Professional Translation between Academic Theory, Best Practice and Market Realities:

A Data-Led Investigation into Practitioners' Experiences of their Current Working Conditions

submitted by

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Declaration of Originality

I certify that the work contained in this thesis is my original work except where due reference is made to other authors, and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university.

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Thesis Abstract

Translation is, as Ludwig Wittgenstein remarked, "a difficult business". With a growing global annual sales volume that currently exceeds US$ 46bn, it is also an extremely lucrative one. This PhD project is primarily an investigation into the "internal knowledge" of professional practitioners who make their living at the intersection between these two aspects of translation; who operate simultaneously in the "mnemonic time" of translation and the "instantaneous time" of globalisation, and on a daily basis negotiate between their own experience of translation as a process that *takes as long as it takes* – and, according to Translation Studies scholars, in a sense always remains provisional and unfinished – and their clients' reliance on receiving complete and accurate translations by or before a pre-agreed deadline.

Quantitative and qualitative data obtained from a survey completed by 292 respondents from 33 different countries shows that, although almost 60 per cent of respondents define themselves as *service providers*, many perceive their work as translators – described as "the work itself", "the actual work" or "the work as such" in a number of responses – as separate from, and less stressful than, their work as providers of translation services. This distinction, which is expressed most concisely in one respondent's wish for "[l]ess paperwork, emails, negotiations – *I would just like to translate*" (emphasis added), appears to point beyond the simple difference between billable and non-billable work. While a number of respondents explicitly talk about their love or passion for "translating itself", many are considerably less enamoured with the market environment that enables them to turn that passion into a livelihood. Time pressure emerges as a constant and near-ubiquitous issue that dominates many respondents' experience of their

professional practice and is inextricably linked to concerns about remuneration, work/life balance, mental and physical wellbeing and the standard of quality respondents feel able to deliver under these conditions. To compensate for growing pressure on rates, a substantial number report working longer hours and/or at greater speed than they would like to. As responses to survey questions about stress factors and enjoyment confirm, these concerns are frequently exacerbated by the feeling that clients who commission translations fail to appreciate the full of complexity of what translators actually do. Specifically, responses to survey questions about definitions of professional identity show that respondents were consistently more likely to ascribe reductive views of translators as service providers, suppliers or resources to their clients, and more likely to ascribe empowering and/or creative roles as language experts, knowledge workers, word artists or intercultural mediators to themselves.

It may also be the case that this is a mutual failure: that some professional translators themselves have a reductive view of their clients' constraints and expectations unless there is sufficient opportunity, time, inclination and trust on both sides for meaningful dialogue beyond negotiating rates and deadlines. This can be difficult in a market dominated by profit-driven corporate language service providers (LSPs) whose business model relies on marginalising professional translators as service providers, vendors and translation resources.

My secondary research objective is to examine what can be done, and/or is already being done, by HE institutions, professional associations and other stakeholders to equip new and aspiring translators with the skills and resilience required to confront the working conditions described by survey respondents, and to offer proposals for new and existing models of best practice in translator education, e.g. situated learning under conditions that are as authentic as possible, mentorship schemes and other forms of collaboration between new and experienced professionals.

The thesis concludes with a speculative chapter that explores potential scenarios for the future of human translation in a market environment that is progressively geared towards eliminating the human element from translation workflows altogether.

Introduction

What We Talk About When We Talk About Translation

0.1. "A Difficult Business"

Translation is – as Ludwig Wittgenstein, a thinker not unduly daunted by intellectual complexity, came to discover while revising the English translation of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – "a difficult business!"[1]

According to a more recent description by researchers studying the specific difficulties inherent in modelling and automating human translation processes, translators work on several different locutionary levels to apply their

> knowledge of the world (including [...] the two linguistic systems and associated sets of cultural conventions […]), [form a] view of the author's knowledge of the world and of the intended audience of the source text [and] of the world knowledge of the target audience [in order to perform] the two component tasks of the translation process, interpreting what the author intended to express [...] and then formulating an expression in the target language in such a way as to communicate the intended content to the degree possible to the audience of the translation in as similar a manner as possible. (Farwell and Helmreich 2014: 172)

At its best, translation can be a rewarding and stimulating intellectual activity. This is clearly the aspect of translation Wittgenstein refers to in his 1922 letter to C.K. Ogden, who oversaw the translation in question. His admission that "It *is* a difficult business!" is bracketed by explicit references to the painstaking intellectual effort expended on considering, rejecting and reconsidering potential solutions for every translation problem:

---

[1] Wittgenstein 1973: 19. Readers interested in the specific difficulties of translating Wittgenstein will find a nuanced discussion in Philip Wilson's monograph (2016) on the application of Wittgenstein to translation. I am grateful to Dr Wilson for drawing my attention to this quote, which has prompted me to rethink the relationships between the different elements in the subtitle of my thesis, in a play on the polysemy of the English word "business" that would itself have been difficult to translate into the native language I share with Wittgenstein.

> DEAR OGDEN, Now I think I have finished the correction of both the German and the English text. I have taken great pains but especial(l)y with the English. I don't know if I have succeeded. It *is* a difficult business! Enclosed I am sending you 4 sheets with remarks on special points. Please kindly read them through carefully every one for there are some points in them which I think are rather important […].
>
> […]
>
> It has happened several times that I altered the translation and found out afterwards that the translation had been all right as it was. Then I crossed out my alteration and put a sign thus - - - - - - underneath the original translation, as much as to say "I beg your pardon, it was all right".
>
> (Wittgenstein 1973: 19; emphasis in original)

This is also, I will argue in this thesis, the sense in which many practitioners experience "translating itself" as a labour of love. It is the sense in which, in her meditation on the "little art" of translation, Kate Briggs (2017: 69) describes the "great exciting excitement" of

> this process of discovery, this adventuring into the writing of a sentence, with no clear idea of what will happen when I start to try, that makes for the real, lived-out difference between reading a sentence – even reading a sentence and speculating in advance how I *might* go about translating it – and the concrete task of writing it in my own language, again. (italics in original)

With a global turnover that has grown from US$32 billion per year in 2013 to over US$46.52 billion in 2018 (DePalma et al. 2013 and 2018), the "difficult business" of translation also happen to be an extremely lucrative one. Although growth in the global language services sector has slowed down in recent years (Moorkens 2017: 466), it is expected to remain positive for the foreseeable future.

Figure 0.i. Growth in annual revenue for outsourced language services (in bn US$) based on figures published in the Common Sense Advisory's annual reports.

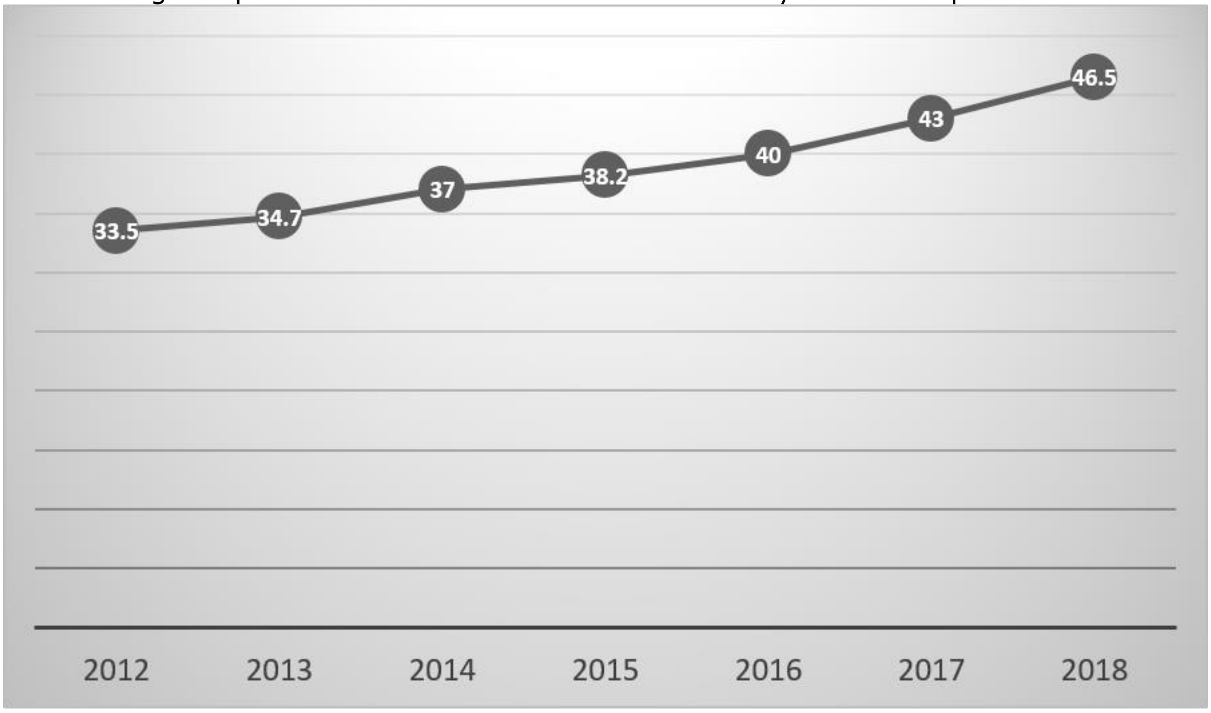
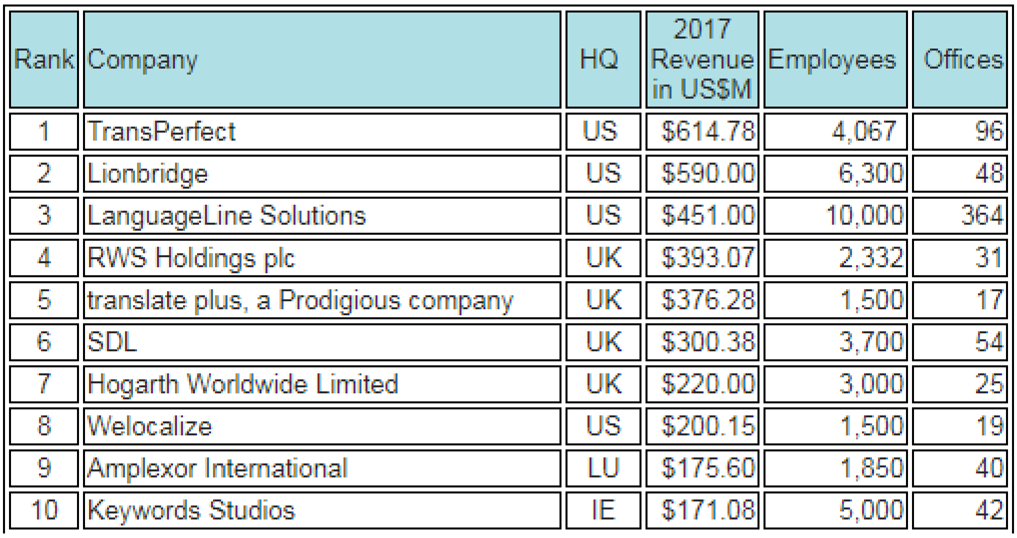


Figure 0.ii. Top ten largest language service providers in 2018, which grew at an average rate of 20.3% over the previous year. The industry-wide growth rate was 7.99% according to the Common Sense Advisory's report.
Source: https://www.commonsenseadvisory.com/top_100_lsps_2018.aspx



Rank	Company	HQ	2017 Revenue in US$M	Employees	Offices
1	TransPerfect	US	$614.78	4,067	96
2	Lionbridge	US	$590.00	6,300	48
3	LanguageLine Solutions	US	$451.00	10,000	364
4	RWS Holdings plc	UK	$393.07	2,332	31
5	translate plus, a Prodigious company	UK	$376.28	1,500	17
6	SDL	UK	$300.38	3,700	54
7	Hogarth Worldwide Limited	UK	$220.00	3,000	25
8	Welocalize	US	$200.15	1,500	19
9	Amplexor International	LU	$175.60	1,850	40
10	Keywords Studios	IE	$171.08	5,000	42

There is evidence to suggest that, on the whole, translators themselves have hardly been able to benefit from the boom in language services sales. Survey findings published by professional associations indicate that – driven by increased pressure on corporate profit margins and exacerbated by the global financial and economic crisis – in many markets, rates paid for translation work have struggled to keep up with inflation or even dropped in absolute terms. In Germany, for example, the professional association of literary translators (VdÜ) reports a drop by over 16 per cent in real terms between 2001 and 2016.[2]

To compensate for the growing pressure on rates, translators find themselves working longer hours and/or at greater speed than they would like to. Responses to the survey that forms the core of the original research presented in this thesis[3] show that many worry about the effect this has on their mental and physical wellbeing as well as on the quality of their work (see section 4.2 for more detail).

The 2018 CSA report itself indicates that it is not only translators themselves who are struggling to compete under current market conditions, which also leave smaller translation agencies vulnerable to takeovers by more aggressively profit-oriented language service providers (LSPs) or private equity companies like those documented by Kronenberg (2018) and discussed in the concluding section of this introduction. In an untypically sombre assessment of the current situation, the 2018 CSA report finds that

> […] the language sector feels an existential angst caused by artificial intelligence, broadening consolidation, and changing client requirements. While "content is king," we find that most companies have yet to come to terms with the burgeoning content volumes, shortening delivery times, and demand for more languages.
> (http://www.commonsenseadvisory.com/Portals/_default/Knowledgebase/ArticleImages/1806_RCH_LSM18_Market.pdf; last retrieved 5 August 2019)

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[2] https://literaturuebersetzer.de/berufspraktisches/umfragen-studien/, last retrieved 20 July 209. See section 3.6 below for a more detailed discussion.

[3] The survey design, findings and analysis are discussed in detail in chapter 1.

Similarly, the “Expectations and Concerns of the European Language Industry” survey published annually by the European Language Industry Association (Elia) since 2013 has consistently found price pressure to be “the undisputed number one challenge” for language service companies. The 2018 edition of the report is the first to include an analysis of responses by individual professionals (905 respondents from 48 countries), which shows a similar level of concern about price pressure. Both subsets of respondents identify “Time pressure” as the second most pressing concern.

Concerns about current and future trends are amplified in the 2019 edition, which concludes that

> 2019 results depict a somewhat more cautious picture than the strong positivism shown in 2017 and 2018. Respondents still expect growth, both for the industry at large and for their own business, but the expectations are tapering off, particularly among the independent professionals.
>
> Investment sentiment remains convincingly positive throughout Europe and other indicators such as hiring expectations also point to strong confidence in the industry.
>
> The open question regarding trends however continue to show the same concerns as in previous years, with price pressure as the dominant negative trend in the industry (usually attributed to low-cost, low-value competition and the inroads that machine translation and post-editing are making) followed by machine translation.
>
> Ironically, language service companies name that same machine translation as the most positive trend and put it without discussion at first place in terms of operational trends, with process automation as a strong runner up.
>
> (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2019_language_industry_survey_report.pdf, last retrieved 5 August 2019)

A respondent to my own survey, who is the managing director of a small translation bureau founded in 1997 by a group of translators, refers to these developments in responses to a number of questions:

> I would like translation to regain the status it had until 20 years ago. I would like to see translators rewarded in accordance with their competencies as they used to be and to see a stop to [clients] looking only for the cheapest price.
>
> More time for translation and text optimisation. Better rates and realistic deadlines would make this more feasible again – without overtime and constant "firefighting".
>
> [both comments translated from German]

Another survey respondent simply asks: "Rates get lower every year...shouldn't it be the opposite?" Likewise, the American translator Corinne McKay – author of the *Thoughts on Translation* blog and several guides to working as a freelance translator (McKay 2006, 2013 and 2017) – observes in a recent post:

> As compared to when I started freelancing in 2002, it's harder to make a living at the low end of the market, and there's more competition at the high end. Low rates at the low end have pushed, and I believe will continue to push, more translators toward boutique agencies, direct clients, and types of work that are unlikely to be encroached upon by machine translation. (http://www.thoughtsontranslation.com/2019/01/29/ten-must-do-tasks-for-your-first-year-as-a-freelance-translator/, last retrieved 20 February 2019)

It is also worth noting that from the figures made freely available by the Common Sense Advisory,[4] it is not possible to determine how much of this growth may be due to a concomitant increase in outsourcing or subcontracting. If, for example, a global brand pays a large corporate LSP $10,000 to carry out a multilingual translation project, which the LSP then outsources at a price of $6,500 to a medium-sized translation agency that in turn commissions ten different subcontractors (freelance translators trading as sole traders or micro-entrepreneurs) to carry out the translation work at an average price of $300, the total sales volume generated by this chain of transactions is $19,500 (of which $3,000 would go to the translators). If the global brand pays a large corporate LSP $10,000 for the same multilingual translation project, which is then carried out by the LSP's in-house translation department, the total sales volume is $10,000. (And once the pro-rata overhead costs of employing in-house linguists for ten different language combinations and providing the necessary equipment for them have been subtracted, the LSP's profit is likely to be smaller than in the outsourcing scenario.)

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[4] Access to full reports is available through the Common Sense Advisory's research programmes for translation, localization, and interpreting companies, buyers of language and globalization services and technology vendors. (http://www.commonsenseadvisory.com/Products.aspx, last retrieved 28 November 2018)

In response to these difficult market conditions and in the face of accelerated automation, a lot has been written and said – by academic scholars as well as professional translators and other industry stakeholders – in recent years about the need for translators to do much more than *just translate*. In the face of accelerated automation, professional translators' and interpreters' associations have been urging members to adapt to their changing environments by upskilling and upscaling. Translators themselves by and large appear to share the view that there is a need for their profession to adapt in order to ensure its survival. In my own survey, a majority of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with the propositions that

- *Human translators will need to take on a more proactive role to raise* *their public profile if they want their profession to survive* (123/105 out of 286 *agree somewhat/strongly agree*)

- *Human translators will need to adapt to changes in economic demand and technological development if they want their profession to survive* (121/111 out of 285 *agree somewhat/strongly agree*).

However, it is worth noting that small numbers of respondents *somewhat* or *strongly disagreed* with both contentions (16/4 out of 286 and 9/5 out of 285 respectively).[5]

At a time when translators "cannot afford to be linguistic hermits, sitting alone behind a typewriter and surrounded only by dusty tomes" (Király 2000: 12), even Farwell and Helmreich's (loc. cit.) wordy and complicated description quoted above of the translation process falls short of capturing the full complexity of their professional practice. Professional translators perform these tasks, not in a controlled environment or an ideal space but in a competitive marketplace dominated by corporate language service providers (LSPs), where

> no translator can hope to survive and thrive without the ability to relate effectively and smoothly – both professionally and personally – with numerous partners: clients, colleagues, suppliers of information and terminology, revisers, employers, tax and social security officers, Internet access providers, and many more. A good grounding in marketing, management and accountancy will do no harm in this respect. (Gouadec 2007: xiii)

Some of the real-world constraints impinging on professional translation practice are acknowledged in the description provided by Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2014: 58):

---

[5] See the concluding chapter for a more detailed discussion of these findings.

> Professional translators perform a challenging multi-activity task involving receptive and productive language proficiency, advanced information literacy skills, and a high degree of instrumental competence. They do so under tight temporal constraints in an increasingly technologized environment; many work in offices that may not be designed for intensive text work and within organizational settings that do not suit their cognitive and informational needs.

Meanwhile, although technological advances over the past decades have made it easier to research and manage terminology, retrieve units from previous translations and handle formatting, and have thus helped to increase translation speed, efficiency and productivity, some critical scholars have also noted that

> by largely failing to address human and organizational aspects in the design and workflow deployment of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and project management technologies, software developers and corporate LSPs have been increasingly disempowering and alienating translators.
>
> (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2014: 62)

Charting the evolution of translation memory tools, Garcia (2009: 202) points out that control/ownership of the means of production remains a crucial issue in the digital economy:

> For a brief honeymoon period, translators who embraced the new [translation memory] technology enjoyed the benefits of significant time savings and almost exclusive access to high-tech jobs. Moreover, the translation solutions they generated stayed on their hard drives, and over time increased in value as linguistic resources. […]
>
> However, freelancers soon lost control of this technology to the emerging translation bureaus, which would eventually be known as Language Service Providers (LSPs). Now, translators were no longer accessing their own resident translation memories at will, but rather dealing with a 'pre-translated' file emailed or

> downloaded from an LSP. […] This 'pre-translation' mode allowed LSPs to share the minimum information required, thus centralising resources and preventing collaborators from sharing them with other competing LSPs or clients. With little effort, LSPs could now multiply individual productivity gains by leveraging the memories and glossaries generated by hundreds of (mostly freelance) translators.

