Introduction to the Special Dossier Section "Translation and Disruption"

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"Disrupt or be disrupted" seems to be a mantra in the business world at the moment: innovative technologies are valued highly as a way of solving problems where traditional business models were unable to. The idea of "disruption" is widely recognised to have derived from Clayton M. Christensen's notion of "disruptive innovation". In his seminal book *The Innovator's Dilemma* (1997), Christensen expounded how a small-scale but innovative digital technology can overthrow large well-managed businesses (for which Christensen uses the term "incumbents") in a very short time. One of more famous examples discussed by Christensen is the development of computer disks. Since then, the idea of digital disruption has caused both excitement and concern in businesses worldwide, and is much discussed in fields ranging from financial services (with disruptive fintech technologies), retail (a good example of a disruptor is Amazon), entertainment distribution (Netflix), the hospitality sector (Airbnb) to the taxi industry (Uber).

With this in mind, this special dosser section of *Revista Tradumàtica*, "Translation and Disruption", aims to explore, understand, assess, re-evaluate and discuss the influence of digital disruption in the world of translation. Several of the papers were first presented at the 17th Portsmouth Translation Conference of the same title, which took place on 4-5 November 2017 at the University of Portsmouth.

Translation is not immune to the disruptive trend in business. Machine translation (MT), particularly the newly developed Neural Machine Translation (NMT), would probably be the first thing that comes to many people's minds when talking about disruptive technologies in translation.

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Some MT developers now claim that NMT tools can produce translations as well as or better than human translators (e.g. Faes, 2016; Hassan et al., 2018). There is also an international and multi-industrial drive for transforming translation into a sort of utility, like electricity or water, by making use of Big Data and automatization, so that translation will "push the evolution of human civilization" (TAUS, 2018). In this landscape, not surprisingly, an overriding fear prevails in the public discourse that experienced translators, as well as Language Service Providers (LSPs) who hire those translators, may be the ones to be disrupted if they do not adopt the right technologies fast enough.

It is not only the business side of the translation (i.e. "Is there a job for us?") that is being challenged by technologies; human aspects of translation, such as the visibility and agency of professional translators, are also affected. Increased emphasis on speed and low costs is putting enormous pressures on translators, who are now facing the challenge of "incorporat[ing] and defend[ing] chrono-diversity in their working practices in the context of the time-space compression and near instantaneous communication", which is not just about working conditions but "[p]art of the ethical challenge for translators" (Cronin, 2013: 94-95). Translators are not the only ones facing such vulnerability. Project Managers of Language Service Providers are affected too, as they are expected to play technologically more demanding but culturally and linguistically more limited roles in the digitalised network (Risku, Rossmanith, Reichelt, & Zenk, 2013).

We also need to look beyond MT when talking about technology that is upsetting translation practices. Crowdsourcing platforms have gained great importance in translation practice, having brought a new method of translation procurement, production and distribution processes. Such platforms include both unpaid translation platforms for volunteer translators (e.g., Massidda, 2015; Mcdonough Dolmaya, 2012; among many others) and paid ones (Garcia, 2015, 2017; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017). Online forums for translators (such as Proz.com) have also brought a change to the way the translation community is organised, how people in the community communicate and how translator statuses are recognised (Pym, Orrego-Carmona, & Torres-Simón, 2016). These new online platforms have affected the way translation stakeholders interact with each other, organise themselves and negotiate their power relations, which often has economic consequences, normally to translators' detriment (Moorkens, 2017).

Technologies are also affecting translation practices in the sociopolitical arena, especially in relation to the provision of urgent communication. When used innovatively, translation in new media can exert a disrupting power on the establishment, playing an infrastructural role that assists grassroots activists, as was witnessed in the Arab Spring (Wolfson & Funke, 2016). Information gets translated on mobile devices for humanitarian causes such as in Bangladesh for displaced Rohingya refugees ("Translators without Borders launches language tool for Rohingya humanitarian response," 2018). Translation of information through mainstream as well as social media is critical to help foreign residents in natural disasters, as seen in the 2011

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North East Earthquake in Japan (Cadwell & O'Brien, 2016). Even in war zones, armed forces are trying to make use of translation technology (Rafael, 2016).

These are some examples of the ways translation is being affected by technology, all of which can be called "disruption" in a general sense: conventional practices are challenged and transformed, often in an "surprising" or "upsetting" way, as the word "disruption" implies. And this connotation of the word "disruption" is part of the reason why impartial observation tends to be difficult with this topic; the observer will belong to either in the "disrupting" or "disrupted" camp (ideologically or pragmatically), which can easily lead to either hype or paranoia. This special dossier section aims to assess the current state of public affairs and discourses (which are often led by media and technology developers) and provide balanced discussions on this topic from a Translation Studies' point of view.

In this special dossier section, the term "disruption" is understood in a broader sense than what Christensen defined in 1997 (which has since been fine-tuned by himself; see the contribution by Kenny in this special dossier section), which we believe is apt in order to fathom the multifaceted and complex situations the business of translation is and has been experiencing ("business" here not just in the commercial sense). As readers will see, authors in this special dossier section forward their own notion of "disruption" in translation and approach the issues from a variety of angles.

