano … piano") and filler sounds (*Poi c' è il gruppo dei pittorí* • • • ə ***slikarjí*** "Then there's a group of painters … uhm, painters"), while longer target-language segments are introduced by "so" (torej) or "that is to say" (se pravi). Although it was the speaker's intention to render their own words in Slovene to facilitate comprehension among those who do not speak Italian, it is quite clear that speaker presupposes at least a passive command of Italian on the part of the listeners.

4.1.3 Expanding

Expanding is observed in those cases of self-translatoriality when there is some overlapping in meaning while new information is added. In an interview, an expansion can be as simple as adding a modifier to an inserted noun phrase (5a) to further clarify or better illustrate the situation the speaker is describing (that is, why she relies on her husband when dealing with issues in Slovene). In formal settings, as those described in Example 3 above, speakers tend to expand when reiterating a greeting in the second code, which can be interpreted either as an indication of their own affiliation to a particular institution/community/group (5b) or the affiliation of the person who is about to take turn speaking (5c).

Example 5a

> E: adesso sto ricu`/ perché anche mio marito adesso sta:`/ ha fatto un corso:´• **tečaj´ slovenščine´** • • allora gli dico sempre` "((ime)) ma che **sklon** è questo` come fa questo´"
> [And now I am re/ because even my husband now / completed a course a course of Slovene ... so I always tell him "((name)) which case is this, how do you say this?"]

Example 5b

Lep pozdrav´ vsem prisotnim`**cordiale´ • • (quindi) saluto a nome:` • • della ((ustanova)) di` • • • di Capodistria**.
[Greetings to all the people present <u>warm greetings on behalf of the ((institution)) of Capodistria</u>]

Example 5c

Ecco ora io non mi dilungerei´ • • cederei subito la parola` • • agli esperti´ • • **torej • ə: predajam besedo` • tokrat • • • v vlogi strokovnjaka` kot umetnostnega zgodovinarja` • •ki bo predstavil zbornik´ • • profesor´ • ((ime)). Izvolite.**
[So now I wouldn't want to take-up any more time, I'd like to immediately give the floor to the experts. <u>So I'm giving the floor to – this time in the role of an expert as an art historian who will present the book of proceedings – professor ((name)). Please.</u>]

Whichever the case, part of the message is only expressed in one of the codes. Similarly, expanding can also be observed in the context of the formal event, described in Example 4 above. When interpreting their own speech for the benefit of a Slovene-speaking audience, the speaker expands on what has been said by commenting on it, expressing an opinion (6a), or adding information that they consider important, but which was not previously included (6b).

Example 6a

• • Se/ finanziamenti permettendo. **Vedno smo odvisni tudi mi` na žalost` predvsem od denarja.**
[If/ funding permitting. <u>We are always dependent, unfortunately, primarily on money too.</u>]

Example 6b

E: c' è l' asilo´ • • la scuola per l' infanzia´vrtec´ ((ustanova))´ e anche la scuola:´ / • il ginnasio ((ustanova)). **Gimnazija. • Tudi` • z italijanskim učnim jezikom.**
[And there is a kindergarten, the preschool <u>preschool</u> ((institution)) and also the school / the secondary school ((institution)). <u>The secondary school. Also with Italian as the language of instruction</u>.]

4.1.4 Complementary language practice and combining TA types

Unlike Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017), who refer to complementary language practices, i.e. cases in which there is no overlap between the contents produced in the two codes, as non-translatorial, data from the corpus of bilingual spoken discourse of members of the Italian national minority in Slovenia suggests an implicit translatoriality. Although not explicitly duplicated or otherwise interpreted, the following cases from informal in-group conversations show how the contents produced in the two codes are connected, either through intensification (7a) or attenuation (7b). The alternating segments in different codes quite literally complement one another (cf. *message qualification* (Gumperz 1982), i.e. CS, in which a segment produced in the second code defines or completes the previous utterance), thus producing a fluid bilingual speech.