The idea that "[t]imes were different" (and, by implication, better) for translators before the widespread adoption of translation memory tools is reflected in the following comment by a survey respondent who looks back on the early days of her career:

> I started my freelance carrier back in 2001. Times were different, exchange rates were excellent (for me working out of the Czech Republic), almost no CAT tools existed so no reductions for fuzzy matches....
>
> [Female respondent, Austria
> CERAPT [Czech Board for Translation and Interpreting] Exam
> Combines self-employment as a translator and interpreter with running a B&B
> Legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, arts, hospitality]

The latest stage in the complex and ongoing evolution of the relationship between individual human translators, translation technology and corporate LSPs may be best summed up in an unequivocal statement of intent made by Andrew Brode, Chairman of RWS, the self-described "world leader in translation and localization, intellectual property support solutions and life sciences language services"[6] and fourth-largest LSP in the 2018 global CSA ranking:

> "'We have over 100 internal translators,' Brode said. 'They are our most expensive resources. As NMT [neural machine translation] improves and becomes more commercial we will be

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[6] https://www.rws.com/, last retrieved 28 November 2018.

> turning our internal translators into post-editors. And so the checkers we use at the moment will be dispensed with.'"
> (Quoted from Kronenberg 2018: 3)

0.2. The Joys of *Just Translating* v. the Pressure to Multitask and Upskill

Becoming a professional translator means developing the cognitive, linguistic and intercultural skills to translate proficiently between languages, and coming to grips with the technological tools that support the efficient processing and delivery of human translations. As I will argue in this thesis, it also means learning to translate, as confidently as possible, between – on the one hand – the awareness that every translation is at least to some extent a precarious venture into unknown territory, the outcome of which is likely to be provisional and imperfect, and – on the other hand – the client's reliance on receiving a definitive and complete translation by a contractually agreed date and time with minimum risk of error, on the other hand. Beyond the complex challenges inherent in *just translating*, professional translators need to find an appropriate manner of communicating their internal knowledge of translation as a process to their clients or work providers, whose primary interest is in translation as a product or service:

> It is debatable what is more important for a translator's commercial success: the quality of her translation or her entrepreneurial acumen. Whatever the relationship between specialist expertise and more generally applicable skills, high-quality translation is a product of the mastery of the subject matter and writing excellence, but it cannot be achieved without communication skills and a problem-solving mindset. (Tomarenko 2019: 12)

This thesis seeks to bring professional translation into focus in its full complexity as a "difficult business" in both senses: challenging work on the cognitive as well as commercial level. More specifically, my objective here is to explore the question what (more) can be done to prepare new and aspiring translators for the difficulties inherent in and arising from this complexity. To this end, the thesis draws evidence from the experiences and observations of professional practitioners to access, reflect and document their "internal knowledge" (Pym 1993: 131, 149-150, Robinson 2012: 6-7, 23-57; see section 2.1 for a detailed discussion). It is this internal knowledge, which is both communal and individual, of what it actually feels like, on a day-to-day level, to earn a living at the "wordface" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002) of professional translation, which comes across externally as professional habitus in the sense originally defined by Bourdieu (1972; cf. Vorderobermeier 2014 for an overview of the relevance of Bourdieu's concept as an analytical tool in Translation Studies). *Remapping Habitus in Translation Studies*. As Robinson (2012: 162) argues, habitus is "collectively shaped, but shaped in ways that allow for constant change and some degree of creativity and freedom of choice". While my focus in this thesis is on individual responses to and variations of these "collectively shaped" dispositions more than on their shared characteristics, it also seems worth asking to what extent these "habitualized inclinations that structure the behavior and preferences of the individuals and institutions that occupy social positions" (ibid.) might be passed on from teacher to student, mentor to mentee.

Translators themselves, it would appear, enjoy *just translating* more than any other aspect of their professional practice. For a large number of my informants, the complicated operations described by Farwell and Helmreich (loc. cit.) clearly constitute the fun part and least stressful aspect of their professional practice. Many resent the "juggling" acts (see section 4.3 below) required to earn a living from these skills under current market conditions. A fuller account of the tasks professional human translators routinely perform on a daily basis would have to include additional elements relating to the nature of translation as a commercial activity, which are highlighted in the following bullet points:

- Whilst carrying out the complicated sequence of tasks detailed above, professional human translators also apply their "knowledge of the world (including [...] the two linguistic systems and associated sets of cultural conventions [...])" *to interpret their work providers' and/or end clients' expectations and/or explicit instructions and produce target texts that are fit for their intended purpose within the end client's supply chain (about which the translator may or may not be able to obtain adequate information), and deliver these target texts by or before a pre-agreed deadline*.
- End clients and/or work providers may at any time attempt to make significant changes to the style and contents of the source text, the translation brief and/or the terms of delivery. Professional translators are expected *to respond promptly and flexibly to any such requests for changes or amendments, as well as to any other requests relating to actual or prospective commissions in the past, present or future, all the while maintaining the intense focus* required to perform

> the two component tasks of the translation process, interpreting what the author intended to express [...] and then formulating an expression in the target language in such a way as to communicate the intended content to the degree possible to the audience of the translation in as similar a manner as possible.

- In addition to improving their "knowledge of the world (including [...] the two linguistic systems and associated sets of cultural conventions […])", and specialist knowledge such as domain-specific terminology and phraseology, as part of their ongoing professional development, translators are also expected *to acquire and maintain a working knowledge of a profusion of constantly evolving tech tools designed to support efficient processing and delivery of translation projects*.

The frequency with which survey respondents across different language combinations, academic backgrounds and specialist domains single out variations of "translation itself"/"the work as such" as the *most enjoyable* or *least stressful* aspect of their professional practice was among the most striking findings of my original research for this thesis; so was the vehemence of their negative response to the idea of changing careers. For many respondents, translation appears to be a calling (cf. Dik and Duffy 2009, Torrey and Duffy 2012, Baumeister 1991) as much as a career. They talk about their work in terms of "love", "passion" and "pleasure". Although responses to questions about professional identity show that almost 60 per cent of survey respondents define themselves as *service providers* (see chapter 6), responses to other parts of the questionnaire indicate that many perceive their work as translators – described as "the work itself", "the actual work" or "the work as such" in a number of responses – as separate from, and less stressful than, their work as providers of translation services. This distinction, which is expressed most concisely in one respondent's wish for "[l]ess paperwork, emails, negotiations – I would *just like to translate*" (emphasis added), appears to point beyond the simple difference between billable and non-billable work towards the (a)synchronous passing of "mnemonic" and "instantaneous time" (Cronin 2003: 71; see chapter *2*): the different speeds of deep engagement with a translation and efficient project delivery.

For the corporate LSPs that have come to dominate the current translation market and operate as intermediaries between end clients and translators by outsourcing a large part of their translation work to a global database of freelance contractors on a project-by-project basis via e-mail or, increasingly, via automated project management systems, the complexity of translators' tasks poses a number of risks and challenges. From their perspective, (human) translators are not just a cost centre that cuts into corporate profits but also a risk factor, a potential source of errors and inconsistencies: what if their knowledge of the world is insufficient or their interpretation of the author's intentions is wrong?

Experiential and anecdotal evidence from my own professional practice and written and oral accounts by other translators (cf. McKay 2017, Neidhardt et al. 2016) suggests that LSPs respond to such risks in radically different ways, by either maximising or minimising the human translator's involvement in their workflow processes. Some build long-term business partnerships with trusted translators by consulting them as much as possible and ensuring their access to all relevant information. Aided by translation and project management tools that, among other features, facilitate selective sharing of information (cf. Garcia 2009: 202), others marginalise and isolate translators in order to optimise process efficiency. From a translator's point of view, the first strategy is obviously preferable. However, it is important to bear in mind that for LSPs, these are simply two alternative business models.

The question then becomes what translators can do to make a compelling business case for the mutual benefits of a more collaborative relationship.

I need to declare an interest here; having parlayed a lifelong love/hate relationship with translation and a more recent interest in teaching and mentoring into a – mostly rewarding, occasionally frustrating – professional career, I have skin in this game. Although written from the privileged position of a translator who, thanks to a maintenance grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), for three precious years has not had to earn her living from translation, this thesis takes as its starting point the change agenda driven by my own experience of working as a German<>English in-house translator for a fast-growing and commercially very successful UK-based LSP from April 2011 to August 2015. (From around a dozen full-time employees – plus four or five unpaid interns – and an annual turnover of £800k when I started, the company more than doubled in size during the time I worked there.)

As Daniel Gouadec (2007: 209-210) points out:

> From a purely economic point of view, the productivity of an "in-house" translator must be such that his translations cost no more than "outsourced" translations, once all other costs (overheads and running costs) have been taking into account, [including] a pro-rata share of [...] the salaries and overheads relating to the financial, commercial and secretarial staff.

However, since my employment contract contained no exclusivity clause, I was able to supplement my income by taking on freelance work from direct clients, publishing houses, corporate LSPs and smaller specialist agencies. These more nuanced experiences and observations form the basis for the hope that informs the outlook presented in this thesis, namely that it is still possible to build an economically sustainable and personally fulfilling career as a professional translator under current market conditions.

Gouadec (2007: 312) also describes the “perverse effects” of a “division of labour” driven by the “growing industrialisation of the translation process”, which turns translators into “operators on a virtual assembly line”. As the only in-house linguist employed by a company that specialised in selling language services, I had little or no input into workflow processes, let alone strategic planning. My scope of agency was limited to completing my contractual workload of 2,500 to 3,000 words a day (thus saving the company the operational expenditure of outsourcing that work), assessing test translations by freelance translators who had applied to be registered on the company’s database, and troubleshooting whenever there were problems with any project in my language combination. Meanwhile, the external subcontractors who produced the vast majority of the translations the company was selling so successfully to its global client base – including a number of large multinational corporations as well as larger LSPs and other white-label and professional services agencies – were routinely referred to as expendable “resources”. In order to increase profit margins, project and vendor managers were trained and incentivised to keep looking for cheaper alternatives to existing suppliers. (The company’s project management system included a category of “Too expensive” linguists, who were only to be contacted, with the operation manager’s approval, in absolute emergencies or to provide test translations for important new clients.)

As a student working towards an MA degree in Literary Translation, I had always had a vague theoretical interest in the different roles translators over the centuries have ascribed to themselves, or been ascribed to by others. As a practising professional translator, I quickly realised that these questions are anything but theoretical – that they are, in fact, existential: what do we talk about when we talk about translation? As David Katan (2009: 129-130) points out, even

> the EU, itself one of the world's largest employers of professional translators (and interpreters), upholder of multilingualism, diversity and multiculturality, is also obliging professionals throughout Europe to classify themselves as equivalent to secretaries. Also, as translating and interpreting is grouped together with typing, transcribing and photocopying [in the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities], we can safely presume that the profession is still officially perceived, in 2008, as a form of text-based copying. This is a very far cry from "consultant", "mediator" or "agent of social change".

The client-facing pages of leading LSPs' websites contain few references to the role of professional translators in the industry's workflows and supply chains, which are typically worded in vague and nonspecific terms that foreground project management over translation processes:

> Our language professionals are in-country, native speakers with certified experience or advanced degrees in linguistics.
>
> Translators are also qualified for the necessary domain expertise, such as mechanical engineering for technical documentation or SEO for website translation. From software localization to printed marketing collateral, our project managers secure and streamline processes so your project has the right linguistic talent to deliver accurate and locally relevant translations on time and within budget.
> (https://www.welocalize.com/multilingual-solutions/language-services)
>
> Hogarth can also translate and localise long-copy marketing content in any media. We understand how important it is to get

> the message across consistently in every market, and have developed processes that enable us to do exactly that. We follow strict quality-control procedures, hand pick a team of expert linguists and writers based on the brief, and utilise best-in-class language technologies to ensure maximum efficiency without sacrificing quality.
> (https://www.hogarthww.com/transcreation/transcreation-language-services)

TransPerfect, the worldwide number one by 2017 revenue according to the Common Sense Advisory ranking presented earlier in this section, prides itself on being "more than a translation company. We're a family of committed individuals dedicated to being the world's leading enabler of global communications."[7] Elsewhere on the website, the company boasts "the industry's most demanding linguist certification" with a "12% overall pass rate", offering clients "a rigorously tested network of industry-expert linguists and full-time quality managers to ensure that the work we deliver is second to none".[8]

LanguageLine Solutions' description of its "comprehensive suite of translation and localisation services" eclipses any involvement of actual translators:

> Using our team of highly skilled and customer-focused project managers we will work with you to understand what you are looking to achieve from your project and to develop the most effective method to help you reach your target audience.
> (https://www.languageline.com/uk/solutions/translation/)

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[7] https://www.transperfect.com/careers/
All websites referenced in this passage last retrieved on 21 February 2019.

[8] https://www.transperfect.com/services/translation.html

RWS Holdings is less coy about acknowledging the use of "native speaking translators who are industry specialists and have the expertise to deliver the right services for our clients", but goes on to emphasise:

> And with state-of-the-art translation and terminology management software, we continually optimize processes to find time and cost savings wherever possible.
> (https://www.rws.com/what-we-do/rws-language-solutions/specialist-translation-services/)

Meanwhile, SDL claims proprietary control over the "service solution" known as human translation:

> For anyone involved in the translation space, SDL has numerous service solutions to help you create, translate, manage and deliver localized content. SDL's professional human translation combined with translation technology is already used by leading brands, across the translation supply chain; while applying translation best-practices across an organization.
> (https://www.sdl.com/specialists/translate-and-localize-content/)

Other companies in the CSA's top ten advertise the size of their networks, ranging from "over 15,000 industry-specialised linguists" (translate plus) through "30,000 linguists, reviewers and subject matter experts" (Welocalize) to Lionbridge's capability to "orchestrate a network of 500,000 passionate experts around the world, who partner with brands to create culturally rich experiences" and "dig deep to convey the most with every word".[9]

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[9] https://www.translateplus.com/language-services/translation-services-localisation/
https://www.welocalize.com/multilingual-solutions/language-services/
https://www.lionbridge.com/who-we-are/#about-us

Are translators powerful cultural agents with complex ethical obligations towards various others, as leading Translation Studies scholars continue to assert (Bassnett 2014, Venuti 2008); or are they the weakest link in the supply chains of a multi-billion dollar industry, as experiential evidence (borne out by research, e.g. Dam/Zethsen 2011, Abdallah 2012) suggests?

Pioneers of a postmodern sensibility that "reflects the changing nature of the world we live in", a world whose "political, geographical and cultural boundaries are perceived as more fluid and less constraining than at any time in recent history" (Bassnett 2014: 11); or relics of a pre-industrial age that vastly overrated the market value of the human mind?

Martyrs to the cause of spreading enlightenment; or "mercenary experts" willing "to fight under the flag of any purpose able to pay them" (Pym 1996: 338)? Philologists tending Walter Benjamin's (1968 [1923]: 75) "hallowed growth of languages"; or entrepreneurs competing to monetise their socio-linguistic assets?

Ventriloquists who rent out their voices for a fee; or earthworms that "'preserve the past, and create the conditions for future growth' [...], disclos[ing] new possibilities in the tired earth" (Cronin 2003: 38)?

Tragic figures mourning a perpetual loss; or heroes venturing across the abyss of différance? Anonymous labourers toiling at the "wordface" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002); or proud authors writing their own destinies?

Can the "multilingual, multimedia communications engineering experts" (Gouadec 2007) of today still claim any meaningful kinship to historical predecessors who worried about fidelity and the merits of bringing the author to the reader or vice versa, but knew nothing about ICE matches or L10N? Perhaps even more crucially, who makes these choices for them?

On their own terms, do translators see themselves as proud professionals and prosperous entrepreneurs – or as deeply alienated, downtrodden "operators on a virtual assembly line" (Goaudec 2007: 312); "professional text interpreters and communicators [who] *make* meaning as they work" or "anonymous language lackeys" (Király 2000: 12, emphasis in original)?

Over the period of my employment as an in-house translator, I mentored about twenty interns/trainee translators on three-month placements, most of them young women in their early twenties who were enrolled in translation or multilingual communication degrees at German or Austrian universities, and watched them experience what appeared to be very similar feelings of cognitive dissonance as their expectations were tested against the reality of current market conditions in the translation industry.

Although my experience may have been an extreme example, the findings of longitudinal empirical workplace studies carried out by researchers on subsets of professional translators in different countries (e.g. Sela-Sheffy/Shlesinger 2011, Dam/Zethsen 2011, Abdallah 2012) suggest that it is by no means unique or atypical. Kristiina Abdallah (2012: 19) reports that two of her interviewees

> experienced a strong emotional response during the first interview session, and, consequently, we had to interrupt the session for a while. These interviewees showed symptoms of stress when they spoke about their unpleasant experiences at work.

In response, professional associations, e.g. the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI), the Institute of Chartered Linguists (IoL) and the Translators' Association (TA) in the UK, the American Translators Association (ATA) in the US, the Bund der Übersetzer (BdÜ) in Germany, the Société française des traducteurs (SFT) in France etc., do what they can to not only raise awareness of the urgency of the problem, but also to equip their members with the commercial and interpersonal skills required to address it.

Fair-trade campaigns like the NoPeanuts! blog (https://nopeanuts.wordpress.com/) take a more aggressive and polemic approach to naming and shaming companies that notoriously underpay translators or fail to pay them altogether, while other initiatives focus on raising the profile and visibility of freelance translators and interpreters (http://loveyourtranslator.com/about-us/). Translators who have successfully carved out a career for themselves share practical advice in blogs and self-published books that simultaneously serve as marketing and networking tools for their authors and how-to guides for less experienced fellow translators (Durban and Seidel 2010, Jenner and Jenner 2010, Chriss 2006, McKay 2006).

0.3. Finding a Voice

This thesis is an attempt to capture a snapshot of the ongoing urgent and intense debates among professionals, which are carried out on online platforms, in bulletins published by professional associations, at conferences, workshops and anywhere else translators congregate either formally or informally, physically or virtually, but underrepresented in Translation

Studies research and consequently in translator education. Any advice members of these ad-hoc or established communities share with each other is typically based on anecdotal evidence derived from their own practical experience, and as such constitutes a type of reflective practice that frequently lacks the analytical depth and rigour of a more systematic inquiry.[10]

In recent years, a lot of progress has already been achieved towards ensuring that MA programmes equip students with the practical skills required by the industry (e.g. post-editing, use of CAT and other technical tools, introduction to a variety of different text types, ethical considerations and, increasingly, rudimentary business skills). On a scale of 0 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely well*), the average rating in response to Q8: *Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?* was 3.08, with a substantial majority of respondents selecting values of 3 (36.3%) or higher (38%) and a slight increase from the earliest to the most recent cohort, as shown in table 0.01 below.

Table 0.01. Average scores (on a scale of 0 to 5) selected in answer to Q8 filtered by respondents' year of graduation.

	All respondents with T&I-related degrees who answered Q8 (n=162)	Of these:		
		Respondents who graduated before 2007 (n=87)	Respondents who graduated between 2007 and 2012 (n=33)	Respondents who graduated after 2012 (n=44)
	3.08	3.04	3.03	3.11

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[10] Originally based on theories of human learning and development popularised by the John Dewey and others in the first half of the 20th century (Schön 1983), in the jargon of corporate and institutional culture, reflective practice is a *lite* version of the *vita contemplativa*, or fully examined life, which envisions working life as an endless feedback loop of continuous self-improvement. I will be using the term in this less narrowly prescribed sense as a component of what Richard Sennett (2006) calls "craftsmanship" (see chapter 2).

Average rating				

Out of the total of 164 respondents with translation- or interpreting-related degrees (56.2% of all survey respondents), 109 added free-text comments, suggesting a high level of interest in and engagement with this question.

Concerns raised by respondents across all three cohorts typically relate to a perceived lack of adequate preparation for the business side of professional translation. “It prepares to translate, but not really the reality as a freelancer”, says one respondent who recently graduated with a translation degree from a French university.

These concerns are elaborated in more detail in a 2016 blog post by a recent graduate of a UK-based translation degree programme, who claims that “an MA in Translation won’t teach you how to make money out of translation”:

> [W]hen you’re paying £7,000+ on a qualification (triple that for international students), you’re making an investment in your own future and expect some return on that investment. I understand it’s interesting to learn about the different theories of equivalence, but at the end of the day a translation agency aren’t going to care too much about the theory.
>
> They want to know that you are a professional who can manage themselves and provide them with the best possible work for a good rate. That’s difficult when you’re not equipped with the right tools to be taken seriously, like a professional. These people don’t have time to hold your hand and explain how things in the translation industry works.

