

Connectivity

Development

Evidence

Interdisciplinarity

Nature & Society

<u>Translation Practice in South Tyrol:</u> <u>Towards a commitment to</u> <u>professional translation expertise</u>

Peter Sandrini

Language constitutes an important element of identity, on a personal level as well as on the level of a group or a community, and this holds true even to a greater extent for a multilingual society. Where two or more languages are present within a society translation becomes inevitable and it seems crucial how translation is conceived as a social phenomenon to assess and gauge its value and quality. Relevant political decisions determine how the use of languages is managed: "any speech community has a language policy (practice, values, and per management)" (Spolsky 2012: 10), and this implies also to deal with translation: "there is no language policy without a translation policy"

(Meylaerts 2011: 744).

This paper looks at translation within the multilingual community of South Tyrol by investigating its social status and researching options for an adequate translation policy which notably is a field well-prepared by Eurac's long standing initiatives (De Camillis 2020). For this purpose we discuss different models how professional translation know-how might be integrated into everyday translation activities within the public administration.

TRANSLATION AND ITS STATUS

Since their inception translation studies have dealt with many different aspects of translation: e.g. language traits, language competence, equivalence, terminology, phraseology, textual features, genre characteristics, cultural idiosyncrasies, technology. What research has largely neglected up to the last two decades was the "view of translation as a social practice and consequently the role of translators and other persons involved in the translation process as social agents" (Wolf 2007: 132) as underlined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

What contemporary scholars of language and society can take from Bourdieu's work is the fundamental insight that language can be approached from the viewpoint of society, as an extraordinarily sensitive index of social relationships, processes and developments (Blommaert 2015: 12).

Translation as a "socially regulated activity" (Hermans 1997: 10) and translators as acting agents have been perceived in South Tyrol in the context of a linguistic minority where the use of one language or another is seen on the one hand as a statement of identity and social affiliation and, on the other hand, as a matter of regulatory provisions. Such an embedding determines the position of translating individuals as well as the attitude of the institutions which decide upon, mandate and publish translations. If we focus on translation as an area where resources are at stake which might be cultural identity, education, employment or prestige we may describe it with the concept of field as defined by Bourdieu: "field refers to a social arena within which struggles and maneuvers take place over specific resources and access to them [...] independent from the will and the awareness of the social agents" (Wolf 2007: 133).

The concept of field enables us "to explain the world of translation as a heterogeneous site, in which different classes of agents struggle to take favorable positions, rather than a professional entity, which is already bound by common social associations and interpretations" (Sakamoto 2019: 204).

In the context of a minority translation serves the higher purpose of using the minority language as much as possible, e.g. in official documents, ensuring its status as well as a certain equality compared to the majority language. Evidence for this is the frequent phrasing "German translation" of Italian legal texts, "immediately translated" or "immediate translation", "correctness of the translation", "translated at the expense of the administrative office" (Sandrini 2019: 288) towards the end of legal texts such as statutes and provisions.

Seen from an inner perspective of the translation profession and its members the field creates an opportunity for employment, recognition and status which depend on what Bourdieu describes as the habitus: "the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the habitus, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (Bourdieu 1990: 54 cited in Blommaert 2015: 9). What we must distinguish at this point is the translation habitus of different social groups: the public, i.e. all members of a community, people actually translating, and the members of the specific community of professional translators. To my knowledge, there are no sociological studies on the translation habitus in South Tyrol so far. Based on individual experience, however, the attitude towards translation may be furthermore approached separately regarding the Italian and the German language group. Strangely enough, the Italian-speaking population sees translation rather as an instrument in order to fulfill legal requirements whereas for the German-speaking community – constituting a minority on a national level – a certain discomfort with translation may be observed where translation is regarded largely as an obstacle to language proficiency.