Example 7a

> Non lo soporto organicamente. **Mi gre na bruh**´ propio perché ṡe un / il cialtrone´ • che è diventato famoso.
> [I can't stand him physically. He makes me sick, just because he is a slob who became famous.]
> *Statement* *> intensification* *> elaboration*

Example 7b

> Ah ṡe::` **zbirčen**`ṡe:: ((1,3s)) delicato ciò! ((smeh))
> [Ah, he is choosy, he is delicate ((laughter))]
> *statement* *> attenuation*

Several translatorial actions can also be combined: Example 8 below illustrates summarizing ("the association is based on voluntary work") combined with expanding ("and none of us are employed here").

Example 8

> Il lavoro della comunità degli italiani • • • è un lavoro di volontariato noi siamo tutti volontari ((1,2s)) La parte /• • torno a ripetere. La parte culturale´ è una parte di volontari´ • • ə: **se pravi kulturni del društva` / društvo deluje na osnovi prostovoljnega dela´ in nihče od nas tukaj ni zaposlen´**
> [The work of the Italian community is voluntary work we are all volunteers. The part/ I will repeat myself. The cultural section is a section of volunteers. That is to say, the cultural section of the association / the association is based on voluntary work *and none of us are employed here*]

In Example 9a, the speaker starts off in Slovene, elaborates on the first utterance in Italian (italics), duplicates the content of the Italian utterance in Slovene (underlined), and finally adds further information in Italian, which remains uninterpreted (italics).

Example 9a

> Tam se pa prijavimo´ kot katero dr/ koli drugo kulturno društvo. ((1,5s)) **Con la differenza´ che noi ci occupiamo´ di • cultura • italiana.** ((1,4s)) Z razliko´ da s:e mi ukvarjamo´ • • pretežno´ z italijansko kul/ kulturo´ anche se siamo molto aperti anche alla maggioranza.
> [There we apply as any other cultural association. *With the difference that we deal with Italian culture*. With the difference that we deal mostly with Italian culture *even though we are quite open to the majority.*]

Examples 9b-c below illustrate duplicating combined with expanding and complementary language practices.

Example 9b

> ((kašelj)) ə:: In questa casa´ • • funzionano::` / hanno / trovano spazio:´ le sezioni ´ • che operano´ presso la nostra comunità • • • **Torej v tej hiši` domujejo dru/ m:: • • sekcije našega društva´ naše skupnosti´** • • e sono tante´ e ne dimentico sempre qualcuna´ per questo chiamo sempre due aiutanti´ no?
> [((cough)) In this house function, have, find their space the sections that operate within our community. So this house is home to sections of our association, of our community *and there are many and I always forget some this is why I always call for two assistants, no?*]

Example 9c

> Lepa hvala´ • **grazie´** • a ((ime))´ curatrice` di questo volume´ • • • ecco ora siamo giunti` • • • ala fine quasi` • e io • • • vedo tanti autori´ • • colaboratori´ • cederei la parola se qualcuno` ((1,5s)) ha voglia di fare qualche intervento? • • **Če je m/ mogoče` kdo med vami` da bi želel še kaj` dodati?** ((4,0s)) Sembra di no´ siamo un po' stanchi´ forse.
> [Many thanks, thanks, to ((name)) the editor of this volume … so now we have come to the end, and I see many authors, contributors, I would like to give the floor if anyone feels like adding something? Is there someone among you who would like to add anything? *Apparently not, we are a bit tired, maybe.*]

These sequences and combinations of different types of TA further highlight the fluidity of such bilingual practice, proving that – even at public events – the bilingual speakers who engage in self-translatoriality assume that everyone involved speaks both languages, while also signalling a preference for intercomprehension over interpreting.