The author’s wish list of topics “an MA in Translation Doesn’t Teach You” includes the following:

> How to…

- Approach clients/agencies.
- Write an email to prospective clients (in [both source and target languages]).
- Market yourself (especially as a beginner).
- Write a translator's resume (which is different from regular resume).
- Set your rates.
- Write an invoice.
- Use online tools to find clients.
- Specialize.

> (http://j-entranslations.com/ma-in-translation-doesnt-teach-you/, cf. http://j-entranslations.com/what-a-course-in-translation-should-include/; both last retrieved 14 August 2018)

The updated 2017 Competence Framework for the European Master's in Translation – published in December 2017, at a time when I was deeply engaged in the empirical research for this thesis[11] – acknowledges these concerns by including "Personal and Interpersonal" and "Service Provision" among its five main areas of competence (along with "Language and Culture", "Translation" and "Technology"). The Framework describes translation as "a process designed to meet an individual, societal or institutional need" and as

> a multi-faceted profession that covers the many areas of competence and skills required to convey meaning (generally, but not exclusively, in a written medium) from one natural language to another, and the many different tasks performed by those who provide a translation service. (ibid.: 4)

It is worth quoting the desired learning outcomes under the "Personal and Interpersonal" and "Service Provision" headings in full here, as many of them closely reflect the concerns discussed in this thesis and/or raised by professional practitioners in response to the survey that forms the core of my research:

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[11] Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/emt_competence_fwk_2017_en_web.pdf (last retrieved 28 November 2018)

> STUDENTS KNOW HOW TO…
> 21 Plan and manage time, stress and workload
> 22 Comply with deadlines, instructions and specifications
> 23 Work in a team, including, where appropriate, in virtual, multicultural and multilingual environments, using current communication technologies
> 24 Use social media responsibly for professional purposes
> 25 Take account of and adapt the organisational and physical ergonomics of the working environment
> 26 Continuously self-evaluate, update and develop competences and skills through personal strategies and collaborative learning
> 27 Monitor and take account of new societal and language industry demands, new market requirements and emerging job profiles
> 28 Approach existing clients and find new clients through prospecting and marketing strategies using the appropriate written and oral communication techniques
> 29 Clarify the requirements, objectives and purposes of the client, recipients of the language service and other stakeholders and offer the appropriate services to meet those requirements
> 30 Negotiate with the client (to define deadlines, rates/invoicing, working conditions, access to information, contracts, rights, responsibilities, language service specifications, tender specifications etc.)
> 31 Organise, budget and manage translation projects involving single or multiple translators and/or other service providers
> 32 Understand and implement the standards applicable to the provision of a language service
> 33 Apply the quality management and quality assurance procedures required to meet pre-defined quality standards

> 34 Comply with professional ethical codes and standards (confidentiality, fair competition etc.) and network with other translators and language providers via social media and professional associations
> 35 Analyse and critically review language services and policies and suggest improvement strategies
> (ibid.: 10-11)

The special issue on "Employability in the Translation and Interpreting Curriculum" of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (Volume 11, 2017 - Issue 2-3) contains a number of examples of how universities in and outside the UK are addressing these requirements, along with discussions of the ethical and practical challenges the alignment of educational provision with industry expectations in a rapidly evolving and increasingly pressurised market poses for academic institutions.

It is also worth pointing out that, in line with the stated objective of "consolidat[ing] and enhanc[ing] the employability of graduates of Master's degrees in translation throughout Europe" (loc. cit.: 3), the learning outcomes detailed in the EMT Competence Framework are strongly oriented towards the translation industry's interests and expectations. By implication, the interests of the translation profession are subsumed in the ability to serve market demands. There is no indication that students might also benefit from critical reflection on these demands and from opportunities to develop a sense of professional pride and identity. Situated learning models (cf. Király 2000, Abdallah 2011) offer potential scope for integrating debate on these issues with the aim of enabling graduates to confront the growing pressure on bottom lines and deadlines and the rise of automation – both for their own sake and to prevent them from attempting to enter the market by undercutting fellow translators. As I will argue in this thesis, any such definition should be grounded in empowering models of translators' agnecy, yet informed by a realistic awareness of the scope for intervention available to them under current market conditions.

Chris Durban and Eugene Seidel (2010: 2) draw a distinction between "doing translations" and "becoming a translator" that I believe is relevant here. Most students and graduates I have worked with are fairly competent, sometimes even confident, at translating different types of texts – but far less sure of themselves when it comes to other competencies and qualities required for a successful career in professional translation.

Durban and Seidel (ibid.) also argue that by accepting unacceptable working conditions, translators become "enablers" of such conditions. Despite recent localised successes (cf. Moorkens 2017: 468), industry-wide regulation of translators' working conditions remains an unfeasible prospect – and perhaps to some extent an undesirable one, given the arguments put forward in this thesis about the importance of individual preferences and priorities. Accordingly, any definition of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable conditions is highly subjective and arbitrary as well as – in a globalised world held together by socio-economic inequalities within and between individual regions – location-dependent. A novice translator desperate for work based in a location where the cost of living is low may understandably be prepared to accept rates and deadlines that a more established colleague seeking to sustain a good quality of life in a location with a higher standard of living would consider unacceptable.

My objective in this thesis is neither to develop guidelines for managing translators' expectations nor to portray or define them as the victims of market forces beyond their control, but to identify sustainable models of best practice that can encourage and enable translators to take at least some control of their working conditions. My guiding question throughout is a concern articulated in the discussion thread quoted in section 2.2 below: how can professional translators achieve and sustain "an enjoyable career and life for [themselves]" in the face of what Gouadec (2007: 295) has called the "unfriendly revolution" of industrialisation and rationalisation that seeks "to get rid of as much of the human component as possible in the translation process"?

My current hybrid guise as a scholar-practitioner allows me to add a second set of questions: what can Translation Studies – as a field of academic inquiry and a provider of translator education – contribute to this debate? Is it possible to theorise professional translation in its full complexity as *both* a cognitive and commercial activity? And if so, (how) will a theoretical approach of this kind help them articulate and address the challenges that arise from this dual perspective?

The distinction, originally drawn by Pym (1993) and elaborated by Robinson (1997, 2012) between translators' own "internal" knowledge of their professional practice and the "external" perceptions held by others – their clients, but also including, in my reading, academic scholarship on translation (see chapter 2 below for a detailed discussion) – helped me define a perspective that seeks to integrate both, and find a voice in which to address the tensions arising from these attempts at integration. That voice – which is also, more precisely and properly speaking, *this* voice now discussing its own genesis – has lost some of the raw, unmediated anger that seethed through early draft versions of the chapters about current working conditions in the translation industry; but has in the process, I would hope, gained a measure of control and authority over the manner in which these conditions are addressed in this thesis.

Professional translators probably know better than many other language users how treacherous attempts at communicating meaning can become when words or phrases are employed imprecisely and/or inconsistently. However, professional translators also know that the insistence on querying and qualifying the precise meaning of each and every word or phrase can have a paralysing effect that frustrates any attempt at communication. Throughout this thesis, I will use some phrases as convenient shorthand for complex configurations that would merit much closer scrutiny and differentiation: *the translation industry, Translation Studies, the translation community* etc. Some of these terms and phrases have been borrowed from other observers and are used here, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, in the sense defined by those who originally coined them; these include "massification" (Gouadec 2007), "virtual assembly line" (ibid.: 312), "culture of new capitalism" (Sennett 2006), and the distinction between "the ivory tower and the wordface" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002).

Neither of these are monolithic entities, as the use of these terms might imply. They can more accurately be described as clusters of stakeholders whose different interests collude and converge, collide or diverge in ways that at any given location and point in time are also highly specific to translators' individual circumstances, as I will argue throughout this thesis. Bearing all of this in mind constantly without always making it explicit means that any general observations put forward in this thesis about *the state of the translation industry*, *current working conditions for* *professional translators* and so on are provisional, contingent, partial (in both senses of the word) and subjective even when they are substantiated by verifiable evidence. It does not, I believe, invalidate such observations as serious contributions to a debate whose urgency is a key tenet of this thesis.

Throughout this thesis, the term *professional network* is used, without explicit or intended reference to actor-network theory (cf. Latour 2005), to mean a loosely structured community of professional practitioners with some shared interests and/or objectives, through which information – e.g. training and job opportunities, new resources and technological tools – is disseminated; in line with the OED definition of a network as

> [a]n interconnected group of people; an organization; spec. a group of people having certain connections (frequently as a result of attending a particular school or university) which may be exploited to gain preferment, information, etc., esp. for professional advantage.

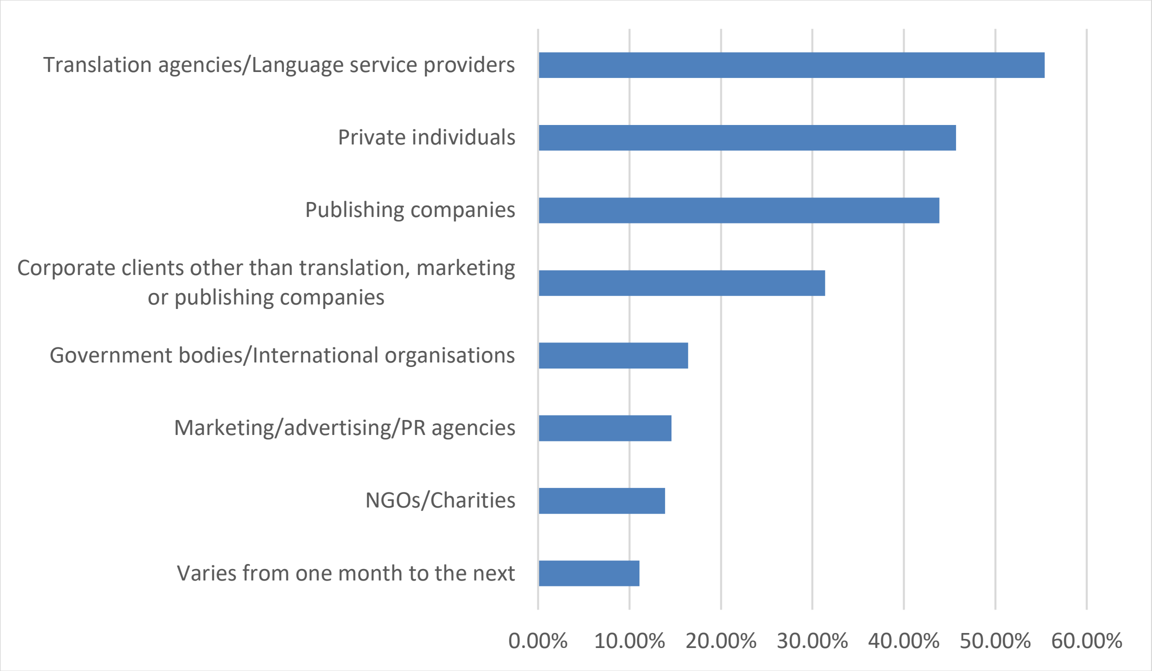
These networks can be physical and/or virtual, formal and/or informal, permanent or provisional.

The term *production network* is used more specifically to mean "a nexus of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms of different sizes, including micro-entrepreneurs (the owners of small businesses), into a larger economic unit" (Abdallah 2011: 129-130; cf. Abdallah 2012). Based on her own and other scholars' research, Abdallah found production networks in the translation industry "[c]haracterized by a hierarchical structure, extreme division of labour, and the involvement of multiple actors", and "rife with ethical dilemmas".

While my survey was not specifically designed to investigate the "topology of production networks" (Abdallah 2012), respondents suggest similar experiences in comments on their interactions with clients (cf. section 4.6 below). Responses also confirm Abdallah’s observation that subcontracting work from corporate LSPs within “complex production networks” is increasingly a “defining feature of present-day economic life” for professional translators (Abdallah 2011: 131), while “dyadic relations between the client and translator, as presented in standard translation theories which emphasize translator expertise” (Abdallah 2012: 30) are becoming less common.

As shown in figure 0.iii. below, more than half of my respondents count *Translation agencies/Language service providers* among their primary work providers (see section 4.4 below for a discussion of the relevant survey findings).

Figure 0.iii. Distribution of survey responses to Q12. *If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply.*



The 2019 “Expectations and Concerns of the European Language Industry” survey found that for the subset of

> independent language professionals, exclusive subcontractor activity decreases with revenue size. It disappears completely in the revenue segment above 100k€, but language services companies and other language professionals remain even there an important part of the client base (40%).
> (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2019_language_industry_survey_report.pdf)

The findings confirm that relationships between translators and the LSPs that provide a substantial part of their work can be problematic:

> The new section about the relationship between language service companies and independent professionals yielded interesting insights that can help enhance their cooperation. Based on the results, there is room for improvement in the area of project management practices.

Specifically, the researchers identified the following areas of concern:

> Companies express a concern that freelancers show less quality focus and should observe the specific project instructions provided to them. Keeping up with training and developments in

> the industry is seen as an important factor of success, particularly for high-level assignments where the quality of deliverables is currently too often considered unsatisfactory.
>
> […]
>
> Important concerns are expressed [by individual professionals working as subcontractors for LSPs] regarding proper communication around scheduling, pricing and payment practices (strong price pressure, insufficient negotiation room and lack of coverage of the time needed for queries, reviews and training, need for punctual payment), inadequate tools as well as automated processes and workflows which reduce human communication and flexibility.
>
> Individual professionals often point the finger to project management as a major source of concern, due to a lack of support from the project managers and a lack of understanding of the translator’s needs which shows through inadequate reference materials, too short deadlines, assignments that do not always consider the translator’s areas of specialization and long but not always relevant boilerplate instructions.

0.4. Can-Do Attitude v. Critical Reflection

In some ways, this thesis is an elegy for a profession – and, even more than that, an enjoyable and intellectually rewarding way to make a living – on its way to joining those of the lace maker (cf. Gouadec 2007: 314-315), the miner (cf. chapter 5 below) and, as one respondent to my survey suggests, the shoemaker. However, I would also like it to be read as a call to arms to make the most of any remaining chances at saving human translation from extinction. One of my key concerns throughout this thesis is how best to equip new translators with the skills they will need to build successful, sustainable and enjoyable careers in the current market environment. Recent and current developments in that market, however, are beginning to make such careers look increasingly unobtainable for future generations of aspiring translators. During the three and a half years it took to research and write this thesis, Google and DeepL both released neural machine translation engines that come very close to producing translations of serviceable quality for many common use case scenarios in some common language combinations, including mine. In my own professional practice, I was recently forced to choose between losing a reliable client and accepting lower per-word rates from that client, a small UK-based translation agency that had come under pressure from its own main work provider, a large US-based corporate LSP. I also lost at least one lucrative and interesting commission for a public institution in Germany to a competitor who, I was told, had quoted a "much lower" rate.

These may be isolated incidents that amount to little more than anecdotal evidence, but my own research and the conversations I have had with other professional translators in the course of that research suggest that they are in fact part of a more general trend. While a detailed documentation and analysis of these trends would be beyond the scope of my current investigation, they do require close attention – ideally, from both academic scholars and professional practitioners bringing their respective expertise to bear on the issue – as a matter of urgency. Kronenberg (2018) has made a very useful start by charting and publishing a "timeline" of acquisitions of LSPs by RWS Holdings plc between November 2015 and January 2018 in the form of a "case study" that exemplifies the mechanisms and effects of increasing consolidation in the translation industry. As Kronenberg (ibid.: 1) points out, the online journal *Slator*, which tracks market trends in the language services sector,

> covered close to 40 mergers and acquisitions in 2017 alone. As it readily admits there were others that it did not cover. In my opinion such highly leveraged deals may do the most consequential long-term harm to translators today, because:
>
> 1. Agencies are being encouraged to sell to giant corporate entities. To puff up their profit picture and get the best sale price, owners will probably cut translator rates.
> 2. Because these deals are so highly leveraged, involving both enormous loans and the issuance of stock, the buyer will likely keep rates down to maintain profitability and satisfy bankers and stockholders.

Following the acquisition of a number of smaller companies that made it "the world's most valuable listed language service provider" according to *Slator*, RWS Holdings posted a 35 per cent increase in revenue

> to GBP 76.6m (USD 97.6m) for the six months ended March 31, 2017, compared to the same period in the prior year.
>
> Gross profits rose from GBP 23.7m to GBP 33.5m. Importantly, RWS also managed to expand gross margins by 20 basis points from 41.7% to 43.7%. Operating profit adjusted for one-offs and acquisition-related costs rose by 28.4% to GBP 19m.

For Kronenberg,

> the most disturbing potential aspect of the mergers and acquisitions process [is] the sidelining of translators by LSPs, and their replacement by post-editors. […] This does not mean that there won't be opportunities for translators, but it is a harbinger of things to come: those opportunities will be harder and harder to find. And fewer and fewer translators will find them. **This is a textbook case of how wealth is systematically being funneled to the top, leaving those who do the work with less and less.**
>
> (ibid.: 3; bold highlighting in original)

In an e-mail, Kronenberg outlines the findings of his further research into recent mergers and acquisitions within the language services sector based on the 2017 report published by *Slator*[12] and concludes by discussing the cognitive effort required to switch between external and internal perspectives on translators' professional practice:

> *Slator* is not written from a translator perspective or even for translators. Like the *Wall Street Journal* or the *Financial Times,* its purpose is to provide actionable information -- in this instance primarily to agency owners and big financial players. In that sense, it aims to be accurate and objective. Reading the report and the linked articles I found that I was constantly tempted to accept the journal's perspective. That is, I began to accept the logic of private equity, venture capital, and consolidation and tended to forget that, as we have seen in the case of Corporate Translations, these things have real effects on translators' lives. So I constantly had to yank myself back into a more critical frame of mind. Reading these materials requires a kind of "double consciousness," a constant translation from one sphere into the other. And that other sphere must be grounded in our (admittedly disparate) experience, as translators, of what is being engineered around us.
>
> (e-mail from Kenneth Kronenberg dated 6 March, 2018; quoted here with the author's permission; emphases in original)

It can also be difficult for new translators in particular to form, let alone articulate, a critical view of these developments. The company I worked for as an in-house translator placed a premium on a "positive can-do attitude" and disciplined employees for "negative communication". For self-employed professionals, the opprobrium of colleagues whose outlook is more optimistic can be just as damaging, as the following comment by a prominent practitioner suggests:

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[12] The report is available to download at https://slator.com/whitepapers/slator-2017-language-industry-ma-report/; for recent articles cf. https://slator.com/tag/ma/.

> "Another piece of advice is to steer clear of crazy people, moaners and complainers. Being surrounded by them may be reassuring because it lets you stay within your comfort zone and empathize – after all, everyone has something she can complain about. But it's not a productive way to build up your translation business or even spend your time, in my opinion."
> (Quoted from Slobodzian-Taylor 2013)

What self-respecting, let alone aspiring, professional would want to be pigeonholed as one of the "crazy people, moaners and complainers", after all?

Throughout the course of my research, key industry stakeholders – including well-established self-employed translators as well as high-ranking representatives of professional associations and corporate hierarchies – have frequently expressed views in private conversations that are far less optimistic about the future viability of professional human translation than their statements on public record. Although by their nature difficult, if not impossible, to document without violating basic principles of research ethics, professional courtesy and confidentiality, these discrepancies between privately held and publicly expressed opinions should perhaps be borne in mind when considering realistic predictions for the profession. For much the same reasons, the motivations behind such discrepancies are equally hard to ascertain. Speculatively, I would assume a fairly complex mix of strategic expediency and social desirability in the context of what Kronenberg (2016/2) has labelled the "Prosperity Gospel" (put in simple terms, the belief that a translator's income is a direct reflection of his or her professionalism, whereas a negative or pessimistic outlook is associated with a "poverty mindset" that signals professional failure),[13] genuine ambivalence and uncertainty and denial bordering on a kind of magical thinking that all will be well as long as nobody breaks rank and starts publicly spreading doom and gloom.

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[13] In response to "criticism, shaming, and denial" meted out against worries about

In line with the argument developed in this thesis about the importance of personal preference in career planning, the thesis itself is an attempt to de- and refine my own positions on the issues discussed here in response, and sometimes in opposition, to different external and internal perspectives on the issues at its centre. Structurally, this approach is reflected in a shift in focus between Parts I and II. Part I – *Internal and External Perspectives* – ends with a reflective chapter on "Theorising Professional Practice", which seeks to situate my research design and findings within a contextual framework that is informed by my own internal and external knowledge of professional translation as both a practitioner and an academic researcher. Part II – *Views from the Wordface* – consists of a presentation of my survey findings grouped by specific topics (transition into professional practice; experience of current working conditions; relevance of

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soaring LSP profits and declining standards of living for professional translators in the current market, Kronenberg criticises the assumptions underlying the "corporate worldview" he labels the "Prosperity Gospel" as a "fundamentally elitist creed that accepts only one definition of success" and

> denies the reality that there is not enough "success" in twenty-first-century translation to go around. Worse, it blames as hapless and whiny the individual translators who either fail to go for the gold, or – perhaps worse – choose not to try.