Both languages are actively used and taught at school from the very beginning, in addition public employees have to provide proof of their language competence so that translation – in the minds of many – may seem unnecessary or even undesirable. A long history of power struggle for linguistic rights and balancing official language use may have led to such a negative attitude or habitus towards translation: "The habitus, product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history" (Bourdieu 1990: 54 cited in Blommaert 2015: 9). Thus, translation practices seem to have been adversely affected in South Tyrol since all public servants are obliged to translate. In fact, the collective labor agreement of 2006, where professional profiles for the regional public administration are described, lists translation as one of their duties. This means that translation is not regarded as a professional activity requiring specific training and expertise but as a sideline job certified by language competence alone.

As a social concept, Bourdieu's habitus relates at the same time to the individual as well as to a community: "habitus, where 'micro-' and 'macro-' features coincide" (Blommaert 2015: 2). Within a general negative view on translation, it is hard for a professional category to develop self-consciousness as a group. Therefore, even individuals involved in the activity of translating do not perceive it as a distinct profession with a clear occupational profile and a formal qualification,

but see it rather as a natural extension of their language proficiency, a notion which translation studies refer to as "natural translation" (Toury 1986). Bearing this attitude in mind, the bi- or trilingual region of South Tyrol is a good example of what gets lost when the important activity of translating in the official context of a language inority is reduced to mere natural translation by bilinguals. In such a scenario translation may serve its purpose of fostering language use, though at a high price.

Deficiencies have been identified with regard to the quality of translations (Angerer 2010: 62), an aspect which may affect even the effectiveness of translation: "If a text produces alienation in the target audience, not only has the translator failed his/her task, but the very purpose of institutional bilingualism has missed its point" (Angerer 2017: 373).

Translation may or may not be effective for a language minority, it is not the main goal of this paper, however, to enter a discussion on multilingualism, language competence, linguistic rights or equality of languages and the scope or role of translation in this. For this we refer to the work of González Núñez (2014) whose main interest lies with the questions of what is translated, why it is translated and what are the consequences for the minority language focusing on the following pertinent question: "What role oes translation policy play in the integration of linguistic minorities?" (González Núñez 2014: 53). In a tentative answer to this research question, Meylaerts (2017) states: "what type of linguistic and translational regime gives the best chance for participatory citizenship and for minorities' integration remains unclear" (Meylaerts 2017: 546).

We would rather concentrate on translation as a professional activity defining its members as "having the qualities that you connect with trained and skilled people, such as effectiveness, skill, organization, and seriousness of manner, and used to describe someone who does a job that people usually do as a hobby" (Cambridge Dictionary Online s.v. professional). Thus, the focus lies on the effectiveness and efficiency of

translation, i.e. the capability of producing desired results with little or no waste as of time or resources.

TRANSLATION POLICY

Translation as defined by power relations between the persons who decide about translation, who commission translations, translate and read the target texts. Policy defines power structures governing translation within a society as well as attitudes, expectations, and social norms. Being driven by outside norms which contrast with the norms of the profession, translators tend to submit to the general social habitus towards translation "as a system of embodied beliefs" (Bourdieu 2000 cited in Blommaert 2015: 8), a concept which comes close to the notion of translation culture as defined by Prunč (2008): "the historically grown, self-referential and self-regulating subsystem of a culture applied to the field of translation and evolving from the dialectical relationship with translation practice" (translated from Prunč 2008: 24). Thus, a professional approach to translation is inhibited and a translation culture evolves which is characterized by a detachment from the profession and from best practices deployed in the translation industry. People performing the activity of translating, be it their main or their secondary job, react by accepting and submitting to a reductive image of the profession, even more so when there is no formal education to support them: "the social space in which the translators acted ex negativo, i.e. as a reactive space that is subject to constraints and restrictions, and not as an interactive space in which the translators as social beings act and interact" (Prunč 2007: 41).