The first two articles set the tone and give a picture of what is currently going on in the translation industry and academia in the context of disruption.

Dorothy Kenny's contribution "*Sustaining Disruption? The Transition from Statistical to Neural Machine Translation*", is particularly useful to understand the concept of 'disruption' in the context of translation in comparison to the authentic idea of disruptive technology developed originally by Christensen. Kenny maps the development of machine translation onto Christensen's concept of disruption, arguing that neural machine translation (NMT) is a sustainable technology which builds on Statistical Machine Translation (SMT), which she argues was a disruptive technology in Christensen's sense. Her argument provides a (much desired) calm and balanced observation on the status quo of machine translation and the translation industry, which is otherwise easy to be swamped by either hypes or paranoia.

Sarah Bawa Mason's survey article "*The Translation Sector of the Future: Indications from the FIT 2017 Conference "Disruption and Diversification*", offers a bird's eye view of how the industry and the academia are reacting to and coping with the trend of digital disruption in translation by summarising the presentations at the International Federation of Translation (FIT) conference, entitled "Disruption and Diversification", which was held in Brisbane on 2-5 August 2017. Bawa Mason categorises the issues presented and discussed in the conference in five areas: globalisation and mechanisation; artificial intelligence; the visibility and value of language service providers; the challenges of the gig economy and the right to title; and copyright and intellectual property. This list shows that both the advancement of technologies as well as related human issues and implications were covered in the conference. Bawa Mason

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emphasises the importance of identifying the values humans can offer in the new order of translation and spreading an easy-to-understand message to promote the argument.

The next two contributions examine what is going on in two specific areas in the translation industry.

In her article "*Disruption in translator-client matching: Paid crowdsourcing platforms vs human project managers*", **Akiko Sakamoto** examines the two translator-client matching systems currently used in the industry: the conventional system provided by human project managers and the new algorithm-based online paid-crowdsourcing platform system. By comparing the two systems within the framework of knowledge management, Sakamoto argues that the platform model overlooks interpersonal knowledge in favour of metadata accumulation. The article also discusses the possible future development of the paid-crowdsourcing translation sector, indicating the trend of further disruptions caused by other, cheaper translation technologies.

Claire Larsonneur's article "*Online Translation Pricing Issues*" analyses the pricing methods used by nine major online translation companies to examine how the recent growth of the net economy is affecting the world of translation. The analysis reveals that the pricing mechanism of online translation is being shifted from the conventional volume-based content-oriented model towards user experience-oriented models. Looking at translation through the lens of pricing, Larsonneur places translation in the wider context of digital disruption brought about by the net economy and demonstrates the undercurrent drive of large language service providers to package translation as part of more comprehensive customer experience.

Henry Jones's contribution, "*Wikipedia as a Disruptive Translation Environment: An analysis of the Istanbul/İstanbul controversy*", provides a case study which shows how the free-participatory and non-linear nature of Wikipedia creates a disruptive online space for political tensions. His case study deals with the translation (or non-translation) of the word "Istanbul/İstanbul" on the English page of the entry. By tracing the editing history of entries made by volunteer participants from opposing political, Jones concludes that every word and layout choice on the Wikimedia has a potential to fuel political conflicts, which is enabled by the online platform's peer-production technology, characterised by its pseudonymous environment and the lack of top-down editorial control.

This special dossier section ends with two contributions which provides recent examples of initiatives launched and developed by academic institutions together with the interested industry stakeholders.

Gys-Walt van Egdom, Lucas Nunes Vieira and **Jakub Absolon**'s contribution, "*Towards testing post-editing performance: a futureproof diagnostic tool*", reports on the initiative to build a diagnostic tool to test the aptitudes of post-editors. The test would include seven modules: (1) keyboarding skills; (2) problem-solving/decision-making skills; (3) editing skills; (4) perception of productivity on editing skills; (5) following guidelines; (6) perception of productivity following guidelines and (7) background questions. Post-editing is already a disruptive professional task and

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measuring performance will allow teachers to improve students' PE competence, freelance translators to consider post-editing services and language service companies to seek suitable candidates.

The article "*Embracing digital disruption in translator training: technology immersion in simulated translation bureaus*" reports on the initiative undertaken by the INSTB (International Network of Simulated Translation Bureaus), which aims to embrace the development of digital disruption in the translation industry by educating students in simulated translation situations, using technology in a positive and proactive way. The authors from the participating institutions (**Joost Buysschaert, María Fernández-Parra, Koen Kerremans, Maarit Koponen, Gys-Walt van Egdom**) focus on technology immersion to go beyond procedural knowledge of CAT tools and apply creativity and problem-solving skills to translation work.

The collection of articles illustrates that digital disruption is now an issue that cannot be ignored in Translation Studies and needs urgent attention. Researchers are already approaching this issue critically from different angles and will continue to do so, whether they explicitly link their work to the notion of digital disruption, or work in a broader science and technology studies-inspired framework (see, for example, Kenny, 2017; Olohan, 2017). We hope this special dossier section contributes to the further development to this important line of Translation Studies research.

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