Kronenberg argues that

> in a landscape dominated by translation behemoths and Uber-style portals, this model of the independent yeoman translator is a mirage. It hasn't been true for years – except perhaps for the few translators working directly for corporate clients.

translation theory to translatorial practice; definitions of professional identity).

As a final caveat, I make no claim that the findings presented in this thesis are in any way exclusive to translation as a profession – only that translation happens to be the field I have become intimately familiar with in the course of my career as a professional practitioner and academic researcher, and therefore the field in which I believe I have the most to contribute. If professionals or scholars working in other disciplines were to find any of these insights useful for their own practice or research, I would be delighted.

I. Internal and External Perspectives

Chapter 1

Methodology: A Stranger among Scholars

1.1. Research Goals and Background

This PhD project is a professional practitioner’s foray into academic research to gain deeper insight into her profession from a different angle. It seeks to externalise translators’ “internal knowledge” (Pym 1993: 131, 149-150, Robinson 2012: 6-7, 23-57) of their professional practice and also, to some degree, to internalise the “external” understanding academic scholars bring to bear on this internal knowledge. The aim was, firstly, to make a contribution to the body of knowledge available to the academic and professional communities about current working conditions in the translation industry, and secondly to embed sustainable habits of systematic reflection in my own professional practice as a translator. As such, my project reverses the more familiar journey of academic scholars and researchers venturing out into the communities they seek to investigate. Among the key premises it is based on is the hope that, far from being merely an incidental or collateral by-product of its successful completion, the methodological skills and hard-won scholarly restraint gained over the course of three years of academic research will prove to be valuable assets in my own future professional work.

Based on this opportunity to combine regular work on various translation projects with empirical research and theoretical reflection, I would argue that translators (and perhaps members of other professions as well) can hugely benefit from bringing similar analytical rigour to the continuous scrutiny of and reflection on their practice and the external conditions shaping that practice. In fact, several translators who took part in the survey described below explicitly mentioned – either in their responses to the survey itself or in e-mail correspondence relating to it – how much they had valued the opportunity it afforded them for personal reflection. In this context, it is also worth noting that in the face of the progressive automation across many professions predicted by some expert observers (cf. Susskind and Susskind 2015, Frase 2016, Harari 2015, Kurzweil 2012 and 2005), as discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis, the capacity for critical (self-)reflection may well constitute one of the most significant remaining competitive advantages of human professionals over machines.

This PhD project is also a trained literary scholar's foray into empirical research. As such, it seeks to contribute to an ongoing investigation – by scholars and practitioners – into the conditions that enable and constrain human translation, and to a discussion about the objects and objectives of Translation Studies scholarship. In principle, researchers seeking to investigate translators' working practices in line with the "sociological turn" in Translation Studies have two options: they can observe, or they can ask. These two approaches are not, of course, mutually exclusive and a number of researchers have successfully combined observation (think-aloud protocols, keystroke logging) with questionnaires or semi-structured interviews (cf. Risku 2014, Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2014).

My own enquiry is inspired by previous workplace studies (see section 1.2. below for more detail), and guided by the "types of questions that practitioner-researchers ask" (Nicodemus and Swabey 2016: 158):

> What is my concern about my practice?
> Why am I concerned?
> How do I gather evidence to show reasons for my concern?
> What can I do about the situation?

> How do I test the validity of my claims to knowledge?
> How can I check whether any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
> How do I modify my practice in light of my evaluation?
> How do I explain the significance of my work to others?
> (ibid.)

As outlined above, the idea for this thesis grew out of my own professional practice as a translator, and more precisely out of a desire to better understand some of the issues I had identified on the basis of my own experience and observation and anecdotal evidence from others. It started as a largely unsystematic and unscientific attempt to make sense of my own feelings of cognitive dissonance between expectation and experience as a fully qualified and highly skilled professional working under market conditions that struck me as harshly exploitative. To this end, I began reading relevant academic articles alongside blog posts and discussion threads on translators' forums. Ultimately, I found I was more interested in exploring and learning from the experiences and opinions of other translators than my own. A survey that, in addition to collecting quantitative data from responses to multiple-choice questions, gave respondents plenty of opportunity to voice their own reflections and concerns in free-text responses and comments, seemed the best way to capture these experiences and opinions. My survey was not designed to prove or disprove particular hypotheses. Rather, it proceeded from the assumption that the topics covered in the questionnaire would be of interest and/or concern to a sufficient number of potential respondents to render meaningful findings, and that a sufficient number of professional translators would be willing to articulate these interests or concerns in response to a mix of open and closed questions.

Beyond that, my survey design was guided by the desire to give respondents the opportunity to raise any other topics or questions they considered important. The result is intended as a contribution to the knowledge available to the academic community about (translators' perceptions of) current working conditions in the translation industry, as well as to my own knowledge and understanding of how these conditions shape the experiences and practices of professional translators.

This genesis, in turn, raised a number of methodological challenges. Notably, it appeared to run counter to many of the applicable paradigms, which typically envisage ethnographic or empirical research as the observation of its object(s) from the outside with the aim of collecting data to test hypotheses and/or answer questions formulated on the basis of academic scholarship. In my case, it felt more accurate to say that the researcher came to academic scholarship as an outsider – a stranger among scholars, rather than the more common figure of the scholar as a stranger among the community s/he is studying – with the aim of testing assumptions and contextualising observations based on unverifiable anecdotal or experiential evidence.

A growing body of scholarship is currently being developed by researchers embedding themselves – or, in some cases, already embedded – in a community of practice. Notably, this is the case with writers and other artists investigating their own creative practice in creative-critical research projects (cf. Gallagher 2008),[14] and with participatory action researchers seeking to reduce the gap between theory and practice by

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[14] Also see: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mediapractice/research/doctoralresearch, http://www.uea.ac.uk/literature/research/creative-critical, http://www.techne.ac.uk/for-students/techne-events/2019/june/this-is-critical-

> developing partnerships among practitioners, researchers and community members to investigate, evaluate and implement *concrete* solutions to the problems they face.
>
> (Nicodemus and Swabey 2016: 164, italics in original).

The "internal knowledge" action researchers and other scholar-practitioners can bring to their research may build trust within the communities under scrutiny and facilitate access to relevant survey populations, but carries the risk of compromising their objectivity and prejudicing outcomes.

My aim for this project was to combine – or, in cases where this might prove impossible, to contrast – the two perspectives: the views from the wordface and the ivory tower,[15] by which I mean my own views from both vantage points as well as those of other professional practitioners and academic scholars. To this end, I continued to work part-time as a freelance translator for a number of clients throughout my PhD project and made a conscious effort to integrate more sustained and systematic habits of observation and reflection into my professional practice. For example, Douglas Robinson's (2012: 203-204) model of different states of enjoyment or engagement with translation work allowed me to interrogate my preferences for specific types of translation tasks and specific ways of working, and to make conscious attempts at organising my workload accordingly.

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writing-asabout-practice-a-creative-critical-writing-lab, https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/creative-critical-summit, all retrieved September 2019

[15] Both terms are borrowed from Andrew Chesterman's and Emma Wagner's (2002) pioneering effort to combine and contrast the two perspectives, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Likewise, reading Richard Sennett's (2006) discussion of the differences between the craftsperson's and the consultant's or consumer's professional habits and attitudes in conjunction with Michael Cronin's (2003) distinction between guardians and traders and the different modes of time they operate in (see chapter 2 below) helped me to understand much more precisely why it can often feel so stressful to balance clients' expectations of instant availability with the intense focus required to meet their expectations of translation quality.

Much as the process of translation is frequently invisible or obscured in its finished product, very little of this reflective practice is directly evident in the pages of this thesis. Nevertheless, its influence on my research interests, premises and potential biases is substantial and needs to be acknowledged – especially in light of the arguments about the non-representative nature of translators' individual preferences developed in section 2.2 below. There have been times during the course of this PhD project when the perspectives of the academic scholar and the professional practitioner were neatly and usefully juxtaposed in the space of a single morning: when, for example, I returned to my desk from a productive and stimulating discussion with my supervisors about professional ethics, best practice and translation quality to find new requests in my e-mail inbox that served as a reminder that these priorities are not universally shared across the translation industry's supply chains. Conversely, allowing myself to surrender to the adrenaline rush of an urgent 2,000-word translation – let alone the pure bliss of tackling a translation task that stimulated feelings of *flow* or *intellectual arousal* (cf. Robinson 2012: 203-204) – would often be a relief after hours of struggling to produce even a few lines of academic writing that seemed worth keeping. In other instances, theoretical reflection and practical application melded seamlessly, e.g. when helping to design best-practice workflows for a long-term collaborative project involving teams of translators and editors for several different languages or developing suitable translation tasks for practical modules at under- and postgraduate level.

The sources I was able to draw on to obtain relevant information – translators' websites, blogs and books (many of the latter self-published), articles in the newsletters and bulletins of professional associations, discussions in relevant online forums – were disparate and sometimes problematic. Translators are professional language users and communicators. It seems reasonable to assume that, unlike accounts they give of their working lives in private conversation, the experiences reported in any such published material will have been carefully curated, on the one hand, with a specific target readership in mind (e.g. potential clients and/or fellow translators) and, on the other hand, in the knowledge that any opinions or attitudes expressed in the public domain are accessible to, and open to interpretation by, audiences other than those they were intended for. Arguably then, such texts may be a more reliable indicator of the professional standing, competence and credibility their authors hope to project than of the reality of their working lives – which may or may not differ substantially from the existence described for the benefit of colleagues and prospective clients.

By this, I do not mean to suggest that these authors are misrepresenting – let alone deliberately misrepresenting – their levels of professional success and expertise, but rather that they may sometimes be selective in choosing the anecdotes they are willing to share with the wider audience described above, and the light they decide to present them in, as representative of their professional practice as a whole. (A notable exception is Alejandro Moreno-Ramos's Mox blog,[16] which satirises the travails of an underpaid and overworked translator who despite his "two PhDs [and knowledge of] six languages […] hardly earns minimum wage". The blog's appeal depends to a large part on its readers' familiarity with the kind of situations it depicts and "many of the events are freely based on [the author's] personal experience". However, Moreno-Ramos uses the framing paratexts on his website to draw a clear distinction between his own thriving professional practice and his protagonist's pitiful existence as a hapless victim of hostile market forces beyond his control, memorably personified in the character of Pam, the evil project manager.)

The need to protect confidential client information would in any case preclude professionals from discussing sensitive issues in detail. A fuller exploration of these sources would require a discourse-analytical framework (cf. Fairclough 1995) that reads textual properties as conditioned by sociolinguistic, economic and cultural contexts of production and reception. For the purposes of this research, my focus was on identifying key areas of interest and/or concern.

Finally, it is worth noting that fewer than half of respondents to my survey said they regularly visit online translators' forums (49.3%), read (42.9%) or regularly contribute to (16.5%) other translators' blogs, online bulletins or other translation-related publications. Therefore, even a systematic and comprehensive analysis of these sources, as exemplified in

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[16] http://mox.ingenierotraductor.com/, retrieved 12 July 2019; cf. section 6.3 below

Dam's (2013) study of translators' weblogs, might not necessarily capture the most pressing concerns of a majority of translators, or give a reliable indication of how widely shared these concerns are.

1.2. Review of Relevant Literature and Previous Research

The relevance of academic translation theory to professional practice proved among the most divisive issues in the survey that forms the core of my original research for this thesis (see chapter 5 for a discussion of the relevant findings). My own project seeks to contribute to an ongoing dialogue between theory and practice. Its specific focus is on bringing together internal and external perspectives on translatorial practice to ask what (more) can be done to prepare new and aspiring translators for sustainable professional success under current market conditions. Accordingly, it draws on disparate sources to develop a survey questionnaire for data collection and to contextualise the findings of that survey.

Much of the conceptual groundwork for the research presented in this thesis was laid by other Translation Studies scholars over the past two decades. The need for a dialogue between academic scholars and professional practitioners has been articulated and addressed by Andrew Chesterman and Emma Wagner in their joint enquiry into the question *Can Theory Help Translators?* (2002) – although their own answers seem to me more provisional than conclusive, deliberately designed to open rather than close the debate. Along with David Katan's (2009) research, the discussion between Chesterman and Wagner played a vital role in shaping my reflections on the relevance of academic theory to professional practice.

My schooling in translation history and theory as an MA student stimulated an interest in the external perspective brought to bear on professional practice by academic scholarship. A number of key conflicts and dilemmas articulated by survey respondents can be framed in terms of distinctions drawn by scholars in and outside the disciplinary boundaries of Translation Studies research, including **Douglas Robinson's (Robinson 2012: 6-7, 23-57) concept of "internal" vs. "external knowledge"** itself.

These distinctions and definitions are discussed in detail in chapter 2 below. Specifically, they include **Richard Sennett's (2006) insistence on the craftsperson's desire to "do something well for its own sake"** – in contrast to the consumer's and the consultant's fleeting and superficial engagement with the world – and **Michael Cronin's (2003) reflections on professional translators' conflicting roles as traders and guardians operating simultaneously in "mnemonic" and "instantaneous" time**. Both provided useful points of reference for some of the most pressing concerns voiced by survey respondents, and enabled me to construct a framework for my own attempt to discuss the full complexity of professional translation in its two separate but inseparable aspects as a cognitive and commercial activity – a craft and a trade.

During the course of my research, **Lawrence Venuti's (2010) distinction between "instrumental" and "hermeneutic" views of translation** as, respectively, mechanical reproduction or interpretive and/or creative action became central to my reflections on the future(s) of human translation. So did **Daniel Gouadec's (2007) distinction between those aspects of "friendly" automation that empower translators** by opening up new markets and putting unprecedented terminological resources at their fingertips, **and the "unfriendly revolution"** that seeks to disenfranchise them and devalue their work. While the contrast between **translators' desire for total immersion and clients' expectation of constant availability** is based on experiential evidence rather than academic scholarship, it can be directly linked to the difference between "mnemonic" and "instantaneous" time, and to the craftsperson's "commitment" (Sennett 2006: 194-197) to their work, and finally to the difference between **translators' experiences of translation as a process and their clients' expectations of receiving a finished product**.

The empirical studies conducted into translators' experiences of their professional practice (Wolf 2007, Katan 2009, Sela-Sheffy and Shlesinger 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011, Dam and Zethsen 2008, 2009/1, 2009/2, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, Abdallah 2012 and 2014, Risku 2014, Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al. 2016) showed me that, alongside the traditional focus on translators' agency in relation to text, there is a growing interest in investigating the market conditions that inform this agency. While the focus on the wider socio-economic context of translation production originated with the emergence of *skopos* theory and the functionalist school in Translation Studies during the 1970s and 1980s, many of the assumptions about the expert status ascribed to professional translators within "dyadic" relationships to their work providers underlying their work as scholars and educators no longer apply, as Abdallah (2012: 30) points out.

Douglas Robinson (2012), Don Király (2000 and 2016) and Daniel Gouadec (2002 and 2007) have all written about the day-to-day practicalities of earning a living at the wordface of professional translation from the double (internal/external) perspective of their own experience as professional practitioners and educators of future professional practitioners. Likewise, Juliette R. Scott's (2019) study of outsourcing practices in legal translation relies on a combination of rigorous academic research and practice-based knowledge. Robinson's emphasis on the importance of enjoyability in translator training also prompted me to extend my definition of sustainable professional success beyond the quantifiable markers of financial security.

The case studies presented in the special issue on "Employability in the Translation and Interpreting Curriculum" of the journal *Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (Vol. 11, No. 2-3) offer further evidence of a shift towards integration of commercial awareness and business skills into translator training programmes.

Two recent volumes by Gabriela Saldanha and Sharon O'Brien (2013) and Claudia V. Angelelli and Brian James Baer (2016) offer practical guidance on different research methodologies and on situating them within the wider disciplinary context of contemporary Translation Studies.

Paul Mason's (2015), Richard and Daniel Susskind's (2015), Peter Frase's (2016) and Yuval Noah Harari's (2016) observations on the challenges and opportunities of progressive automation in other professions prompted me to consider the role of (human) translation within the future scenarios envisaged in their books.

Joss Moorkens (2017) places precarious working conditions for professional translators within the wider context of post-financial austerity and neoliberal marketplaces that value short-term profit over sustainability and fairness (cf. Moore 2015, Bloodworth 2018, Prassi 2018).

Based on their own internal knowledge, a number of translators have (self-)published guides to the professional practice of translation as a trade (cf. Chriss 2006, McKay 2006, Durban and Seidel 2010, Jenner and Jenner 2010, Neidhardt 2016, Guillemin 2019), while Kate Briggs (2017) writes quite stirringly about the craft of translation as an exciting, risky and profoundly human endeavour.

1.3. Developing the Questionnaire

The survey that forms the core of my original research was conceived as an opportunity to capture the experiences of other translators in a medium that, while anonymising the identities of individual respondents, sits somewhere between private conversation or correspondence and public forum.

In spite of the reservations outlined in section 1.1. above, online sources provided a useful starting point that allowed me to extend my enquiry beyond my subjective experience as a professional practitioner, and the concerns and preoccupations resulting from that experience. Based on the frequency of relevant blog posts, forum threads and articles in which they were addressed, and the intensity of discussion that followed (as indicated by the number of comments or responses), the following areas of particular interest emerged from this preliminary research:

- Client relationships/client education
- Progressive automation of workflow processes including translation itself
- Work/life balance and workload management
- Emergence and adoption of new technologies
- Translation industry trends (mergers and acquisitions, consolidation,

diversification)

- Respective benefits and drawbacks of working for LSPs and direct clients
- Downward pressure on rates resulting from some of the trends outlined above

The survey of UK translation sector professionals conducted in autumn 2016 by the European Commission Representation in the UK, the Chartered Institute of Linguists and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (2016 UK Translator Survey) – the results of which had just been made public at the time when I was designing my questionnaire – provided a host of data that was relevant to this research project, as well as a useful template for a questionnaire that had proved effective in collecting this data. Explicitly designed "with content shaped by active translators, to ensure it would be as useful and valuable as possible, and to increase the number of potential respondents" (ibid.: 2), the UK Translator Survey combined open and closed questions with opportunities for respondents to express concerns and opinions not directly addressed in the questions themselves.

Since the "Specific Questions" section in Part Two of the 2016 UK Translator Survey had already canvassed respondents' use of and attitudes to translation tools and technologies in detail, I decided not to cover the same ground. My questionnaire therefore does not contain any questions on translation tools and technologies. This decision allowed me to focus my attention elsewhere, but it also meant skirting some very divisive issues confronting professional translators under current market conditions. Many translators I know hold strong views on topics such as the increasing prioritisation of efficiency and productivity and its effects on enjoyability and job satisfaction, or the challenges, risks and opportunities associated with recent advances in machine translation technology (notably, the introduction of DeepL and Google NMT). These views are only tangentially represented in my own survey. I will, however, refer to relevant findings from the UK Translator Survey where appropriate.

The questionnaire used for my own survey consisted of 26 questions divided into four sections, which roughly corresponded with the different stages in the trajectory of a professional career from academic training to professional practice and, finally, reflections on the future of human translation (see the Appendix for the complete questionnaire). The questionnaire covers a number of aspects central to my research focus:

- Transition into professional practice
    - experience/perception of support received from training institutions and professional associations
    - usefulness of internships and degree programmes
    - recommendations for additional support
    - length of time it took respondents to make a living from professional translation/interpreting
- Workload management
    - number of regular clients
    - hours per week spent on translation/related marketing and admin tasks
    - satisfaction with current workload and remuneration
    - stress factors
    - enjoyment, passion and professional pride
- Relevance of academic theory to professional practice

- Definitions of professional identity
    - respondents’ perceptions of their own roles in the current translation industry
    - respondents’ perceptions of how their clients see them
- Future prospects for human translation.

Additional preliminary questions were designed to collect data on respondents’ backgrounds (current location, academic qualifications, specialist domains, language combinations, gender identification), which then allowed me to filter responses in order to test the potential impact of any of these factors on respondents’ perceptions of their working conditions.