As a consequence of the social attitudes described above many features of professional translation such as organization, project planning and the use of translation technology are missing. This has been highlighted by De Camillis & Chiocchetti (2018) who identify a "lack of modern support tools" (De Camillis & Chiocchetti 2018: 35). It also emerged clearly from

a study on the settings and conditions of translation in South Tyrol carried out with the help of the empirically based Translations Policy Metrics (TPM) model (Sandrini 2019). In contrast to research on the effectiveness of translation, the TPM model puts efficiency in the foreground and focuses on the policy decisions that enable an optimal and efficient implementation of translation and thus on questions as to how translation works and how it is organized. In order to identify and rank the actual state of development, the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI 2010) with a scale of five maturity levels is applied: the initial, the managed, the defined, the quantitatively managed and the optimizing level. The TPM model groups relevant decisions regarding translation into five major areas: ideology, organization, technology, quality and human resources. Each of these is further divided into several subareas so that the state of development or maturity of a total of 135 areas can be measured. Data from two widespread surveys and four single interviews with translation managers in the public administration draw a sub-optimal picture of translation in this region. In many areas clear-cut policy decisions are not apparent or even completely lacking, hence the study attests South Tyrol an overall score of 44 with a placement on the second maturity level out of five.

Such an implicit approach – not to decide, not to organize nor manage explicitly – can very well make up a particular translation policy: "The unavailability of a policy document does not necessarily translate to the absence of a policy" (Kadenge & Nkomo 2011: 260, in this sense also Meylaerts 2011). However, it would be futile to expect efficiency or quality from such an approach to translation in a multilingual public administration within a society with linguistic minorities. Yet, the TPM study lends itself very well for an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses which according to the data lie predominantly in the area of organization, processes, and technology (Sandrini 2019: 388). Notably the implementation of appropriate translation technology constitutes an important asset in the era of artificial intelligence, social media, and ubiquitous free online machine translation. The last two decades have changed the translation industry radically, prompting researchers to speak of the 'computerization of translation' (Chan 2017: xxvii) and consequently of a 'technological turn' in translation studies (Cronin 2010).

Today the use of technology is a sine qua non under the aspect of efficiency: "There is no translation policy without a translation technology policy" (Sandrini 2016: 57). Using technology in all its manifestations also implies a clear vision of how data such as terminology, translation corpora, translation memory and training data for machine translation will be provided, configured and managed: "There is no translation policy without a translation data policy" (Sandrini 2016: 57).

All this presupposes specific know-how as well as training to tap the full potential of technology, especially since the one big differentiating factor shifted from availability and cost where the main accent lay in the first years of adoption towards customization and quality of translation tools. Manpower and clear professional profiles are necessary, while language competence alone and spare-time engagement do not lead to optimal results.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As outlined above, it is central for a multilingual institution to take advantage of the specific know-how that characterizes professional translation as taught in specialized academic training programs. Only by integrating this knowledge can translation activities achieve a satisfactory level of efficiency which obviously will lack if specialized knowledge is unknowingly or deliberately not considered; the TPM analysis mentioned has shown that this may be the case in South Tyrol.

The organizational problem can be illustrated metaphorically: imagine you want to build a house and you decide not to use a professional

carpenter for whatever (political) reasons, e.g. being convinced that everybody can handle a hammer and nails, and/or that carpenters are too expensive. There is no doubt that your house will have a lot of faults and imperfections, quality and even security issues as a result.

Now, the list of professional roles in the public administration in South Tyrol includes the role of a translator who can be everyone with at least a three-year university degree, or a translator supervisor with a four-year university degree of whatever specialization, but these jobs are relatively scarce as opposed to the high volume of translations or the overall number of staff. On the other hand, the activity of translating administrative texts is included among the general mansions of all staff in the public administration, and thus translation is regarded as a general function of all personnel: everybody with minimal linguistic competences translates. The effect of this ambiguous attitude and the general habitus towards professional translation – "the description of the job profile of the translator within the public administration is somehow contradictory" (De Camillis & Chiocchetti 2018: 21) – is that crucial instruments aiming at improving efficiency and quality are disregarded.

The key issue to be decided is therefore how the local administration of South Tyrol can implement and integrate professional know-how concerning translation. And this involves especially the areas mentioned above where the TPM analysis showed severe shortcomings. Professional know-how is associated with a particular academic training, so the issue could be, how translation experts with a corresponding university degree can be engaged, or what their role could be within the administration. On the other hand, the question emerges, how professional know-how can be brought to the general staff already doing translations with adequate training. And in addition which approach could bolster efficiency and quality best. Starting from the status quo with a general staff without specific translation training doing all translations, we can envisage three scenarios which may lead to this strategic aim for the public administration: 1. General staff with linguistic competences translates, professional know-how is provided externally;

2. Professional translators (translation departments) translate all texts;

3. General staff with linguistic competences translates, however professional translators coordinate and supervise translation activities.