4.2 Motivation for self-translatoriality and its purpose

Self-translatoriality, as already indicated in Example 5 above, is not limited to interpreting and facilitating comprehension: for instance, in Example 10a, when asked about their preference between Italian and Slovene, the speaker responds with conviction, repeating the last utterance in Slovene, to *add emphasis and humour*; furthermore, Examples 10b-d illustrate how speakers engage in self-translatoriality to *correct an (unintentional) insertion*. In many of these cases the transitions between codes are marked by pauses, laughter, or commentary.

Example 10a

> No:: l' italiano assolutamente. Non esiste. • • Non c' è paragone. • • *Ni **primerjave***.
> [No, Italian, absolutely. It doesn't exist. There is no comparison. <u>There is no comparison</u>.]

Example 10b

> ad esempio` l' altro giorno` mia mamma´ • • è entrata in una biblioteca´ • • in una libreria` scusa´• • quella lì di fronte ala **tržnica**´ <u>di fronte al merca/</u>… Mia nona´ non gavesi dito mai **tržnica.**
> [for example, the other day my mum went to a library … a bookshop, sorry … that one in front of the market, <u>in front of the mark</u>/ … My grandma would have never said market.]

Example 10c

> E lei ha detto` "sì però se tu fai decidere` • • il capitalismo´ al fine sei una: / una **cunja**`" *non so cosa ha deto*` uno straccio.
> [And she said "yes but if you let capitalism decide, in the end you are a rag" I don't know what she said <u>a rag</u>.]

Example 10d

> Avevo` • • un nonno` che viveva a Lubiana´ che era **čebelar**´ • • apicoltore´ • • • e::m::: e loro´ so che mi:: insegnavano:::` ((1,9s)) lo sloveno.
> [I had a grandfather who lived in Ljubljana and he was a beekeeper … <u>a beekeeper</u> … and they, I know they taught me Slovene.]

Example 10e

> **In veste kako je blo hecno´ ne?** • • Cosa era interessante` no? • • Che allora` • • noi naturalmente non possedevamo nessuna fotografia` niente`sua di lui `no?

[And you know how funny it was no? <u>What was interesting, no?</u> That at the time we did not possess any photo, nothing, of him, no?]

As observed before in the case of opening greetings, self-translatoriality can also overlap with *addressee specification* (cf. Gumperz 1982) and serve as a symbolic gesture expressing openness and respect towards the other culture. Moreover, it may *signal the speakers' identity* through language choice (cf. Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022, 12), as illustrated in case 10e above, in which the presenter at the meeting with the university students starts their turn in Slovene, reformulates their utterance and continues in Italian, presumably to highlight their role as a representative of the Italian community.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to observe the occurrence of code-switching as a form of translatoriality among members of the Italian national minority in Slovenia. Following the model proposed by Reh (2004) and expanded upon by Koskela, Koskinen, and Pilke (2017), 85 instances of self-translatoriality (or *reiterations* according to Gumperz 1982, 78) from spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech were observed in terms of duplicating, summarizing, expanding and complementary language practices. The analysis shows that while self-translatoriality occurs both in in-group and out-group bilingual communication in different (informal, semi-formal and formal) settings, it is far more frequent in the context of public events hosted or co-hosted by the Italian national minority that were open to the broader multilingual community, i.e. in situations that would usually call for interpreting. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that although duplicating language practices occur in all settings, speakers often repeat only the nearest element, either single words or phrases, which can sometimes lead to a fragmentation of the message. Moreover, all four TA types are often combined, producing fluid bilingual utterances that presuppose a certain degree of plurilingual competence among all participants.

In addition to speakers making sure they are understood or engaging in self-translatoriality to aid comprehension, these language practices are also motivated by other reasons: speakers often correct themselves after a single-word switch or reiterate what has been said to add emphasis and humour. The data also show that self-translatoriality signals speakers' identities and – particularly in the case of duplicating greetings and opening formulas in formal settings – often overlaps with addressee specification. The case study also unveiled the value of translatoriality as a symbolic gesture within the multilingual community of Slovene Istria, in which intercomprehension is perceived as a desirable practice that acknowledges the importance and value of both official languages as well as a discursive strategy that reveals a respectful attitude towards the culture of the Other and promotes plurilingualism and the coexistence of multiple local cultural identities.