I deliberately chose not to ask respondents about the number of years they had spent in the profession. While this would probably have been an easy and straightforward question to answer for some respondents, others might have struggled, as I would have myself. I delivered my first paid translation in 1998 and my first book-length translation in 2005, started working full-time as a professional translator in 2010 and completed my academic qualification in 2013; which of these dates should be considered most relevant? Many of my closest translator friends and colleagues have taken similarly non-linear career paths. In retrospect, it would sometimes have been useful to have this information. Instead, I worked on the rough (and equally unreliable, as my own working history shows) assumption that respondents who graduated before 2007 were more likely to have started their careers at an earlier date than those who graduated after 2012. In some cases, respondents supplied this information where they considered it relevant.

In formulating the survey questions, I incorporated feedback from many informal conversations with fellow translators about my research goals and interests, as well as from two more formal presentations of my project: the first to an audience of around 50 members of the ITI Cymru and South West regional groups in Cardiff in April 2016, the second to a smaller group of about 15 members of the Brighton Language Collective in September 2016.

Some questions primarily interested me from the translator's internal, others from the researcher's external perspective. In some instances, these two interests (*I wonder how other translators feel about this* versus *What does this tell me about perceptions and attitudes within the translation community?*) overlapped, in others less so. My aim was not to arrive at any prescriptive definition of what might constitute a typical – let alone an ideal – professional translator's career profile. Rather, I wanted to capture as diverse a range of opinions and experiences and gain as detailed (albeit not necessarily complete, representative or objective) an understanding of actual translators' perceptions of current working conditions in the profession as possible within the scope of a PhD project. In formulating the questions, it was therefore important to allow and encourage a wide range of responses without rendering the data impossible to analyse in a meaningful way. I decided to offer a number of predefined answers for most questions, either in the "checkbox" (where multiple answers are allowed) or the "multiple choice" (where only one answer is allowed) format, complemented by a comment box where respondents were encouraged to expand on their responses. For some questions, simple numeric or Likert-type scales were used to measure respondents' levels of satisfaction with their current working conditions.

In order to maximise submission rates, only three questions covering details of the respondents' backgrounds (current main source of income, current country of residence and translation-/interpreting-related academic qualification) were mandatory, while respondents were free to skip any of the other questions. By collecting this information from all respondents, the intention was to improve my chances of finding potential correlations between respondents' attitudes to their professional practice, on the one hand, and their location and/or academic qualification, on the other hand, which might merit further investigation. (For example, robust support systems for new translators might be more readily available in some countries than others; academic training might have an impact on the extent to which translators feel in control of their working conditions, and/or on the levels of job satisfaction they feel entitled to.)

Early versions of the questionnaire included a number of leading questions, which offered respondents a choice between answers that were based on strong opinions (e.g. on rates, stress levels, the usefulness of internships and the future of human translation) I had seen or heard other translators, academic scholars or industry stakeholders express in writing, conversation or public discourse. The primary intention or methodological rationale was to test how widely shared these opinions are in the professional translation community. Secondly, my hope was to provoke equally strong reactions from respondents who did not share them, ideally in the form of quotable comments. In the final version that was distributed to potential respondents, the majority of these questions were rephrased more objectively to invite a wider range of responses and avoid any wording that might unduly influence or alienate respondents. The most notable exception to this was the final question (*Q26. How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?*), in which respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to the future of human translation, but were also given the opportunity to express their own opinions in free-text comments. (Responses to Q26 are discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.)

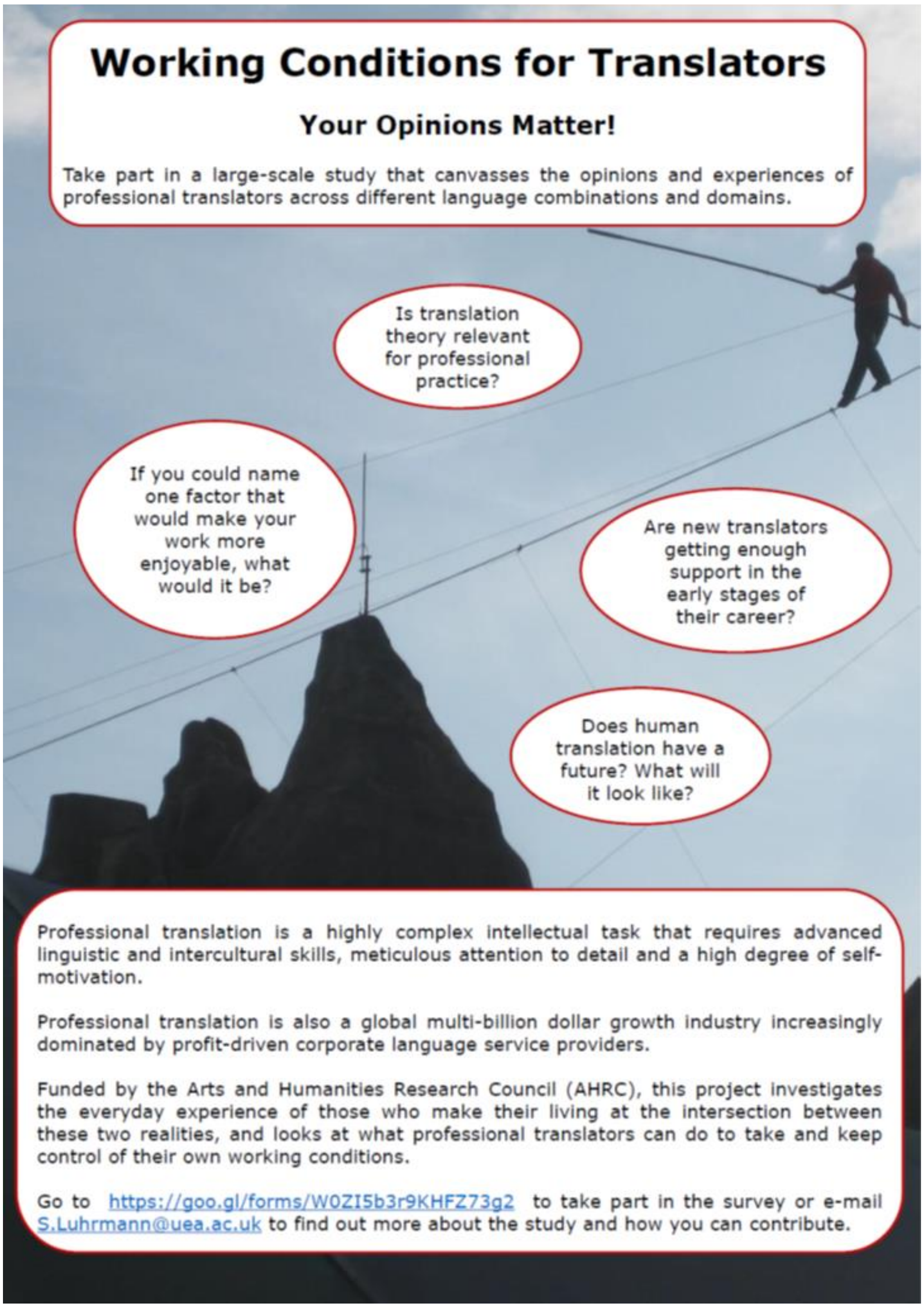
Unlike longitudinal studies, where participants are observed and/or interviewed repeatedly over an extended period of time, a one-off survey provides only a snapshot view of respondents' attitudes and opinions at the moment of filling in the questionnaire. Some questions explicitly asked respondents to consider only their current situation, while others specified a limited frame of reference (e.g. Q 12b. *Looking back over the last 6 months, how many different clients have you regularly worked for?*). A small number of questions asked respondents to reflect on past career progression or future developments.

An initial draft of the questionnaire in Microsoft Word format was then sent to a number of trusted colleagues, who were invited to provide critical feedbacks in the form of comments, questions, proposed amendments and additions. As a result, a number of questions were rephrased for greater clarity and/or amended to offer respondents a broader and/or more nuanced choice of predefined answers. The revised version of the questionnaire was uploaded as a Google Form and pilot-tested by another small group of respondents, who were asked to fill in the questionnaire as they normally would and to send me any comments or queries by e-mail.

1.4. Distribution/Dissemination and Associated Risks

Rather than targeting a specific or segmented group of respondents – e.g. the membership of one or more professional associations – I wanted the survey distribution to replicate some of the random message-in-a-bottle effect by which information (e.g. about job or professional development opportunities, new resources or technological tools) tends to be disseminated within a community whose members, though professional communicators, are not always natural networkers or socialisers. (So as not to perpetuate stereotypes of nerdy loners with underdeveloped people skills and "limited ambition, liking routine, socially isolated and suffering from artistic frustration" (Henderson 1986: 58), it is important to emphasise that many translators I have met are excellent at projected confidence and professionalism in social situations. I also know others who would much rather be sitting at home behind a computer screen, and some who fall into both categories. In my survey, the respondents who mentioned isolation and lack of personal contact with clients and other stakeholders as benefits of working as (self-employed) translators outnumbered those who saw them as drawbacks by 4 to 1 (see figure 4.iv). Respondents also highlighted the collaborative nature of many translation projects. On the other hand, it is also worth noting that several respondents expressly told me they would not feel comfortable speaking to me on the phone or via Skype, but would be happy to answer follow-up questions by e-mail.)

Figure 1.i. Flyer distributed at translation-related events to promote the survey



Working Conditions for Translators

Your Opinions Matter!

Take part in a large-scale study that canvasses the opinions and experiences of professional translators across different language combinations and domains.

Is translation theory relevant for professional practice?

If you could name one factor that would make your work more enjoyable, what would it be?

Are new translators getting enough support in the early stages of their career?

Does human translation have a future? What will it look like?

Professional translation is a highly complex intellectual task that requires advanced linguistic and intercultural skills, meticulous attention to detail and a high degree of self-motivation.

Professional translation is also a global multi-billion dollar growth industry increasingly dominated by profit-driven corporate language service providers.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), this project investigates the everyday experience of those who make their living at the intersection between these two realities, and looks at what professional translators can do to take and keep control of their own working conditions.

Go to https://goo.gl/forms/W0ZI5b3r9KHFZ73g2 to take part in the survey or e-mail S.Luhrmann@uea.ac.uk to find out more about the study and how you can contribute.

The final version of the questionnaire was initially distributed by e-mail to a list of around 60 of my own professional contacts, who were asked to forward it within their own professional networks, including dissemination through ITI mailing lists and Translation Studies alumni networks at several UK universities. In addition, I handed out flyers containing details on the survey, my own contact details and the URL for the questionnaire (see figure 1.i.) at a number of translation-related conferences and events I attended, including the International Translation Day event at the British Library, the 2017 Portsmouth Translation Conference, the Translating and the Computer 39 conference and the Postgraduate Symposium on Innovation and Experimentalism in Translation and Translation Studies at the University of East Anglia. The latter had the drawback of requiring prospective respondents to type a shortened but complicated and non-intuitive URL rather than just clicking on a link that would take them to the questionnaire. In response to the additional question *How did you become aware of this survey?*, only one respondent referred to the flyer, while the majority mentioned e-mail (40.4%), social media or professional associations' newsletters.

This method of distribution meant that I was unable to control further dissemination, measure response rates or verify the extent to which respondents had answered the questions truthfully. Since the survey was accessible on the internet to anybody who had been provided with (or stumbled upon) the URL, there was also a risk of abuse, e.g. multiple submissions by the same respondent or hackers tampering with survey contents or data.

The original group of recipients consisted primarily of colleagues I had met in person at workshops, conferences, readings and similar events, collaborated or corresponded with in the course of my own professional practice, the majority of whom were based in European countries – predominantly the UK, Germany and France – the United States and Australia. Probably as a consequence, translators from other regions are underrepresented in the findings. For future research projects, it might be interesting to carry out similar surveys targeted specifically at respondents in one or more of these underrepresented regions in Asia, Africa and Latin America to see whether the results would differ substantially from those obtain in this research project.

There are reasons to expect translators to respond well to this type of qualitative research: they are professionally articulate, prone to deep contemplation and attentive to wording to the point of obsession.[17]

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[17] Accordingly, several respondents to my survey took issue with the phrasing of individual questions, commenting for example:

> "Gender is not an identity! It's a hierarchy. Stop the postmodern bullshit please"
> (in response to Q6 about gender identification)
>
> "This dichotomy between theory and practice is artificial (and boring!) and was resolved by Immanuel Kant almost three centuries ago."
> (in response to Q23 about the relevance of translation theory to professional practice)
>
> "I would challenge the wording of this question. Translators 'charge', they don't 'get paid'. Translator are getting better at looking at it from this perspective, but there is still a long way to go."
> (in response to Q15 about satisfaction with current remuneration)
>
> "How much more can globalisation accelerate? I'm sick of hearing that :)"
> (in response to Q26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future? [Accelerated globalisation will make translation skills more culturally significant*])
> "I would replace 'survive' with 'thrive' in the statements above."
> (in response to Q26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future? [Human translators will need to take on a more proactive role to raise their public profile if they want their profession to survive] and [Human translators will need to adapt to changes in economic demand and technological development if they want their profession to survive]*)

Respondents to the recent UK Translator Survey – i.e. translation professionals who “make (or expect to make) some or all of [their] living from translation; and [...] are mainly based in the UK” – expressed “a rich and fascinating variety of preoccupations” in answer “to open questions giving [them] the opportunity to expand on their answers and to address any subject of concern to them” (ibid.: 2-4).

On the other hand, successful practitioners in any profession are also likely to be time-poor (because of strong demand for their expertise) and (as a necessary consequence of their time poverty) good at prioritising business-critical activities over less essential demands on their time and attention. Accordingly, there was a risk that the opinions and experiences of those with the highest levels of sustainable professional success and job satisfaction would be underrepresented in the responses to the survey, and to free-text questions in particular.

Beyond that, the target audience was to some extent self-selecting in the sense that the survey was more likely to reach potential respondents who are active and well-connected within the professional translation community, as opposed to those who might be working in greater isolation – whether by choice or circumstance – or still struggling to build professional support networks. It is worth noting in this context that between them, the two cohorts of respondents who graduated from translation degree programmes after 2007 make up just over a quarter of the total survey population (compared to 30% who graduated before 2007 and 43% with no translation or interpreting-related degree). Despite all efforts to filter quantitative and qualitative findings by relevant subsets where appropriate, the cumulative effect may be that the opinions and experiences of more recent graduates are underrepresented in this thesis – as are those of respondents living outside the developed economies of the global north.

Furthermore, it does not seem unreasonable to speculate that the motivation to respond to a lengthy survey questionnaire might be stronger for certain types or profiles of translators than others. Specifically, it seems plausible that translators with what I have elsewhere labelled "perfectionist" and/or "existentialist" tendencies (cf. Lührmann 2017) would be strongly motivated by deeply held beliefs and feelings about translation as a creative process or a craft. Thus, a number of respondents use emotionally charged language to talk about their professional practice, describing the translation process as "quite addictive" or "beautiful" and emphasising their "love" and "passion" for their work. One respondent expressly articulates a sense of calling or vocation, suggesting that "you don't choose to become a translator or an interpreter but the profession chooses you to assist in getting the message across". Another respondent explains that translation proved a "life-saver" for her after a severe injury left her

> unable to continue working as a journalist, but my journalistic skills were portable to this way of making a living: meeting deadlines, writing quickly and succinctly to publishable standard, and quickly researching and getting to grips with a previously unfamiliar topic area. I came to translation in 2002 at a time when the internet was expanding and since then there has been a regular and ample flow of work. The income is not always enormous, but it is a lot better than social security. The work is varied and interesting and my disability is irrelevant (indeed, most clients have no idea that I am disabled). And compared with journalism, the work is virtually stress-free. Now that I am becoming increasingly disabled, I have been able to move from full-time to part-time work, and now accept smaller jobs than I used to. Luckily, there is still enough to keep me occupied. So

> from my perspective, it has been an ideal line of work for the past 15 years.
>
> [Female respondent, Australia
> T&I-related BA from an Australian university, graduated before 2007
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, mining, tourism, personal ID and qualification documents]

Translators with "entrepreneurial" or "idealist" traits, on the other hand, might use a survey of this kind as an opportunity to express concerns about the current state of the translation industry and the external market factors that shape the demand for and the production and consumption of translations, as in the following comments:

> I do really like the agency model (where they find the clients and I translate), but right now I feel that at least in the US, most agencies engage in price-based competition, which isn't where I want to go.
>
> I'm very happy with rates from my direct clients; not all potential clients will pay my rates, but I have more than enough work from those who will. However lately (in the past 1-2 years), I find that almost no mainstream agencies will pay my rates. I have completely stopped marketing to agencies. I do respond when agencies contact me, but probably 9 times out of 10, they respond that my rates are too high for any of their projects.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, international development, non-fiction books]

> "Can't find work" for a specific reason – I do not work below a certain minimum rate […] and these days it's rather hard to find agency clients willing to pay this rate.
>
> [Female respondent, Austria
> CERAPT [Czech Board for Translation and Interpreting] Exam, passed before 2007
> Combines self-employment as a translator and interpreter with running a B&B
> Legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, arts, hospitality]

Others used free-text responses to *Q 21. If you could name one aspect that you find most unpleasant about working as a professional translator, what would it be?* to discuss their dislike of specific terms they see as an expression of fundamental misperceptions of their professional roles (see chapter 6 for an in-depth discussion of respondents' perceptions of their professional identities):

> Turning down inquiries, as mentioned earlier. Otherwise, there is also the sense that for many of my agency contacts, **I am just a "resource" in a database** to whom work is to be assigned. Since I am not an employee of the company, the company is obviously not beholden to me, and there is always the possibility that I'll suddenly stop hearing from or receiving work from any given client. That's a risk I'm willing to accept and work around as a freelance translator, but I feel that those facts tend to stand in the way of the development of quality, cordial relationships with the project managers and other contacts I interact with from those agencies.
>
> [Male respondent, Japan
>
> T&I-related BA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, marketing/ advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> The term "vendor". I don't like the impression that I'm selling widgets, I am selling a service that is quite subjective, and I am a qualified human being, not a facilitator of a computer program. Some "LSPs" seem to wilfully misunderstand that idea. I don't mind CAT tools for large projects with repeated terminology, they are very useful, but I get extremely angry when asked to do "light-touch post-editing" of a machine translation. It's a totally ridiculous concept.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007

> Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy]

There would be considerably less incentive for professional practitioners who do not share such convictions or concerns – those for whom translation is a job more than a professional identity – to take part in this survey. Accordingly, the fact that this latter group is under-represented in the survey results says little about its actual size. This more detached attitude towards translation as a profession was articulated most explicitly by one respondent who said:

> Translation is fine but if I find something else I like that's fine, too. There are too many interesting things out there.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, games]

Nor is the survey designed to capture the experiences and attitudes of translation degree graduates who come to the conclusion that "their work is not appreciated by or in demand in the translation industry" and instead choose to pursue careers "in other industries that value their competencies" (Abdallah 2012: 51). Abdallah's observations are based on her own longitudinal study of eight Finnish translators between 2005 and 2011. She found that

> four of the eight interviewees in my research data had exited the translation industry by the time of their second interviews, and by the time of their last interview session in 2011, only three translators still worked in the translation and localisation industry, as micro-entrepreneurs (ibid.: 42)

Further methodological issues arise from my decision to include literary translators in a survey primarily designed for translators who work in non-literary domains. As one respondent pointed out in a comment in response to *Q 26. How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?*:

> This question (as a lot of the questions before) is very different for literary or book translators and all other kinds of translators and interpreters, because the work of the first ones is protected by authors' rights/copyright. Finally this is crucial and market and working conditions for both are so different that it seems not to be a good idea to make the same survey for both.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction]

It is worth noting that this distinction is not just a question of cultural capital or social prestige. Under German law, for example, along with copyright protection and royalties, the material benefits literary translators are entitled to as authors include membership in the Künstlersozialkasse, a statutory body that provides access to health insurance, pension and social security schemes for artists and writers at more favourable terms than those offered by private insurance providers.

However, the 2007/2008 CEATL survey found that in 8 out of 23 countries/regions surveyed, full-time literary translators "who earn their living mainly from literary translation and occasionally from translation-related literary activities (lectures and talks, readings, book publishing, literary criticism, etc.)" account for "less than 10% of all active translators" (loc. cit.: 6). This includes the United Kingdom, where the largest subset of respondents to my own survey (24.3%) reside. I know from personal experience that professional practitioners – myself included – frequently combine literary translation with other income streams, including other types of translation. The exclusion of literary translation from the survey would almost certainly have resulted in an incomplete picture of these translators' professional practice. Accordingly, for the purposes of the survey – and this thesis in general – I chose to regard literary translation as one specialism among others (legal translation, medical translation, translation of academic articles etc.) rather than as a wholly separate field such as interpreting, project management or teaching. This distinction may be to a certain extent arbitrary – for example, it could be argued that the professional activities of a legal translator who also works as a court interpreter are not fully represented in the present survey, either. I would nevertheless maintain that, with regard to the specific areas covered in this thesis, there are more similarities between literary and non-literary translation practices than between translating and other related but non-translatorial practices.