Let us discuss these three options in detail.

1. The results of a study conducted by De Camillis & Chiocchetti (2018) are worth mentioning here: the research uses a comparative approach in order to contrast the policy and organization of translation within the multilingual administrations of Switzerland and South Tyrol. After describing the two different settings – the Swiss arrangement utilizes translation departments with academic translators and an elaborate system of translations and revision management – the paper draws some conclusions for an improvement of the situation in South Tyrol and recommends external courses for the staff who translate: "Offering courses on institutional translation could fill the gap in employees' theoretical and practical knowledge" (De Camillis & Chiocchetti 2018: 36).

Relying on external courses requires that some managing position within the administration must be able to decide which training is necessary and who is able to provide it. Adequate institutions or training facilities must be available who possess professional translation know-how and have the necessary manpower. Universities with a translator training program or specialized academies may very well fulfill this role.

Beyond the need for such a managing role there are also other issues which arise for the administration with such an approach: e.g. who is going to decide which translation technology fits best the needs of the administration, and how it will be applied within the different departments; or who will set goals or decide upon quality standards. Furthermore, external courses are not suited to manage the internal translation workflow or give technical support to staff translating within the administration. Internal knowledge will also be necessary for setting up quality criteria for translation data such as translation memories, terminology, parallel corpora or training data for machine translation as well as for a reasonable management and storage of such data.

2. The Swiss model as outlined in De Camillis & Chiocchetti (2018) hires translators with a specific university degree who organized in translation departments do all the translation jobs needed by the public administration, together with a well-thought-out revision and co-drafting system. It is never easy to transfer one organizational model into another reality, even when the Swiss can count on a long and positive experience of managing multilingualism. De Camillis & Chiocchetti (2018) for example advise against recruiting translators with a specialized professional gualification mainly for reasons of cost: "A radical overhaul of the administration's current structure, involving the hiring of professional translators, would not be feasible in the short term, primarily for financial reasons" (De Camillis & Chiocchetti 2018: 36). Such a renouncement may save some costs in the short run but it is hard to see how the efficiency of translation work can benefit with no integration of professional translators in the administration. In addition, cost is not the decisive criterion why the Swiss model would not work in South Tyrol, at least not in the short or medium term. It is much more the well-established social attitude against translation and the resulting lack of political will which prevents the adoption of such an approach in South Tyrol.

3. The third scenario seems more appropriate to take advantage of the existing knowledge as well as integrating professional translation knowhow. It mirrors an organizational model where general staff with adequate linguistic competence still translates, but professional

translators coordinate and supervise translation activities. The mentioned paper by De Camillis & Chiocchetti sees translation activities by non-professional general staff as a benefit and lists among positive assets "a deep knowledge of the functioning and areas of expertise of the various departments as well as of the text types used" (De Camillis & Chiocchetti 2018: 36). This advantage should be preserved. However, these resources must be integrated by internal translation know-how to ensure efficiency and quality. Translators with academic training "should act as language services advisors or language consultants, advising their customers on the best approach to a particular assignment and explaining the benefits or drawbacks of certain translation methods" (FIT 2017: 2), as the International Translators Organization describes the future role of translation professionals. Thus, the model reflects the ongoing change in the role translators play: they do not see themselves in a competitive role with machine translation, or in our example with the intimate knowledge and specific language competence of general staff, they rather position themselves as a necessary complement with an eye on optimizing the translation process in relation to technology, organization and quality.