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Appendix

Table 1. Additional transcription symbols.

.	falling intonation
?	rising intonation
!	exclamation
´	rising tone
`	falling tone
text	speech laughter
“text”	reported speech
:	sound elongation
•	short pause
• •	pause < 0,5 seconds
• • •	pause 0,5–1 second
((0,00s))	longer pause with duration
word/ wor/	false start, correction, or word fragment
…	ellipsis
((text))	extralinguistic circumstances, e.g. ((laughter)), ((noise)), ((sigh)); omission to provide anonymity, e.g. Rose works at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana > ((name)) works at the ((institution)) in Ljubljana
((neraz.))	unintelligible speech
(text)	guessing an unintelligible part
ə, əm, m,	filler sound indicating hesitation, uncertainty
mhm	filler sound indicating agreement

About the author

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Book Review

Richard Pleijel and Malin Podlevskikh Carlström, eds. *Paratexts in Translation. Nordic Perspectives*

Berlin, Frank & Timme GmbH, 2022, 196 pp.
Hardcover: ISBN 9783732907779.

Reviewed by Donald F. Reindl
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Paratexts in Translation. Nordic Perspectives is volume 135 in the book series *TRANSÜD. Arbeiten zur Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens und Dolmetschens* (Works on Theory and Practice of Translating and Interpreting), initially published by Peter Lang and (since volume six) by Frank & Timme in Berlin. The works in the series have mostly appeared in German, but also in Spanish, French, and English, as in this volume. Described as presenting "treatises that build bridges between languages and cultures" (TRANSÜD), previous volumes in the series have covered topics ranging from film translation and theater surtitling to translation culture and translation competence, as well as field-specific works dedicated to translation and interpreting in healthcare, law, and other areas. The current volume is a good thematic fit to this range of topics, complementing the scope of coverage by the series.

Paratexts in Translation is dedicated to translation aspects relating to the concept of the paratext, which has been in vogue in translation studies over the last two decades (7). The term *paratext* was applied by the late French literary theorist Gérard Genette (1930–2018) to refer to "those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher and reader: titles, forewords, epigraphs and publishers' jacket copy are part of a book's private and public history" (Genette 1997, i). Since then, the definition of the paratext has been both expanded to include reviews and literary criticism as well as refined into the subdivisions of peritexts (i.e., material in same volume as the text, such as prefaces and footnotes), epitexts (i.e., elements outside the book, such as interviews with the author), metatexts (i.e., critical commentary), and extratexts (i.e., texts that can influence how a translation is produced or received). The recognition and acceptance of these additional distinctions vary from one researcher to another (9, 13). As the editors point out, the study of paratexts is a growing field: the first full volume on the topic was published in 2018 (Kathryn Batchelor's *Translation and Paratexts*), and we can expect more studies on paratexts to appear as researchers increasingly engage with the subject (9).

This volume consists of five articles. The first contribution, by Elin Svahn, "The Making of a Non-Retranslation through Paratexts. *Bonjour Tristesse* in Eight Swedish Editions 1955–2012" (21–55), examines paratexts in relation to Françoise Sagan's best-known novel, *Bonjour tristesse*. The second article, by Richard Pleijel, "At the Threshold of the Sacred. Paratextual Retranslation and Institutional Mediation through Footnotes in a Roman Catholic Edition of the New Testament" (57–92), is dedicated to footnotes in the 2020 edition of *Katolsk studiebibel* (Catholic Study Bible). Marcus Axelsson's article "Translating Feminism. Paratexts in the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish Translations of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)" (93–121) examines the relevance of the title work in different cultural contexts viewed through the lens of paratexts. The fourth contribution, by Malin Podlevskikh Carlström, "Translation Visibility and Translation Criticism in the Swedish Reception of Post-Soviet Russian Literature. Literary Reviews as Epitexts" (123–164), uses paratexts to explain how translations are perceived in a literary system. The volume concludes with an article by Jana Rüegg, "Marketing 'Frenchness'. The Paratextual Trajectory of Patrick Modiano's Swedish Book Covers" (165–193), examining book covers as paratexts and the motifs that they use to convey "Frenchness".