In retrospect, offering respondents greater scope for differentiation in areas where working conditions differ substantially between literary and other types of translation would potentially have made it easier to articulate these differences more clearly. My hope is that any such lack of differentiation was to some extent compensated, on the one hand by the ability to skip questions respondents regarded as irrelevant to their practice and, on the other hand, by the option to address these issues in comments and free-text answers.

The findings show that only 29 of the 279 respondents who answered *Q4. Which domain(s) do you specialise in?* exclusively selected literary domains (literary fiction, genre fiction, poetry). Of these, 26 selected *Self-employment as a translator* as their main source of income, while one selected *Pension* and two *Academic research/teaching*. A number of respondents also used comments to offer observations about the specificities of literary translation markets in various countries and/or differences between literary and other types of translation.

Finally, it is worth noting that this research project walks an at times uneasy line between the anonymity required by research ethics and individual privacy rights and the desire to promote greater public visibility for translators as professional experts rather than nameless resources. It is a contribution to Translator Studies in that it

> focus[es] primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation, for instance on their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environment, or their history and influence.
>
> (Chesterman 2009: 20)

However, it does so without investigating individual translators' textual and/or extra-textual interactions and interventions. Although the respondents to my survey include a number of translators who are prominent figures in the translation community and/or the publishing industry, whose careers might well be worthy of this kind of scrutiny, the interest of this study lies elsewhere. In this survey, their experiences and opinions have been recorded as anonymous voices in a diverse and disparate chorus. I hope they do not mind this – but their willingness to fill in the questionnaire, and the selfless generosity they have shown in using their contacts and influence to promote the survey to a much wider target audience than I would have been able to reach without their help, suggest that they see merit in this research.

For all the risks and reservations discussed in this section, the quantity and quality of the data obtained from all 26 survey questions seems to me indicative of a strong interest and engagement – even enthusiasm – on the part of an avowedly time-poor survey population. So far, the response to presentations of the survey findings to professional audiences has substantiated this impression.

1.5. Analysis of Findings

Google Forms provides basic analytical and diagramming features that make it easy to establish and visualise percentages for questions with predefined answers in any of the supported formats (multiple choice, checkboxes, grids and linear scales). Further quantitative analysis was then used to identify trends and patterns, e.g. the correlation between respondents' opinions about the relevance of translation theory and definitions of their professional identity (see section 6.4) or the statistical impact of domain specialisation on early career progression (see section 3.6).

E-mail addresses provided in response to the final question (*If you would like to receive a report of my findings once the survey has ended and I have analysed the results, please leave an e-mail address where you can be contacted. [Your e-mail address will not be passed on to any third parties or used for any other than the stated purpose.]*) were detached from the rest of the data and saved in a separate file.

E-mail addresses provided in response to the penultimate question (*Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview by phone, Skype or in person? If so, please leave an e-mail address where you can be contacted. [Your e-mail address will not be passed on to any third parties or used for any other than the stated purpose.]*) were not separated from the rest of the data at this point, since they allowed me to contact those respondents who had given their consent, either individually or in smaller subsets, with follow-up questions relating to their answers. (Follow-up questionnaires on time management, enjoyment, rates and internship experiences are reproduced in the Appendix; findings from these follow-up surveys are discussed in the relevant chapters below.) All of these contact details have since been deleted and will not be included in any published version of the data.

Google Forms also supports the display and downloading of responses in the form of a table. I was then able to use the functions available in Microsoft Excel to calculate averages for the numerical responses to Q8. *Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?*, Q15. *How happy are you (overall) with the rates/salary you are currently getting paid for your translation work?,* and Q22. *On a scale from 0 to 10, how stressful do you find your job as a professional translator?.* This allowed me to identify and take a closer look at outliers – specifically, subsets of respondents who were either particularly satisfied or particularly dissatisfied with their rates or salary, and respondents whose stress levels were either above or below average.

I also decided to investigate whether gender identification, location and academic training had any substantial impact on respondents' perceptions of their professional practice under current market conditions. To this end, I filtered the responses by relevant categories (male/female, location, translation- or interpreting-related degree yes/no), which enabled me to compare and identify any substantial differences between these subsets of respondents, and to establish correlations between different factors. Although I did collect information on respondents' language combinations, I decided against using this information in any quantitative analysis; with many respondents working between several languages, the number of potential permutations would have been too great to render any useful results. For future research, a more targeted approach (e.g. a direct comparison between subsets of respondents working in common and less common language pairs) might be useful to determine the extent to which the choice of language combinations influences translators' experience of their working conditions.

1.6. Presentation of Survey Results

Of the 292 respondents who filled in the survey between November 2017 and April 2018, a substantial majority answered most or all of the 26 questions. The question that elicited the largest number of free-text responses under the multiple-choice option *Other* (40 out of 273 respondents) and additional comments (114) was Q23 about the relevance of translation theory to professional practice (see chapter 5 for an in-depth discussion).

This thesis seeks to voice the concerns and opinions of a community of professionals who can very eloquently speak for themselves. Rather than presuming to speak for them, I have quoted extensively from the free-text comments many survey respondents provided in addition to multiple-choice and tickbox answers to clarify, qualify or put these answers into context. Unless indicated otherwise by insertions or ellipses, responses are quoted verbatim except for obvious typographical errors and spelling mistakes (e.g. "adn" instead of "and"). These have been corrected as a small courtesy to respondents who took the time to fill in a lengthy questionnaire and cannot be expected to proofread their answers before submitting them. Although they may appear out of place in a piece of academic writing, any emoticons included in comments have been reproduced as an integral part of the respondent's communicative intent. Responses given in any language other than English have been translated by human translators and marked as such.

A number of arguments put forward in this thesis are explicitly or implicitly grounded in the assumption that opinions about working conditions are shaped by individual circumstances, among other factors. To the extent that respondents have volunteered basic background information (current location, gender identification, translation- or interpreting-related academic qualifications, specialist domains), I have included this information when quoting their free-text comments, in order to give a fuller picture of who my informants are without compromising their anonymity.

Like the opinions expressed in responses and comments, these descriptions are snapshots captured at a specific moment in time; none of the elements included in them are intended to be understood as static. For example,

> [Female respondent, France
> No T&I-related degree
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical]

describes a respondent who, *at the time of answering the survey*, self-identified as female, was based in France, did not have a translation- or interpreting-related degree and specialised in legal, business and medical/pharmaceutical translations. None or all of this may have changed by now.

1.6.1. Profile of the Statistically Typical Respondent

The statistically typical respondent is a self-employed translator (87.7%)[18]

---

[18] Unless specified otherwise, all figures quoted in this section are percentages of the total number of responses received for each question, typically between 280 and 292.

based in the UK (24.3%) who identifies as female (74%). She holds a translation- or interpreting-related degree (56.2%) completed before 2007 (54.26% of degree holders), which she feels prepared her reasonably well (mean average value: 3.04 out of 5) for her professional career, is a member of a professional organisation (65.2%) and specialises in translations for the marketing/advertising sector (36.2%). She has never done a translation- or interpreting-related internship or work placement (56.2%). During the early stages of her professional career, she had to find her own support, but found it was readily available (42.2%). She was able to make a living from professional translation within two years of starting her career (50.4%). (Out of 292 survey respondents, two match this profile in every aspect up to this point.)

She currently works for between two and five regular clients (37.8%). The majority of her work comes from existing clients (79.1%), primarily from translation agencies/LSPs (55.4%). By her own estimate, she typically spends 20 to 30 hours a week on professional translation work, including related activities such as proofreading/editing or transcreation (28.5%), and less than five hours on marketing, invoicing and other admin tasks relating to professional translation (56.8%), but is unhappy with her current workload (56.3%) and reports a satisfaction level of 6.0 out of 10 (mean average value) with her current remuneration for translation work.

When deciding whether to accept or turn down a job, timescales and deadlines are the most important factor for her (85.1%), followed by rates (68%) and whether she feels competent to take the job (60.9%). Resources and support provided by the client are least important (3.2%).

She regularly visits online translators' forums, Facebook or LinkedIn groups etc. (49.3%) to discuss translation-related issues (76%), research terminology (56.5%) and feel less isolated (51.9%). She does not read other translators' blogs (57.1%), write a blog herself (90.4%) or contribute regularly to other translators' blogs, online bulletins or other translation-related publications (83.5%).

She finds her job moderately stressful (mean average value: 5.13 out of 10) and experiences deadlines as the most stressful aspect of working as a professional translator.

She sometimes (72.3%) experiences the flow state as described by Robinson (2012: 203-204), but finds that this depends largely on the style, length and quality of the source texts. She disagrees with Emma Wagner's dismissal of translation theory and believes that *theory can provide useful guidance for professional practitioners* (35.5%). She is passionate about her translation work itself, which she experiences as the least stressful aspect of her professional practice while relishing the freedom, flexibility and convenience of working from home, and pragmatic about her clients' perception of this work: She sees herself as a language expert (65.5%), service provider (59.2%) and intercultural mediator (54.2%), but believes that her clients see her primarily as a service provider (77.3%), language expert (54.6%) or translation resource (53.9%).

Finally, looking at future prospects for human translation, she agrees with the contentions that

- *Advances in translation technology are going to make our work easier and more enjoyable*
  (8.45% of 284 respondents *strongly agree*, 34.85% *agree somewhat*, 27.81% *neither agree nor disagree*),

- *The translation market is so diverse, there will always be a variety of work to suit everybody's preferences*
  (23.59% of 284 respondents *strongly agree*, 42.25% *agree somewhat*),
- *Accelerated globalisation will make translation skills more culturally significant*
  (18.37% of 283 respondents *strongly agree*, 45.58% *agree somewhat*),
- *Human translators will need to take on a more proactive role to raise their public profile if they want their profession to survive*
  (36.71% of 286 respondents *strongly agree*, 43% *agree somewhat*),
- *Human translators will need to adapt to changes in economic demand and technological development if they want their profession to survive*
  (38.94% of 285 respondents *strongly agree*, 42.45% *agree somewhat*),

but strongly disagrees with the suggestion

- *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway*
  (58.63% of 278 respondents *strongly disagree*, 13.3% *somewhat disagree*).

I am offering this statistical overview as a useful first introduction to a rich and complex dataset that can yield some meaningful insights about the respondents as a group. However, it is also worth noting that, as individuals, these respondents are far more diverse than the above summary suggests. The fact that out of a total survey population of 292 respondents, not a single one matches this profile of the statistically typical respondent past the end of the first paragraph indicates a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences among survey respondents and, by extension, among the translation community at large.

Given this diversity – in conjunction with the fragmented state of the global translation industry – the extent to which specific views, e.g. on the (ir)relevance of translation theory to professional practice or on the most/least stressful aspects of working as professional translators, are not only shared across different subsets of respondents, but often phrased in similar, even identical wording strikes me as remarkable. In some instances, the cumulative effect of reading comments by respondents based in different countries, working in different specialist domains and with different career paths can be quite repetitive and monotonous, making outliers stand out as distinctive voices. In other areas, e.g. satisfaction with their current workload and remuneration, respondents' comments are just as strikingly unique to the individual, despite the emergence of common themes such as the feast-or-famine syndrome, the unpredictability of future work and the precariousness of any long-term planning. There are respondents, for example, who see professional translation as a comparatively reliable income source that supports more financially precarious activities:

> My biggest challenge is balancing my translation work (which pays well, and which I mostly enjoy, but which can leave me drained and in confidence crises more often than I like to admit) with my other work as a fitness/dance instructor (which I adore and which makes me happy, but which isn't as financially beneficial to me). I also hate turning work down as I worry that if I turn too much down, people will stop asking - but then when I have too much on, I worry about letting people down anyway, which takes its toll on my mental health. It's a bit of a vicious circle!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty]

> I also write fiction and would like to (a) concentrate on literary fiction and (b) have more time to write. Combination of "can't afford" (until my novels start selling in reasonable quantities :-)) and "don't want to let down clients".
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree

> Business, marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/design, literary and genre fiction]

For other respondents, who derive the bulk of their income from other work and translate for enjoyment or variation, the exact opposite applies, as the comments collected in table 1.01 below show.

Table 1.01. Selection of free-text comments by respondents who subsidise their translation work with other income sources.

> Teaching and editing pay better than translation, but I love translation, so that's how I make it stack up financially.
>
> [Female respondent, Ireland
> BA and MA in Languages (with translation modules) from an Irish university, graduated before 2007
> Non-fiction books, literary fiction, genre fiction, arts
> Combines self-employment as a translator with teaching in adult education and self-employment as a copyeditor and proofreader]

> As I also do consultancy work (billed by hour), I work on two very different rates and my consultancy work is where I get most of my income from. I like translation and believe in the importance of value of it (and thus do it in spite of lower rates), but that aside, I do think translation rates overall are rather low for the effort we put into them, i.e. when converted into hourly rates.
>
> [Female respondent, Ireland
> T&I-related degree, graduated before 2007
> Combines self-employment as a translator with self-employment as an IT/business consultant
> Medical/pharmaceutical, business, marketing/advertising, website localisation]

> I have a separate career that serves as my main source of income.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree

Poetry, literary fiction, philosophy, literary essays, critical theory
Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income]

If I did prefer make my living only from translating, I think it could work well, however I would have to translate also for companies, not do only fiction. But this is not the case, actually, I like my job at the university I'm having now.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
T&I-related MA from a Czech university, graduated after 2012
Literary and genre fiction
Lists self-employment as a translator and academic research/teaching as main sources of income, adding: "Literary translation is not, in my case, a regular source of income (which teaching is), but still, it is an important one."]

I can't make a living from my translations, but it's also due to the fact that I decided to pursue an academic career, and therefore I haven't been actively seeking out contracts.

[Female respondent, Canada
T&I-related PhD from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Academic articles, literary fiction]

I have a full-time post as an academic, so don't need to make a living from translation (that same full-time post obviously limits the amount of translation I can take on)

[Female respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Literary fiction]

I make a good living as a translation project manager. However, I chose this position because of the difficulties of navigating the translation world as a freelancer.

[Male respondent, US
T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
Non-fiction books, literary fiction]

While closer analysis of the data reveals some distinctive patterns – e.g. respondents who specialise in literary translation were found to need longer to make a living from translation than those specialising in legal translation (see section 3.6. for more detail) – there is enough variation within these subsets to suggest that factors such as academic qualifications, geographical location, specialist domains, availability of support etc. shape but do not determine respondents' experiences and attitudes. Likewise, responses to the questions about satisfaction and stress levels spanned the full Likert-scale spectrum from *Not at all* to *Very* in all but the smallest subsets I investigated.

Beyond the rather banal revelation that human translators come in all shapes and sizes and from many different walks of life, this strikes me as relevant to my investigation because it supports the argument that there is no one-size-fits-all roadmap to sustainable career success in the current translation industry. Some specialisations may offer a shorter route to financial self-sufficiency than others, but they do not necessarily promise lighter workloads or greater job satisfaction. Translation degree programmes, work placements and internships can be useful stepping stones, but they are neither guarantors nor prerequisites for success. Accordingly, at least to some extent the onus is on aspiring translators themselves to identify their own priorities and preferences – and, I would add, on training providers, professional associations and individuals who act as mentors to new translators to encourage this process of self-reflection and self-discovery by offering effective support and guidance, rather than attempting to impose prescriptive models of success.

1.6.2. Primary Income Sources

A large majority of 256 respondents (87.7%) selected *Self-employment as a translator* as their main source of income. While this is roughly consistent with data from previous surveys (2016 UK Translator Survey: 74.4%; Katan 2009: 74.5%), it is not necessarily meaningful in itself – the distribution methods described above meant that the survey may have been more likely to reach self-employed translators, who are more dependent on networking than in-house employees and may also be more likely to take time off work to attend workshops or conferences. However, it does mean that the responses primarily reflect the opinions and experiences of translators who earn the largest share of their income from freelance work. Other primary sources of income listed by respondents include academic research/teaching (25 respondents), employment as an in-house translator (13), self-employment as an interpreter (13), employment as a project manager (5), pension (3), employment as an interpreter (1), language teaching, indexing, writing, teacher/solicitor, IT consultancy, employment as a librarian, videogame testing, copywriting, copy-editing, service coordinator for a company, outsourcing translation work, running a bed & breakfast.

1.6.3. Gender Identification

Although I originally intended to keep the survey gender-blind, subsequent discussions with my supervisors – notably about the prevalence of impostor syndrome in female academics and professionals – convinced me that it was worth finding out to what extent gender is a factor shaping respondents' perception of and response to their working conditions.

The 2019 edition of the "Expectation and Concerns of the European Language Industry" survey, the first to include data on gender "to identify meaningful gender-based differences in the industry",

> confirmed the wide-spread opinion that women are strongly represented in the translation industry, with 73% of the total number of respondents. This bias is very strong among independent professionals, training institutes and translation departments, but all but absent among those respondents representing translation companies. (https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2019_language_industry_survey_report.pdf, retrieved 15 July 2019)

Findings presented in the report also show that "the infamous gender pay gap is also present in [the language] industry", although "[a] clear reason for the gap cannot be readily determined from the data". The researchers also found a "small but consistent difference" in the levels of concern expressed about various "challenges" ranging from "Client acquisition & competition" to "Time pressure", with female respondents "show[ing] slightly higher level of concern in all areas except administration and quality management".

In my own survey, of the 292 respondents who answered the relevant non-mandatory question, 216 (74%) identified as female and 67 (22.9%) as male, while 4 selected the *Prefer not to say* option and a few others expressed indignation at the question itself. Only one respondent refers directly to experiences of gender-related discrimination (specifically "discrimination against women in the literary world") in her responses to the survey questions.

The impact of gender on respondents' attitudes to their professional practice is part of a much wider debate beyond the scope of this current investigation. The (statistical) impact of gender identification on respondents' attitudes and experiences is discussed in greater detail in section 4.8 in the context of workload management, where it was found to be most profound. While differences in average levels of work-related stress (female: 5.20 out of 10, male: 4.90, overall: 5.13) and satisfaction with rates or salaries (female: 5.99 out of 10, male: 6.09, overall: 6.0) proved to be minor, the gap between the percentages of respondents who expressed satisfaction with their current workload was more substantial (female: 39.8%, male: 28.57%, overall: 37.2%).

Perhaps the most obvious gender gap I was able to discern concerned the frequency with which respondents who identified as female or male respectively mentioned childcare and/or other family commitments as a factor shaping their professional practice. In response to Q14. *Are you happy with your current workload, or would you prefer to work more/less?*, 16.99% of female and 9.52% of male respondents selected the option "I would like to work more, but external circumstances (e.g. childcare, health issues, contractual restrictions) are stopping me". It was not possible to determine which – if any – of the factors listed in brackets prompted each individual response, since the predefined answer did not offer respondents a choice between them. However, concerns about childcare and other family commitments are mentioned in more than thirty free-text responses or comments relating to this and other questions, only one of which comes from a male respondent. Many of these relate to time and/or financial constraints, as in the comments collected in table 1.02 below.

However, in answer to Q22b (*Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find least stressful?*), a few respondents also refer to the flexibility of self-employment as a positive factor that allows them to

> […] work my own hours and find time for my family
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> No T&I-related degree
> Non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> […] organize my day as I taking different factors into account: family (children), weather, my health (being able to take a nap when I feel tired)…
> [Female respondent, France
> T&I-related degree from a French university, graduated before 2007
> Business, academic articles, engineering, arts, non-fiction books, industry, science]

> […] arrange my work schedule around my children's schedules. As a mom with a special need son, the flexibility is great.
> [Female respondent, Indonesia
> No T&I-related degree
> Finance, business]

Table 1.02. Selection of free-text comments relating to time and/or financial constraints in the context of combining (freelance) translation work with childcare/family commitments.

> My income [still wouldn't] be enough to support a family.
> [Female respondent, Spain
> T&I-related degrees from universities in Germany and Spain, graduated before 2007
> Legal, finance, business, tourism]

> […] with two young children I feel I have no choice but to work part-time
> [Female respondent, Italy
> No T&I-related degree
> Works "part time about 4 hours a day, on average 20 hours a week"
> Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books]

I am constantly juggling the desire to spend more time with my children and the desire to translate more. I turn down a lot of work which I would like to do but cannot in the hours I work. I think I have a good balance at 25 hours a week in the daytime, plus the occasional evening, but there are times when I work every evening (more like 40 hours a week) and then it becomes unsustainable. I would prefer my husband to reduce his hours rather than for me to work less: better that we both work 30 hours, than for him to do 35 and me 25.