Along these lines translators will act as "translation workflow engineers" (Hummel 2019: 20) covering both the role of a reviser with quality checking and post-editing, as well as the role of a "multilingual knowledge manager" with the task of maintaining multilingual knowledge and terminology data, and the role of a "linguistic assets curator" who takes care of language resources such as translation memories, text corpora or training data for machine translation systems (see Hummel 2019: 20). The adoption and efficient application of translation technology represents a crucial factor, and various authors in translation studies emphasize its importance as a key aspect of modern translation competence. Pym for example sees the translator as "solutions architect, or solutions manager for machine intelligence" (Pym 2019: 17), and Melby & Hague (2019) state: "a successful language-services advisor

must believe that technology – including machine translation – creates an opportunity, not an obstacle" (Melby & Hague 2019: 210).

Coming back to our metaphor of constructing a house without carpenters or at least deciding to minimize the role of professional carpenters, you may decide to hire just one for overseeing the ongoing work, for training the lay workers, or for checking the quality of the construction.

Such a model allows for a smaller number of hired translators in the public administration, but professional translators can concentrate on providing their professional know-how as well as playing a leading role in optimizing translation processes within the multilingual public administration.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the overall purpose of this paper is to introduce the necessity of professional competence or specific translation literacy for the local multilingual administration, as well as to present some introductory proposals that could lead to significant progress in efficiency and quality.

The quality and effective use of language is especially important for a linguistic minority whose identity and power are largely based upon the degree to which its members identify with one another. Translation plays a crucial role in guaranteeing equal language use by the administration, and the principles of good governance impose doing this in the most efficient way. Today, technology, data management and quality assurance require specific know-how in translation which cannot be accomplished by regarding translation processes as a side-line job. A multilingual administration that aims to optimize translation processes must take advantage of professional know-how. Adopting one of the three approaches shown above may lead to this goal, but we have to keep in mind that all three have their positive and negative aspects,

although the third model seems the most promising for the reasons already stated.

Abstract

This paper addresses the general attitude towards translation in the multilingual region of South Tyrol and especially in the local public administration. Based on existing research studies the status quo of official translation is analyzed and the necessity of integrating hitherto lacking professional translation know-how is emphasized. To this end three options are discussed how translation processes can be optimized by making specific know-how available within the public administration.

Keywords: translation, translators, social attitude, translation policy, public administration

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Angerer, Barbara (2010). Individuelle und institutionelle Zweisprachigkeit: Das besondere Spannungsfeld in Südtirol. Maîtrise: Univ. Genève. Available at https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch /unige:12741 (5.3.2021).

Angerer, Barbara (2017). Living apart together in South Tyrol: Are Institutional Bilingualism and Translation Keeping Language Groups apart? In: Grote, G.; Obermair, H. (eds.): A Land on the Treshold 1915-2015. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 361-380.

Blommaert, Jan (2015). Pierre Bourdieu – Perspectives on language in society. In: Jan-Ola Östman & Jef Verschueren (eds.), Handbook of Pragmatics. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1-16.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984). Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste. London: Routledge.

Chan, Sin-wai (2017). The future of translation technology: towards a world without Babel. Routledge Studies in Translation Technology Series. New York: Routledge.

CMMI (2010). CMMI for Services, Version 1.3. Pittsburgh, PA: Software Engineering Institute, Carnegie Mellon University. http://resources.sei.cmu.edu/ library/asset-view.cfm?AssetID=9665 (02-018).

Cronin, Michael (2010). The Translation Crowd. In: revista tradumatica. 08/2010, 1-7.

De Camillis, Flavia (2020). Assessing Translation Practices of Nonprofessional Translators in a Multilingual Institutional Setting. In: Prieto Ramos, F. (ed.), Institutional Translation and Interpreting: Assessing Practices and Managing for Quality. New York: Routledge, 44-61.

De Camillis, Flavia; Chiocchetti, Elena (2018). Politiche traduttive nelle amministrazioni pubbliche multilingui: Confronto tra Alto Adige e Svizzera. AIDA Informazioni 9/2018, 15-39.

FIT (2017). FIT Position Paper on the Future for Professional Translators. International Federation of Translators. https://wa1.fitift.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Future-of-professional-translatorsbilingual-exit_April-2017.pdf [01.03.2021].

Hermans, Theo (1997). Translation as institution. In: M. Snell-Hornby, Z. Jettmarová and K. Kaindl (eds): Translation as Intercultural Communication. Selected Papers from the EST Congress Prague 1995. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 3–20.