The volume's subtitle, *Nordic Perspectives*, reflects not only the subject matter in the contributions but also the researchers themselves. All five contributors are relatively young scholars (born between 1979 and 1990) with Swedish backgrounds (with degrees from or teaching at Stockholm University, the University of Uppsala, and the University of Gothenburg). Marcus Axelsson is also a lecturer at Østfold University College in Norway and Malin Podlevskikh Carlström is a fellow at the University of Turku in Finland, adding an expanded Nordic dimension to the contributors to the volume.

Elin Svahn's contribution takes as its starting point the fact that Françoise Sagan's 1954 novel *Bonjour tristesse* first appeared in a Swedish translation in 1955 and was reissued in eight editions up to 2012. Because the same translation was used each time, Svahn refers to this as a "non-retranslation," and she uses this as a basis to examine how the novel has been canonized in the Swedish literary system—that is, how the 1955 translation by Lily Vallquist (1897–1986) was repeatedly "packaged" for Swedish readers. The effect is a diachronic dissection of the novel's canonization. Strikingly (and unusually from a cross-linguistic perspective), the novel's title was changed in Swedish to *Ett moln på min himmel* (literally, 'A Cloud in My Sky'), and it was not until the fourth edition, in 1983, that the Swedish edition of the novel was published with its untranslated French title. This is in marked contrast to other language editions of the novel, which have either simply used the French title (e.g., in English, Italian, Dutch, Serbo-Croatian, etc.) or translated it literally (e.g., Bulgarian *Добър ден, тъга*, Greek Καλημέρα θλίψη, Polish *Witaj, smutku*, etc.). As Svahn points out, the effect of this is a loss of intertextuality (in the original work, the opening epigraph sheds light on the title; 28) as well as canonization of the innovative title in Swedish. Svahn examines epitexts (e.g., reviews of the novel) and peritexts (e.g., the back cover blurb), observing that the description of Sagan as the author has evolved over time (from a girl to a woman to a cultural concept), and also that subsequent paratexts heavily rely on previous ones, recycling elements from them.

Richard Pleijel's article examines the case of a Catholic paratextual reworking of a Bible translation. The translation *Bibel 2000* (published in 1999/2001) was the product of a state-sponsored committee established in 1972 aiming to redress dissatisfaction with the 1917 official Swedish translation of the Bible; as such, it was intended to be a strictly linguistic and non-confessional translation to serve the cultural needs of the Swedish population regardless of religious belief. When the Catholic Church requested permission to revise the translation in line with Catholic doctrine, this was denied, but permission was granted to add additional footnotes to the unchanged translation. These footnotes mostly relate to the 1992 catechism, church councils, and papal encyclicals, with an emphasis on Catholic doctrine such as the Immaculate Conception. The resulting *Katolsk studiebibel* (Catholic Study Bible, 2020) "mediates a distinctly Catholic understanding of the New Testament" (57) and is in essence a "paratextual retranslation" of an unaltered original text. Pleijel points out that influencing the confessional perspective of Biblical translations is not unique; examples range from paratextual downplaying of theological disputes in the 1611 King James Version to paratextual emphasis on Calvinist doctrine in the 1637 Dutch translation (*Statenvertaling*) and promotion of dispensationalism in the 1909 *Scofield Reference Bible*.