[Female respondent, UK

Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007

Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, children's books, magazine articles, news and current affairs]

My childcare arrangements don't allow me to work more hours.

[Female respondent, UK

T&I-related MA from an Estonian university, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Lists self-employment as a translator and private language tutoring as main sources of income, spends 10 to 20 hours a week on translation work

Legal, medical/Pharmaceutical]

I work full time and find it hard to juggle this with my parenting responsibilities and a hidden disability. I'm working on increasing my hourly rate so I can work fewer hours – progress is slow but things are improving.

[Female respondent, UK

T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Medical/pharmaceutical]

[…] Recently returned to five full days after having one day a week with my kids for about a year. Really excited to be able to devote more time to work and kick-start my business, especially with doing a rebrand and trying to give my business more of an edge with marketing campaigns, attempting to break into the direct client market. BUT. I will never shake the "mum guilt" and stop feeling like I'm missing out on time with my kids by working full time.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA, CIoL Diploma in Translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Business, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive]

In order to earn just enough to get by as a single mum, I had to work full time and unsociable hours with the rates offered by agencies (hence currently only translating as an additional income)

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
Finance, marketing/advertising, sports, engineering, natural sciences
Supplements teaching salary with translation]

I am constantly busy, which affects my family life.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
T&I-related MA and PhD, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Literary and genre fiction]

Geographical location is important. My current standard of living would not be possible in an expensive city, or if I didn't live in a country with free health care/subsidised child-care etc etc. The disadvantage is being cut-off from the centres of the Anglophone publishing world.

[Male respondent, France
No T&I-related degree
Non-fiction books, literary fiction, historical documents, testimonies, personal correspondence]

1.6.4. Ethnic Identification

Almost without exception, every gathering of professional translators and interpreters I have ever attended anywhere in Europe has been overwhelmingly – and disturbingly – white as well as overwhelmingly female. I suspect the same is true of my survey population; my survey questionnaire did not include questions on ethnic, racial or national identification. Having grown up in a country where my grandparents' generation collected this type of data to facilitate discrimination and genocide, I find such questions troubling and intrusive even when they are asked for the purpose of promoting diversity, and tend to select the option that did not exist in Nazi Germany: *Prefer not to say*. In retrospect, the decision not to collect this information strikes me to some extent as a missed opportunity to explore potential connections between ethnic background and professional identity within the survey population, e.g. the degree to which respondents living outside their countries of birth may have initially been drawn to translation as one of the few career choices where their status as non-native speakers of the local majority language would be seen as an asset rather than a constraint; this certainly played a role in my own decision to pursue a career in translation. Again based on personal experience, it may also be the case that the freedom and flexibility to work from home compensates for not feeling at home anywhere else (cf. Kronenberg 2013).

1.7. Summary of Findings

The findings affirm that it is possible for many professional translators to make a sustainable living under current market conditions. Overall, professional translation emerges as a career choice that can be both challenging and rewarding, wonderfully creative and enjoyable as well as horrendously tedious and frustrating: "Translation is a very good profession if you like meeting people and sharing ideas", as one respondent says – although many others comment on the solitude and isolation of freelance translation work. This, in turn, is sometimes experienced as a positive aspect of the job, and more often as a distinct drawback. "As an introverted person, I enjoy working from home and not having to see other people every day", one respondent says, while others wish for "[m]ore personal interaction, whether with clients or fellow translators", "working in a group" or "working with another translator".

Recent graduates of translation degree programmes feel better prepared to enter the market than earlier cohorts. As graduates are far less likely to find employment as in-house translators than to set out as self-employed sole traders or micro-entrepreneurs, some of the challenges they find themselves confronted with are to do with the unpredictability ("feast or famine") of self-employment or freelance work in the gig economy (cf. Moore 2015, Standing 2016, Moorkens 2017, Prassi 2018). Others arise from the specific complexities of professional translation as an activity that requires the ability to cope with working in isolation as well as in intense, sometimes acrimonious collaboration with other stakeholders in production networks (cf. Abdallah 2012) that are often opaque, intractable and temporary; to switch between deep focus on the translation itself and instant availability to clients and other work providers; and to balance the confidence to commit to specific translation choices with the critical capacity to question these choices and the resilience to handle feedback that may not always be constructive. These challenges will be contextualised in more detail in subsequent chapters. For now, it is worth noting that a large number of respondents relished the freedom and flexibility of "being my own boss" and "working from home" with no commute, corporate hierarchies or office politics – or, alternatively, "being able to work from anywhere/wherever I like".

The survey results also demonstrate that professional translation is an activity many respondents have strong feelings about, as evidenced by the vehemence of their disagreement with the proposition that *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my life anyway* and the emotional language used by a number of respondents when discussing their professional practice. (It could also be the case that some people are drawn to a career in translation by a desire for deep "commitment" to their work (cf. Sennett 2006: 194-197). This argument will be developed further in chapter 2 in the context of Sennett's critique of the devaluation of "craftsmanship" in the "culture of new capitalism".)

For reasons discussed in section 1.3. above, developments in translation technology were addressed only tangentially in my survey. Nevertheless, a number of respondents used free-text fields to express concerns and opinions about their future in the light of recent advances in neural machine translation technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning in general and the recent launches of Google NMT (in November 2016) and DeepL Translator (in August 2017) in particular.[19] These comments are discussed in detail in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

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[19] Cf. https://techcrunch.com/2017/08/29/deepl-schools-other-online-translators-with-clever-machine-learning/
https://www.deepl.com/press.html
http://angelikasgerman.co.uk/deepl-translator-a-review/
(all last retrieved on 12 September 2019)

While my survey findings indicate that it is (still) possible to earn a comfortable and sustainable living from professional translation under current market conditions – although less so in literary translation than in other domains – many respondents express a sense of unease with developments driven by factors including

- progressive automation,
- mounting pressure on deadlines and bottom lines across different sectors,
- lack or loss of ownership/control over technological tools,
- and a constant supply of highly skilled but commercially inexperienced graduates of translation degree programmes,

which turn a slow contemplative process into a constant race against the clock and professional experts into expendable resources. Survey responses also suggest a willingness to put up with unsatisfactory working conditions for the sake of working in a job they love. While some respondents struggle with isolation, others relish the freedom and flexibility of self-employment. As discussed in detail in chapter 4, respondents who see their roles as providers of translation services to paying clients as separate from, extrinsic to and more stressful than their roles as producers of translations – which many describe as "the work itself" or "translating as such", i.e. the core or essence of their business activities – tend to report higher stress levels and lower degrees of satisfaction than those who enjoy interacting with their clients.

Chapter 2

Theorising Professional Practice: Definitions and Distinctions

2.1. Articulating Complexity: Internal and External Perspectives

This thesis foregrounds the epistemological value inherent in the **internal perspective(s)** of first-hand experience. The survey that forms its core sought responses (discussed in detail in Part II of this thesis) from professionals who

> [think] and [talk] about translation from inside the process, knowing how it's done, possessing a practical real-world sense of the problems involved, some solutions to those problems, and the limitations to those solutions […].
> (Robinson 2012: 7)

Accordingly, Robinson's (2012) own description of this "internal perspective" integrates aspects relating to translators' cognitive, text-based working processes with aspects relating to their commercial, client-facing activities to form a complete picture:

> the process of becoming a translator, receiving and handling requests to do specific translations, doing research, networking, translating words, phrases, and registers, editing the translation, delivering the finished text to the employer or client, billing the client for work completed, getting paid. (ibid.: 6)

In Robinson's definition (ibid.: 7), the **external perspective** is that of the "non-translator (especially a monolingual reader in the target language who directly or indirectly pays for the translation […])", the "user's view". Translation, from this perspective, is a global growth industry with an annual turnover in excess of USD 40 billion, relatively low overheads and a potential for huge profit margins. Accordingly, at this end of the spectrum interest lies primarily in the frictionless supply of translation as a product in what Cronin (2003: 71) calls the "instantaneous time […] most readily associated with global business", "where space-time compression and time-to-market imperatives generate demand for an extremely rapid turnaround of translation jobs." From this perspective, translators are routinely referred to as *(service) providers*, *suppliers* or *translation resources* (see discussion in chapter 6). Equally routinely, the "instrumental" model of translation as *complete and accurate* "mechanical substitution" (Venuti 2010) informs standard definitions of translation quality and assumptions made about client expectations, and drives efforts to advance the development of automation technologies.

In striving towards a more reflective approach to my own professional practice, I have found it useful to consider the view from the "ivory tower" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002) of academic scholarship as an **alternative external perspective**: one that offers a corrective to the unquestioning acceptance of the instrumental model.

From this perspective, translators are charged with great capabilities and responsibilities as guardians of linguistic capital and "powerful agents for cultural change" (Bassnett 2014: 10). As Katan (2009: 112) argues:

> Evers since the "cultural turn" [in Translation Studies scholarship], over 30 years ago, and the rise of the functional school, belief in the translator as much more than a (more or less) faithful copier has taken hold. […]
> Today, metaphors abound pushing the translator away from office- or room-bound photocopiers and walking bilingual dictionaries to world travellers. […] This idea of freedom (at least from the constraints of the conduit metaphor and immanent meaning) has allowed interpreters and translators to be hailed as active participants in (re-)creating meaning. […]

> In all cases, the academics are awarding translators creative, managerial and specialist roles, which almost automatically results in calls for the end of the invisibility of the translator.

The **"instrumental" model of translation as mechanical substitution** is rejected in favour of a **"hermeneutic" model of translation as interpretive action** (Venuti 2010), which has the virtue of being at once more interesting from an academic perspective and more empowering from a professional one. As I will argue in the concluding chapter, this may in fact soon be the only economically viable model for human translators as machine translation engines become more efficient and proficient at mechanical substitution. However, I would also argue that, from a professional practitioner's point of view, it has the distinct disadvantage of not being widely shared among the work providers who pay for translations and whose standard definitions of translation quality and client expectations currently appear firmly rooted in the instrumental model. As Katan (2009: 149) concludes on the basis of his own research:

> For the moment, at least, it would appear that translators are anything but freed from the constraints of the conduit metaphor, are hardly empowered, and fail to see the relevance of translation theory. […] There seems to be little evidence that they are high-flying professionals in a position to control output.

This may be why roughly one in three survey respondents agree with Wagner's assessment of academic theory as *largely irrelevant* to professional practice (see chapter 5). Wagner (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 1) and Gouadec (2007: 357-358) both seem to envisage academic theory as somehow unrelated if not inimical to professional practice – something to *get over* or *get through* in order to *get on* with the difficult business of translating for a living or, as Robinson (2012: 199) has it, something to "move beyond" in order to enable "translation at professional speeds":

> The analytical procedures taught in most translator training programs are not consciously used by professional translators in most of their work, because they have become second nature.

For Robinson,

> this is the desideratum of professional training: to help students first to learn the analytical procedures, then to sublimate them, make them so unconscious, so automatic, so fast, that translation at professional speeds becomes possible. (ibid.)

On the other hand, "conscious analysis" becomes necessary "when habit fails" – primarily in cases "when the source text and transfer context are problematic" and/or "the translator's knowledge base and skills are inadequate to the task at hand" (ibid.: 199-200).

If the ultimate objective of teaching future translators about translation theory is to enable its eventual sublimation to a point where it aids, rather than impedes, the speedy production of fit-for-purpose translations, comments by survey respondents on the relevance of theory to their professional practice suggest that many institutions are doing so successfully. "The terminology slips but what you actually do is founded on the formal training", one respondent says, while another admits: "I can't remember who said what, but some of what they have said has clarified problems and helped me to take decisions." Other respondents talk about theory as being

- "in the back of my mind in many decisions",
- "a very important grounding […] an essential 20%, i.e. the foundation",
- an "underlying theoretical awareness [that] influences and guides

> translators at a later, practising stage even if they're not regularly aware of it or reflecting on it".

Knowledge of academic translation theory, on this view, sits in the practitioner's professional toolkit alongside other cognitive, intercultural and communicative skills. Beyond the instrumental conception of translation theory that supports an instrumental conception of translatorial practice, I want to advance a different conception of translation theory as an alternative external knowledge of translatorial practice that can augment and add value to professional translation at a historic moment when human translation can no longer compete with machine translation engines in terms of speed, cost-efficiency or productivity.

The value I am proposing here is not easily marketable. A more reflective approach to professional translatorial practice is likely to make translators less rather than more efficient and productive, to slow down their workflow processes rather than speed them up. While there is reason to hope that it might improve the quality of their output, any such gains would be difficult to prove or measure. (In answer to my survey question on the relevance of academic theory for their professional practice, 17.2% of respondents selected the option *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection*, as discussed in chapter 5 below.) My contention here is that the real value of theoretical reflection lies in offering an alternative alignment that shifts interest and attention away from the exclusive focus on the speedy and efficient delivery of translation products and towards a more holistic practice of translation as a process that benefits from the involvement of human actors to keep language alive and not leave it to robots.

2.2. Defining Professional Success: Pride, Enjoyment, Resilience

Underlying this thesis is an understanding of **sustainable professional success** that includes the **need for financial resilience** under unpredictable "feast or famine" conditions alongside the **craftsperson's pride in a job well done** and the **mental states (from anxiety through boredom and apathy to intellectual arousal)** induced by different translation jobs. My own reflections on this subject were initially prompted by a discussion on the Proz.com forum, in which participants express a number of explicit or implicit assumptions about translators' roles both within the supply chain and in the larger social and societal context.

With over a million registered users, Proz.com is a virtual marketplace for language professionals that claims to serve "the world's largest community of translators".[20] The platform also provides a forum for freelance translators to share resources, voice opinions and air grievances. Proz.com is the second most popular online platform (behind Facebook) mentioned by survey respondents in answer to Q17. *Do you visit online translators' forums, Facebook or LinkedIn groups etc.?* (Of the 284 respondents who answered this question, 49.3% (140) stated that they use online translators' forums *regularly*, 34.9% (99) *occasionally*, 10.6% (30) *hardly ever* and 5.3% (15) *never*. In answer to the follow-on question *What are the main reasons you use online forums for? Please select as many as applicable*, which received 262 responses, 76% (199) selected *Discussing issues related to translation*, followed by *Terminology research* (56.5%/148) and *Feeling less isolated* (51.9%/136).)

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[20] http://www.proz.com/about, last retrieved 12 July 2019

Between 3 April and 5 April 2012, eighteen members of the Proz community contributed to a discussion about rates,[21] which starts with a Proz member asking advice about charging different rates for agencies and direct clients, specifically whether a 50 per cent difference is standard working practice. The first respondents address this question directly, but participants in the discussion soon realise that there are larger issues at stake: from the nature of the translator's relationship to the market in general and his/her clients in particular to more elusive ideas about job satisfaction, healthy work-life balance, professional pride, social capital etc. These arguments participate in a wider theoretical conversation about the exact nature of the translator's work: is it a business, a profession, a vocation (in either sense of the word), a craft, an art or, after all, just a job? Are translators plying a trade, manufacturing goods, supplying products, providing services, delivering language solutions...?

In the course of the discussion of different pricing strategies, the following definitions of translators' professional identities emerge:

- *translators as service providers* whose rates are dictated by the laws of supply and demand
- *translators as entrepreneurs* who set their own rates on the basis of business plans and cost calculations

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[21] http://www.proz.com/forum/money_matters/222004-prices_for_customer_and_agencies.html, last retrieved on 26 October 2015. Like the majority of my survey respondents, the eighteen translators who participated in this thread were all based in Europe and the Americas: four in the US, three in Spain, two each in Germany and the Ukraine, one each in Mexico, Portugal, Estonia, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovakia and Lithuania.

- *translators as manufacturers* of time-critical word-based products, which they then sell to end users at retail prices while offering discounts for resellers/distribution partners.
- *translators as "craftsmen/craftswomen"* whose "means of production are the same as any other craftsman: brain, eyes, hands, and time. They are limited commodities, and our goal is to maximize the price we get for our limited production capacity".

These ideas are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 below. The narrow focus on translation as an economic activity in the Proz forum thread may be unsurprising given the subject under discussion. I want to suggest that it also illuminates the day-to-day struggle to make a living under current market conditions, which leaves freelance translators very little time for more holistic reflection. One participant (A) blames this on their failure to "move beyond" what he sees as

> the first step in freelancing – creating and pursuing a business plan that allows you to support yourself and any dependents in a sustainable and personally acceptable way […].
>
> This represents a minimum threshold – if someone can't reach this within several years, then they should quit – *but the real goal is creating an enjoyable career and life for oneself*, defining priorities and long-term goals that go well beyond "getting by" and actively pursuing them (regardless of whether they consist in doing important work, having more free time, having more money, having friendlier customers that value our work, etc.). (emphasis added)

A second participant (B) concurs, adding:

> There are so many translators who seem to function according to the "subsistence model" [...]. So they are so proud of "being constantly busy" but in the end really have nothing to show for it other than keeping their heads above water. This might mean

> very little leisure time, little to no savings, compromised physical and mental health, and any number of other things.
>
> [...]
>
> [A] has hit upon the problem inherent in the philosophy of accepting low-paid work because "something is better than nothing" and "it is important to stay busy and keep the cash rolling in."

As A's comment acknowledges, the specifics that constitute sustainable success can vary greatly according to individual preference. The American translator Chris Durban, a prominent speaker on the international conference circuit and co-author of the eponymous guide to succeeding as a "prosperous translator" (Durban and Seidel 2010), maintains that

> "I don't view translating as lifestyle. It's a professional career that requires a lot of commitment and can't be done sustainably on an ad hoc basis while, say, island-hopping in the South Pacific—however cool that sounds."
>
> (Quoted from Slobodzian-Taylor 2013)

Her further comments in the same interview imply that she derives her job satisfaction from "understanding the big questions [...], which makes it easier to get excited about your text", and from "gain[ing] access to profitable and interesting jobs" (ibid.).

Another professional translator, who specialises in translations for the tourism sector and is featured in a recent Guardian article on digital nomad workers, sees her work as ideally suited to an itinerant lifestyle that has allowed her to live and work "in 15 countries since 2011" (Lea 2019). Her account suggests that freedom and flexibility compensate for some of the less desirable aspects of freelance translation reported by respondents to my survey, such as low job security, income and social status:

> "Every day is exciting, and there's always a new experience around the corner […]. I feel like I'm constantly on holiday, and

> there's no such thing as the Monday morning blues, or the humdrum of a daily commute. Life becomes simpler and more streamlined as you realise you don't need many material possessions. And there's no keeping up with the Joneses."
> (Quoted from ibid.)

The "17 reasons why translating is the best job in the world" listed in a blog post by the German translator Miriam Neidhardt pertain to commercial or *trade* as well as to technical or *craft* aspects of her profession.[22] According to the information provided on her website, Neidhardt has been working as a freelance translator since completing a degree in Translation for Economics in 1998[23] and now specialises in literary and medical translations from English and Russian into German. She has also published a guide to "surviving as a freelance translator"[24] (Neidhardt et al. 2016, first edition published in 2012) that raised her profile within the German translation community.[25] (In the original German as in my English translation, the title *Überleben als Übersetzer* suggests both the mock-heroic tone of the self-help guide that deliberately couches minor achievements in terms of a titanic struggle against harsh adversity and impossible odds, and a more serious agenda of empowerment. It is perhaps also worth noting that the German term for setting up a business – *Existenzgründung* – implies a stronger link between economic success and existential struggle than any of its English equivalents.)

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[22] https://www.miriam-neidhardt.de/2016/05/11/der-beste-job-der-welt/, last retrieved 5 August 2019

[23] https://www.miriam-neidhardt.de/en/german-translator/, last retrieved 5 August 2019

[24] All passages quoted from Neidhardt's blog are my own translations. In the interest of precision, they occasionally sacrifice idiomatic fluency for semantic accuracy, while striving to reproduce the conversational yet businesslike tone of the German source texts.

