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Translation *plus*: The added value of the translator

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The translator *plus*: An Introduction 8
Cinzia Spinzi

Translation *plus* and the added value of the translator: An interview with David Jemielity 15
David Jemielity and *David Katan*

Translation *plus* and the added value of the translator: An interview with Rose Newell 32
Rose Newell and *David Katan*

Collaborative Translation and Cases of Translator *Plus* 42
Angela D'Egidio

Exploring and expanding the plus of translators' power: Translatorial agency and the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) 62
Gary Massey

The value added of the translator in the financial services industry 83
Patrick Williamson

Hybridisation adds value in translation and interpreting 100
Claudia Benetello

Author as the Other Translator: From cooperation to collaboration through competition and compromise 124
Wenhao YAO

'Dear Kimon':
Gatekeeping and politics in a translator's correspondence 145
Nadia Georgiou

Creativity in Media Accessibility: A Political Issue 162
Pablo Romero-Fresco

Notes on Contributors 197

Acknowledgements 201

The translator *plus*: An Introduction

Cinzia Spinzi

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

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

In situations where the translator is not "just the translator", and is listened to rather than simply 'used', how has her status been re-evaluated to include higher autonomy decision making? And, what are the models suitable for investigating this role of agent as an integral part of a cooperative chain or circle? And again, what skills are necessary to make the translator more proactive and less reactive? These concerns and many others are tackled in this issue starting from the two provocative interviews that David Katan delivers in company of two professional translators thriving in the premium market – and who have both written about the subject: David Jemielity and Rose Newell.

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

What seems to give this parallel world of translators an extra kick is the set of soft skills, the questionning and responsiveness, as **Rose Newell** suggests. Sounding less comfortable with the expression 'premium translator' because "a person cannot be a premium as such", Newell brings the conversation to a number of points she considers crucial, including the translator's ability to turn down the work that doesn't live up to her professionality. The translator's proactive behaviour starts at the drafting level of the texts to be translated to ensure communicability and usability, even though – she observes – translation agencies discourage translators from doing so. A good example of how this added value of the translator can be made more visible – Newell proposes – is to ensure that clients see and understand the ST-TT file with the translator comments to make clients understand the translation process, the significance of the words and how they matter in the choices the translator makes. Sometimes, as Newell says, there is a problem educating clients, and rather like Jemeliety's "battlepicking", she points out: "You can't get blood out of a stone" – and some translation projects should simply not be undertaken. In conclusion, since market accessibility, needs, and size will unceasingly vary, the key for Newell "is to think hard about what any given client is looking for, and who they are selling to" (p. 40).

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

Gary Massey continues, pointing to the value that translatorial agencies may add to operational and strategic communication that take place within multilingual organizations if a more positive and strategic role of the translator is valued. Massey argues that translators, far from being marginal to the communicative organization, are endowed with a "'hidden power' (Piekkari *et al.* 2020, 3015) as they reshape meaning through the chain of the interpretative decisions they make when they translate" (p.63). In his analysis of the stumbling blocks to a pro-active role for translators within multilingual organizations, he mentions the translator's invisibility, the one-dimensionality of the dominant models of translation service provision, and also the linear model of communication within organizations which often neglect the role of the final recipients and their interpreting capacities. Massey suggests that a combination of translatorial linguistic ethnographic research methods should be used to detect factors that inhibit the professional translators' agency building on the results of previous research studies (Katan 2011, 2016; Massey and Wieder 2019, 2020).

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

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

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

And we return to transcreation in **Claudia Benetello**'s personal case that follows. The added value for the commissioning author is visible through what she calls "hybridization", a more far-reaching form of specialization that helps translators to move up the market. Based on her polyhedric experience as a translator and interpreter in a number of sectors, and on her idea of transcreation as a "fully-fledged consulting service", Benetello argues that possessing skills that belong "on the other side of the fence" (p. 104) contribute to a premium professional profile that will benefit clients. Hence, her particular profile includes anthropological, copywriting and marketing skills.

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

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

Four steps are distinguished in Yao's model of collaboration, which takes both from Steiner's 4 stage Hermeneutic Model and from Taoism: the flow of exchange, reflected here in the interaction between the author and the translator. The flow is the underlying principle behind creation where through a continuous act of devotion and creativity the translator becomes the "Other Author". The initial step is Cooperation. This starts with the commissioner's mandate, which sets up an unequal status and identity between the translator and the author – in the sense that the translator agrees to cooperate following the conditions established by the commissioner. This status is altered in the following stage, Competition (seen here as 'yang', the masculine active force), when the translator responds or *attacks* the source text and the author's authorial status is undermined. At this point, the translator is no longer passive because she intervenes in the text. Balance is restored in the following phase, Compromise (seen here as 'yin', the feminine, passive, conservative force), where the two 'authors' co-exist by virtue of the final phase, Collaboration, where both author and translator are enriched.

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

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

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

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