Marcus Axelsson's study shows how paratexts (in the case at hand, peritexts in particular) intersect with gender studies by comparing the Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish translations of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). In all three cases, the motivation for translating the work seems to have been prophylactic, so that the feminine "mystique" (i.e., the myth that women are fulfilled by their roles as housewives and mothers) would not become a reality in Scandinavia (93). This is set against a contrast between post-Second World War American culture, in which the women's movement regressed, and Scandinavian culture of the same time, when women were making strides forward through greater workplace involvement, welfare state developments such as childcare institutions, and social equality as a core value. Axelsson's discussion is contextualized in historical and intercultural examples; he points out how Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was undermined by the footnotes in its German translation, but endorsed and even radicalized by its French footnotes. The three Scandinavian translations of *The Feminine Mystique* differ in their paratexts. The translated Danish title is innovative (*Farvel Kvindesag?* 'Farewell, Women's Cause?'), whereas the Norwegian and Swedish tiles are more or less semantically equivalent to the English; the Danish text lacks cover art and a synopsis, and the Swedish text lacks a foreword. The role of forewords is especially important because they prepare readers for approaching a text. The lengthy Danish foreword (by the translator Kika Mølgaard, 1930–1995) presents personal opinions, endorses the text's message, and carries a warning tone, whereas the Norwegian foreword (by the sociologist Sverre Lysgaard, 1923–1994) is more scholarly and tones down the argument, but also echoes the Danish warning. Overall, Axelsson's analysis illustrates how paratexts can amplify, undermine, or even negate a text.

Malin Podlevskikh Carlström's contribution is a data-driven corpus-based study focusing on translation criticism. Her corpus consisted of 430 literary reviews (i.e., epitexts) of Swedish translations of eighty-two post-Soviet novels published between 1994 and 2020 with the aim of determining whether and how a review indicates that a text is a translation, and what value judgments the reviews expressed. The data and statistics are presented in several tables and graphs. It is noted that translation criticism is relatively weakly developed, especially because translation quality is difficult to assess and because the social status of translation is relatively low, leading to invisibility of both the translator and translation in general among readers. Nonetheless, translation criticism plays an important role because "the critic functions as a gatekeeper, whose . . . reviews may encourage or discourage readers to read a novel" (130). Attention is drawn to the fact that what passes for translation criticism is generally vague and unsupported platitudes, or clichés such as "translated fluently" or "reads as the original" without any examples to support such an assessment. Podlevskikh Carlström presents detailed hierarchies of visibility and criticism, finding that 89% of reviews mention the translator by name (a legal requirement in Sweden) and that 26% contain some form of translation criticism. Negative criticism is relatively rare, but it can also be cutting (e.g., "caveman-level Swedish" or "a torment to read"; 137). Among several conclusions, the takeaways are that highbrow literature and highbrow authors are more visible in translation criticism, and that politics come into play because the Swedish media have a longstanding tendency of favoring Russian opposition or dissident authors.

Jana Rüegg's article investigates how Swedish publishers exploit the notion of "Frenchness" when selecting cover illustrations for translations of works by the Nobel Prize winner Patrick Modiano (born 1945). These illustrations are publisher's peritexts, and they serve an advertising or marketing function. Moreover, publishers rarely retain the original cover art when publishing a translated work because the book cover must appeal to the target culture by meeting its dominant expectancy norms. As Rüegg observes, works in different genres are marketed in different ways, and most readers can guess the genre that a book belongs to based on its cover illustration. Thus, in the case at hand, publishers seek to exploit connotations of high prestige that readers expect. Since his first novel was published in Swedish translation in 1970, Modiano has seen thirty of his works issued in Swedish by various publishers. The author examines these to determine what aspects of Frenchness and high prestige are highlighted. In the dichotomy between cosmopolitanization (i.e., playing down the special features of the source culture) and vernacularization (i.e., playing up these features; cf. Edfeldt et al. 2022, 3), Swedish publishers opt for the latter. Rüegg concludes that Frenchness is evoked through a range of techniques, from obvious images of Paris (such as the Eiffel Tower or a Métro sign), to less obvious symbolism (e.g., a French bistro or a Parisian-looking city), to rather abstract choices: foggy scenes and monochrome photos. In turn, buyers are conditioned to expect such cover illustrations, fostering their perseverance.