Hummel, Jochen (2019). "Sunsetting CAT". Presentation at the Jiamcatt Annual Meeting "The Shape of Things to Come", Luxembourg, 13 May 2019.

Kadenge, Maxwell; Nkomo, Dion (2011). Language policy, translation

and language development in Zimbabwe. In: Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. 29:3. DOI: 10.2989/16073614.2011.647488, 259-274.

Melby, Alan; Hague, Daryl H. (2019). "A Singular(ity) Preoccupation. Helping Translation Students Become Language Services Advisors on the Age of Machine Translation". In: Sawyer, David/Austermühl, Frank; Enríquez Raído, Vanessa (eds.): The Evolving Curriculum in Interpreter and Translator Education. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 205–228.

Meylaerts, Reine (2011). Translational Justice in a Multilingual World: An Overview of Translational Regimes. In: Meta : journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal. 56, n° 4. 743-757.

Meylaerts, Reine (2017): Multilingualism as a challenge for translation studies. In: Millán, Carmen; Bartrina, Francesca (eds.): Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies. 537-551.

Prunč, Erich (2007): Priests, princes and pariahs – Constructing the professional field of translation. In: Wolf, Michaela; Fukari, Alexandra (eds.): Constructing a Sociology of Translation. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 39-56.

Prunč, Erich (2008). Zur Konstruktion von Translationskulturen. In: Schippel, Larissa (ed.): Translationskultur – ein innovatives und produktives Konzept. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 19-41.

Pym, Anthony (2019). "How Automation through Neural Machine Translation Might Change the Skill Sets of Translators". Version 3. August 29, 2019. Draft written as part of the project Language Competence and Work (RecerCaixa 2016ACUP00020), 2017–2019. www.academia.edu [20.11.2019].

Sakamoto, Akiko (2019). Why do many translators resist post-editing? A sociological analysis using Bourdieu's concepts. The Journal of Specialised Translation, Issue 31 – January 2019, 201-216.

Sandrini, Peter (2016). Towards a Digital Translation Policy. In: Dejica, Daniel; Hansen, Gyde; Sandrini, Peter; Para, Iulia (eds.): Language in the Digital Era. Challenges and Perspectives. Warsaw / Berlin: De Gruyter Open, 50-59.

Sandrini, Peter (2019). Translationspolitik für Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung einer Strategie der Offenheit. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2019, TransÜD 99.

Spolsky, Bernard (ed.) (2012). The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 124-146. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511979026.

Toury, Gideon (1986). "Natural Translation and the Making of a Native Translator," TextconText 1, 11-29.

Wolf, Michaela (2007). Bourdieu's "Rules of the Game": An Introspection into Methodological Questions of Translation Sociology. Matraga, Rio de Janeiro, v.14, n.20, 130-145.

Eurac Research Drususallee/Viale Druso 1 39100 Bozen/Bolzano T +39 0471 055 055 <u>info@eurac.edu</u>

DOI: 10.57749/a924-n835

Today, Eurac Research is an internationally respected and globally networked science and research center. But how did this success come about, and what are its future targets and projects? Founded in 1992, 30 years ago, the then "European Academy of Bozen-Bolzano" had to overcome numerous obstacles to find its way. In a rather forbidding environment, it gradually succeeded in firmly establishing the concerns of science, while expanding enormously in terms of personnel and structure. Within these pages, more than a dozen authors and numerous interviews capture what is special about Eurac Research and shed light on this inner-Alpine "luxury place of the mind".

Recommended Citation: Obermair H., Pechlaner H. (Editors), Eurac Research: Inventing Science in a Region, Bolzano-Bozen, Italy: Eurac Research, 2022

EAN: 978-88-6839-628-2 ISBN: 978-88-6839-628-2 Print version DOI: <u>https://doi.org/10.57749/a924-n835</u> Online version

Page: 272 Languages: German / Italian / English Size: 190 x 270 mm Price: 20,00 Euro

Buy now

Except where otherwise noted, content on this site is licensed under a <u>Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license</u>.

© Eurac Research 2022