Although the focus on paratexts may seem narrow at times, the topic raises broad issues, especially for translation. Foremost among these is that a translation itself can be considered a paratext rather than a subsidiary work, as pointed out in the introduction to the collection (11). The ambiguous extent of authorial intention in relation to a text is also worth considering (13). The individual works in this volume do provide plenty of food for thought.

Svahn's observation that the Swedish translation of *Bonjour tristesse* has remained unchanged for seven decades recalls the fact that even original texts gradually become stale and out of synch with the times—for example, racial concerns expressed when reading the works of Mark Twain today (cf. Tharp and Sloane 2014) or even leading to bowdlerization of the title of a Joseph Conrad novel (cf. Conrad 2009). Staleness is even more of a concern with translations; for example, Clifford Landers suggests that the half-life of a translation is thirty to forty years, and that a translation increasingly loses "its vitality, its freshness, and its ability to communicate," necessitating periodic retranslations (Landers 2001, 10–11). Svahn's comment about canonization of titles also makes one reconsider canonized titles translated into English from Slovenian; for example, France Prešeren's *The Baptism on the Savica* (Slovenian: *Krst pri Savici*) takes place *at* Savica Falls, not *on* Savica Creek, and Ivan Cankar's *The Bailiff Yerney and His Rights* (Slovenian: *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica*) calls to mind a court official rather than a farmhand.

Pleijel's article highlights the powerful role of annotation (as marginalia, footnotes, or endnotes). Although the example examined does not elevate annotation to a level equal to the text itself (à la Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* or David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*), footnotes can have a formidable effect on the reception of a text, be it an original or a translation. This is well exemplified by various editions of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*—specifically, Mercutio's reference to sodomy in Act 2, Scene 1. If the line is not simply omitted or bowdlerized, annotations of the play run the gamut from deliberate distraction (e.g., a misleading note comparing *medlar* to *meddler*; Shakespeare [1597] 2000, 71) to explicit emphasis of the sexual content (e.g., Shakespeare [1597] 2010, 147). A translator of the play would face a range of choices in whether—and how—to annotate the play in another language.

Axelsson's study calls to mind the enormous number of "why read?" forewords and essays that one encounters: *Why Read Marx Today? Why Read Proust in 2023? Why Read Kafka? Why Read Aristotle Today?* Like the paratexts accompanying *The Feminine Mystique*, these epitexts address the relevance of works decades, centuries, or even millennia old and justify their availability in translation. Carlström's observations on the attention that highbrow literature attracts in translation criticism invites the obvious question of why other literature in translation—such as children's literature or trivial literature—is any less deserving of critical attention. Furthermore, this highlights the split between literary and technical literature: nobody applauds elegant translations of texts on geomorphological processes or dermatological conditions—but perhaps we should.

Finally, Rüegg's article shows that one can, in fact, judge a book by its cover, and that this special peritext, which is generally beyond the purview of an author or translator, can have a decisive impact on the success of a book. Here, one cannot help but recall the lurid cover illustrations featured by science fiction works to boost their sales (see, e.g., Stableford 2006, 33; Dedman 2016, 133). This paratextual peccadillo of literary culture calls to mind Terry Pratchett's quip ("I do note with interest that old women in my books become young women on the covers") and was famously lampooned by Kurt Vonnegut and his recurring character of Kilgore Trout, a failed science fiction writer whose works sell only by virtue of being sandwiched between the covers of pornographic books.

For readers encountering paratexts for the first time, as well as those already familiar with the concept, *Paratexts in Translation* is a welcome, accessible, and diverse collection of research on this topic. Within the discipline of translation and beyond, it will inspire further investigations of this interesting and multifaceted phenomenon.

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