[25] https://www.miriam-neidhardt.de/2014/11/23/rueckzug/, last retrieved 5 August 2019

Neidhardt's "reasons why translating is the best job in the world" include the freedom to work from home, on her own terms – from choosing her office décor and ambient music to terminating business relationships with anybody who "stresses" her – with the option of instant (and instantly revocable) access to a virtual "open-plan office full of lovely colleagues" via social media, but without having to report to a supervisor. "Nobody is watching over my shoulder," as she repeatedly emphasises. She also describes other benefits such as:

- high earning potential;
- the absence of a dress code and other stress factors such as "annoying colleagues" or the fear of losing her job;
- the remote and impersonal relationship with clients:

  > No business trips. No conferences. The occasional e-mail – that's all it takes to get my work done. And because I'm in charge, there are no negotiations either. I make my own rules, and I don't have to justify them to anybody;

- the easy compatibility of professional translation with her desire for a holistic lifestyle as a mother of school-age children who enjoys DIY and grows her own vegetables;
- as well as the creative, intellectually challenging and versatile nature of the work itself:

  > If a text falls outside my realm of expertise and would thus be stressful for me to translate, I simply turn it down. Instead I work on texts about medical studies, which I love because I'm always learning new things about extremely interesting topics; I get to hunt for mistakes in other people's texts and to make non-corporate clients happy by providing them with translations

> of certificates that will allow them to get married or to emigrate to another country. […]
>
> I get to play with words […]. I get to use language to communicate without actually having to talk to anybody. I get to read and accumulate new knowledge every day. […]
>
> It's as if I had several different jobs in different companies at the same time – as a specialised medical translator, a literary translator, a certificate translator and a proofreader.
>
> (ibid.)

Neidhardt's experience and credentials obviously have an impact on the professional choices available to her and therefore on her perception of and attitudes towards prevailing market conditions. The flexibility, autonomy and freedom of choice Neidhardt celebrates clearly require a high level of control over her working conditions that seems attractive and desirable but hard to obtain for new translators, as another reader who identifies herself as an MA student reminds her:

> It takes quite a long time to get to the point where you are now – where it becomes possible to work only on topics you enjoy, and to turn down jobs because you have enough other great projects to work on. (ibid., comment section)

Not every translator would necessarily share Neidhardt's definition of what constitutes a "stressful" translation project – others may well find "texts about medical studies" extremely distressing to translate due to their contents if not their level of difficulty. Translators at any stage of their career might disagree with Neidhardt's preferences and class some of her reasons for enjoying her work – notably the isolation and lack of face-to-face interpersonal contact with clients and colleagues – as drawbacks rather than benefits, as one reader points out in a comment: "Sometimes I do wish I had colleagues who work in the same room." (ibid., comment section)

Empowerment, in this context, entails working towards a level of mental and financial resilience that allows translators to feel sufficiently in control of their working conditions – rather than at the mercy of capricious clients and unpredictable market forces – to minimise stressful and exploitative factors, maximise enjoyment and make the most of the opportunities available in current and future translation markets. While professional associations can provide institutional support, e.g. in the form of relevant research findings, resources, career advice and CPD opportunities, it is up to individual professionals to define and communicate their own preferences for specific types of work and specific ways of working.

For new professional practitioners in particular, identifying their personal priorities requires a combination of trial and error and systematic reflection. Situated learning models (e.g. classroom simulations of real-world working conditions) can provide safe environments for students to develop and practise habits of experimentation and reflection. Abdallah (2011) goes further in proposing a model of "radical education" explicitly designed to foster "an atmosphere of hope in the classroom" alongside habits of critical enquiry that would equip students to recognise and reject unsustainable working practices by "envisioning alternative ways of acting" (ibid.: 137).

2.3. Getting Lost in Translation: Mnemonic v. Instantaneous Time

In the terms proposed in this section, the transition from university-based training to professional practice also involves a transition from an external to an internal understanding of professional translatorial practice, which teachers can support by encouraging students to start thinking like professional practitioners. On the most basic level, this means thinking about aspects relating to translation as a trade – word counts, rates, client expectations, workload management, fit-for-purpose quality – as well as about the craft aspects of the translation process itself. Robinson's (2012: 109-111) notion of *practice as pretence/pretence as practice* also comes into play here.

On a more sophisticated level, to start thinking like a professional practitioner can also mean reflecting on the distance(s) between the external perspectives of work providers and translation scholars and each individual translator's own internal understanding of his or her profession. To achieve sustainable professional success, translators must be able to function in both **"mnemonic" and "instantaneous" time**, and to translate as fluently as possible between them.

In Richard Sennett's terms, this means internalising a **craftsperson's as well as a consumer's or consultant's understanding of their profession**: while the former is what makes professional translators enjoy "the work as such", i.e. "translating itself", the latter allows them to thrive in the project- or network-based "culture of new capitalism", which demands instant responsiveness and constant availability. Sennett's reflection on *The Culture of New Capitalism* (2006) in general, and on the different modes of inhabiting this culture as "craftsmen" or "consumers" in particular, offer a framework for situating the experiences reported by survey respondents within a wider socio-economic context. Sennett addresses human responses to "the old dream/nightmare of automation", which "by the 1990s [...] began to become a reality in both manual and bureaucratic labor: at last it would be cheaper to invest in machines than to pay people to work", as a systemic rather than an industry-specific phenomenon (ibid.: 7).

Based on his interviews with white-collar workers in large American organisations on "the cutting edge of the economy" (ibid.: 12; specifically, "high technology, global finance, and new service firms with three thousand or more employees") during the 1990s, Sennett identifies the devaluation of "craftsmanship" as one aspect of a broader paradigm shift towards a "new capitalism" that privileges transferable problem-solving and networking skills while distrusting "the desire to do something well for its own sake" (ibid.: 194). In this context it is also worth noting that Gouadec (2007 and 2002) uses "craft translation" or "*traduction artisanale*" as a designation for small-scale assignments, frequently in the "high-cost high-quality" market segment, for which "traditional" ("non-industrial") translation methods are used. He observes that many "craft translators" have adapted to recent and ongoing changes in the market by

> resort[ing] to the procedures and tools of industrial translation without compromising in any way on time and costs [...] either by choice or because their survival means sub-contracting for translation companies where such procedures and tools are in standard use. (2007: 313)

For Sennett, the craftsman (his use of inclusive pronouns suggests that he means women, too) is the opposite and potential adversary of both the "consultant, who swoops in and out but never nests" (2006: 105), and the consumer, who "dwell[s] in material desires which die when consummated" (ibid.: 138). While "for the consumer, stimulation lies in the very process of moving on" (ibid.: 148), the craftsman "digs deep into an activity just to get it right" (ibid.: 105) and takes satisfaction or even pleasure from a job well done – a house well cleaned (ibid.: 104) or a well-turned phrase. Craftsmanship, Sennett concludes, "represents the most radical challenge" against the culture of the new capitalism (ibid.: 194):

> Since people can anchor themselves in life only by trying to do something well for its own sake, the triumph of superficiality at work, in schools, and in politics seems to me fragile. Perhaps, indeed, revolt against this enfeebled culture will constitute our new fresh page. (ibid.: 197)

However, it is worth noting that the model Sennett termed "new capitalism" in a volume published in 2006 (the individual lectures collected in *The Culture of New Capitalism* date back further to 2004) is itself on the brink of obsolescence in a global economy increasingly dominated by even more precarious and exploitative forms of (self-)employment (cf. Bloodworth 2018, Frase 2016, Standing 2016). The concluding chapter of this thesis discusses predictions of progressive automation that will significantly change the scope and nature of professional work in the near future.

In some respects, translators are eminently suited to surviving, and even thriving, in the "culture of the new capitalism". After all, they habitually collaborate in flexible – and more often than not virtual – production networks with various other stakeholders or "partners" (cf. Gouadec 2013: 219-233). They are used to negotiating their professional lives on an ad-hoc, project-by-project basis with very little scope for long-range planning. (Lead times between the initial request, confirmation and start of a translation job are often short or non-existent. Clients can move the goal posts – i.e. change time scales, order volumes or technical requirements, or even cancel a project – at any point without warning, make substantial last-minute changes to the source text etc.) Many of the skills required to do this work well are very transferable and sought-after in the current labour market, as Abdallah (2012: 51) points out:

> [I]t seems justified to draw the conclusion that people with formal translator training need not be overly concerned about their job prospects. If their work is not appreciated by or in demand in the translation industry, they certainly seem to find work in other industries that value their competencies. Excellent skills in at least two languages, the ability to produce user-friendly texts in different genres in both languages, sound general academic skills combined with the ability to conduct research on a wide variety of subjects, the ability to work in a team, critical thinking skills, and the eagerness to tackle the challenges of ever-evolving computer-assisted tools and software programmes are all highly appreciated, regardless of the industry in question.

From this perspective, professional translators have one weakness that compromises their ability to adapt easily to the conditions of "new capitalism" as Sennett describes them: their work – the craft of *translation itself* – requires single-minded focus and attention to detail:

> The translator, with her face in a funnel, her focus trained on this one book, and for the moment on just this one sentence of the book, to the short-term exclusion of all others. (Briggs 2017: 66)

In Sennett's terms, these are the hallmarks of a "craftsman's" as opposed to a consultant's or consumer's attitude. Craftsmanship, as he argues, "has a cardinal virtue missing in the new culture's idealized worker, student, or citizen": commitment.

> Getting something right, even though it may get you nothing, is the spirit of true craftsmanship. And only that kind of disinterested commitment [...] can lift people up emotionally; otherwise, they succumb in the struggle to survive. [...] Mental mobility eschews getting deeply involved; ability is focused on

> operational technique, [...] an exercise in problem solving rather than problem finding. [...] Commitment poses a more profound question about the self-as-process. Commitment entails closure, foregoing possibilities for the sake of concentrating on one thing. (Sennett 2006: 194-196)

I want to argue here that the constant rush to meet one deadline after another (cf. section 4.2 below) is experienced as especially stressful because it is so starkly at odds with the craftsperson's desire to "do something well for its own sake". Behavioural psychologists draw a distinction, which is often blurred or ignored in everyday experience, between urgent and important tasks. There is, it seems to me, a difference in kind between the relief of finishing something by a pre-agreed deadline and the satisfaction of bringing a piece of work to completion.

Rewarding consumerist attitudes and behaviours in their workforces makes sense for post-industrial late-capitalist economies that have automated most remaining production tasks, or outsourced them to developing countries (cf. Sennett 2006: 86-94), since these economies need people with short attention spans who enjoy buying things, not people who care deeply about knowing how to make them (ibid.: 105). Sennett sees the craftsperson's need to achieve "closure" as a virtue and a potential source of resistance in the challenge against the "new capitalism", which privileges consumerism over craftsmanship and promotes the proverbial jack-of-all-trades above the single-minded perfectionist.

In a similar vein, Cronin (2003: 70-71) highlights the double function translators have historically performed "as zealous elaborators and protectors of national languages and literatures and as the indispensable intermediaries in the opening up of the world to the circulation of commodities, people and ideas". This, he goes on to say, obliges – or, to put it more positively, enables – them to operate in two different modes of time at once:

> The mnemonic time of translation [...] is constantly in tension with that other time of globalization, instantaneous time [...], where space-time compression and time-to-market imperatives generate demand for an extremely rapid turnaround of translation jobs. This is the time most readily associated with global business. Mnemonic time in translation [...] is the time given over to translation tasks that aim to bring into the present of a society or culture a set of already existing texts.[26]

Briggs similarly insists that

> the writing of a translation has its own particular duration which can't be accelerated – and that is different from the tempos of productivity we find elsewhere. [...] Translation demands a certain, un-condensable, time *with a work* and therefore, also, with the questions animating that work, the questions the translator brings to it and the further questions that will inevitably arise from the gestures of translating it.
>
> (Briggs 2017: 66, italics in original)

For all the rich treasure that is to be found in translation, getting *lost in translation* – losing their bearings and sense of time in the world outside the text – is an all-too-real professional hazard for translators. Mediating between the "particular duration of translation" and the "tempos of productivity" is one of the routine translational operations professionals perform almost unthinkingly and – more or, quite often, less – fluently. In practical terms, this means being constantly prepared for interruptions (e-mails – frequently marked URGENT – phone calls, Skype or text messages etc.) that often require flexible responses and considerable re-organisation of short- and medium-term plans while maintaining intense focus on the translation task at hand *and* keeping an eye on the clock in order not to miss a deadline.

---

[26] Cronin bases his argument on the distinction drawn by Demos co-founder Geoff Mulgan between the "guardian syndrome [...] which attaches value to 'hierarchy, loyalty, prowess, ostentation, honour and exclusivity'" and the "trader syndrome [which] values 'thrift, industry, optimism, voluntary agreements, honesty, invention and collaboration with strangers, and rights and duties associated with contracts'" (ibid.: 70). In the ordinary sense of both terms, professional translators are required to be traders (as defined by UK tax law, for example) as well as guardians (of the linguistic and cultural resources their livelihood depends on).

There is some evidence from a limited study "on the negative effects of 'always-on' technology, dubbed 'infomania'" (Wilson 2010), commissioned by Porter-Novelli, the London publicists of Hewlett-Packard, in 2005 to suggest that constant interruptions of this kind may have a negative impact not only on concentration, but also on the ability of the human mind to process complex intellectual tasks.[27]

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[27] www.drglennwilson.com/Infomania_experiment_for_HP.doc
The findings, which were widely sensationalised and misrepresented in the media (https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7298-info-mania-dents-iq-more-than-marijuana/;
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4471607.stm;
https://www.wired.com/insights/2015/01/infomania-texting-and-productivity/; all last retrieved on 27 September 2019)
were based on a very limited study with a set of eight Porter Novelli employees, conducted before the widespread adoption of smartphones made technology as all-pervasive and "always-on" as it is today. The subjects were "tested twice – once in quiet conditions and once in distracting conditions (mobile phones ringing and e-mails arriving)", using "[p]arallel forms of a matrices-type IQ test". Results showed a drop in IQ test performance from a mean score of "143.38 achieved under quiet conditions to 132.75 under 'noisy' conditions", which the study's lead researcher assumed to be a temporary effect. While this effect, which the researcher who conducted the study assumes to be temporary, feels true to experience, it might be worth testing, e.g. by asking a group of professional translators to translate two texts of similar complexity – or asking two groups of professional translators with similar levels of domain-specific expertise to translate the same text – under different conditions.

Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2014), who have studied translators' working conditions from the perspective of ergonomics, found that the complexity of translation places "heavy demands on concentration, working memory, and bilingual lexical retrieval processes",

> as professional translators not only have to read and often do research in one language, but also write and revise in another one while thinking, retrieving and evaluating information from internal and external resources under tight temporal constraints. […] Moreover, many translators work in offices that may have sub-optimal conditions for intensive text work, such as ambient speech and non-speech noise, inadequate lighting, and people moving within their field of vision. Physical factors, such as the design of desks, office chairs, computer keyboards, and mice, as well as context factors, such as changes in noise levels, lighting, and temperature, can influence performance and present risk factors for health problems. (ibid.: 61)

This complexity is further illustrated by the large number of tabs and windows open on the computer screens of professional participants in their CTP project, "e.g. two Word documents, 3 pdf files, 2 document management folders, 4 Firefox windows" in addition to "the translation memory program, the concordance window and a parallel text". The authors argue that these observations are indicative of a "heavy cognitive load" (ibid.: 70-71), for which they found many of their participants ill-equipped:

> [D]espite using several documents and programs at the same time, none of the translators at our industry partner worked with more than one screen, and there was a lot of switching between windows (which might imply a concomitant reliance on short-term memory to retain the information between the switches). (ibid.: 69)

There is, then, a risk that the exigencies of making a living as a professional translator under current market conditions – specifically, the expectations of constant availability and instant responsiveness, as discussed above – can be detrimental to the quality of the work translators are capable of delivering, as well as to their mental and physical wellbeing and enjoyment of that work. (See the chapter on *Current Working Conditions* for a discussion of relevant survey data.) Equipping new translators for sustainable professional success includes preparing them to guard against these potentially harmful effects.

As Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al. (2016) found, self-employed translators benefit from greater control over a number of organisational and ergonomic aspects of their work than colleagues in institutional or commercial settings. These include workload management (timing and order of jobs, timing and frequency of breaks) as well as environmental factors such as room temperature, access to a window, airflow, lighting and ambient noise levels.

However, while self-employed professionals may also have more control over the level, timing and frequency of distractions they tolerate in their working environments than in-house translators working in a busy office, they tend to be more dependent on new requests for work coming in by way of e-mails, phone calls, Skype or text messages etc. There is, as one respondent to my own survey puts it, "the anxiety of always being online to get back to clients"; the stress of "[d]ealing with emails and knowing that many (potential) clients expect me to be available and to reply promptly all the time", as another says. In response to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?*, others say:

> I would like to be able to ignore my e-mails for longer periods so I can concentrate on the translation – I don't ignore them in case I am offered more work
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

> Less paperwork, emails, negotiations – I would just like to translate
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> T&I-related Mgr. from a Czech university, graduated after 2012
> Literary and genre fiction, subtitles legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, subtitles]

> Less interruptions by telephone and e-mail
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, sports]

In answer to Q21 about the *most unpleasant aspect of working as a professional translator*, another respondent refers specifically to the cognitive demands of multilingual work:

> receiving unexpected phone calls in one language while working on a project in a different language!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MSc, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

Douglas Robinson (2012: 32-33) argues that these constant distractions can provide an antidote to the danger of "burning out on your own translation speed": "for most translators a 'broken' or varied rhythm is preferable to the high stress of marathon top-speed translating". Given the different individual preferences and priorities discussed throughout this thesis, this advice – which is presumably based on Robinson's own professional practice and observation of other translators in his professional network – is likely to suit some translators better than others. It does, however, offer a feasible, and eminently sensible, response to the challenge of combining craftsmanship and project management: embracing interruptions and intrusions from the world outside the text as an integral part of a healthy working rhythm. Robinson breaks this down into an hour-by-hour account of a translator's working routine, which alternates between periods of intense single-minded focus and shorter bouts of equally intense engagement with clients and colleagues via social media, e-mail and phone.

Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al. (2016: 16) also found that a majority of the 1,850 respondents in their quantitative study on workplace ergonomics felt "sometimes, mostly, or always disturbed by [incoming] emails, chats, and phone calls". However, evidence from their CTP research project, where participants "were also asked what they consider an interruption and how they deal with them", (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2014: 79) supports Robinson's recommendations:

> Unsurprisingly, most mentioned email but many said that they found interruptions such as phone calls, questions from colleagues and coffee breaks helped sharpen their concentration afterwards. Prudent distribution of breaks would seem the natural good-practice recommendation suggested by such observations. (ibid.)

2.4. Flow, Interrupted: Total Immersion v. Constant Availability

Based on Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) research into the "phenomenology of enjoyment" and Massimini and Carli's (1995) model of "systematic assessment of flow in daily experience", Robinson (2012: 203-204) describes **flow** as "the subliminal state in which translation is fastest, most reliable and most enjoyable – so enjoyable that it can become addictive, like painting, novel-writing or other forms of creative expression".

According to Massimini and Carli's model – which Robinson re-interprets to match different feelings and levels of engagement translators and interpreters might experience in relation to specific aspects of their work – enjoyment of (translation) work is a question of finding the right balance "between challenge and skill". Massimini and Carli distinguish eight different channels or states, which in Robinson's (loc. cit.) interpretation range from the "optimal states" of "*Arousal*" (a state of "full conscious analytical awareness", when "the challenge posed by a translation task exceeds the translator's skills by a small but significant amount") and "*Flow*" to "varying degrees of mismatch between challenge and skill".

At the other end of the spectrum are the "less desirable (though quite common)" states, which include

> *Control*: a state of calm competence that is mildly satisfying, but can become mechanical and repetitive if unenhanced by more challenging jobs. [...]
>
> *Boredom*: the state that develops in translators who rarely or never work anywhere close to their capacity levels.
>
> *Relaxation*: a state of calm enjoyment at the ease of a translation job, especially as a break from overwhelmingly difficult or otherwise stressful jobs. The key to the pleasantness of this channel is its shortlivedness: too much "relaxation," insufficient challenges over a long period of time, generate boredom.
>
> *Apathy*: a state of indifference that is rare in translators at any level [...].
>
> *Worry*: a state of concern that arises in inexperienced translators when faced with even mildly difficult problems that they feel they lack the necessary skills to solve.
>
> *Anxiety*: a high-stress state that arises in any translator when the workload is too heavy, the texts are consistently far too

> difficult, deadlines are too short, and the emotional climate of the workplace (including the family situation at home) is insufficiently supportive.[28]

Robinson (2012: 204) explicitly applies his categories or "channels" to translator training as well as to professional practice:

> the best programs will shuttle between [*Arousal* and *Flow*]; those that are too easy will bore students [...], and those that fail to maintain the proper balance between challenge and student skills (fail, that is, to keep the former just slightly higher than the latter) will demoralize students [...].

I became interested in the concept of flow as "optimal experience" – originally developed by the behavioural psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) – firstly, as a possible explanation for the pleasure many translators appear to take in *just translating* (see sections 4.4 and 4.9 for a discussion of relevant survey findings) and, secondly, because I distinctly recognised the experience from my own professional practice.

Csikszentmihalyi developed the concept as a result of his research into the internal and external factors that constitute or influence human happiness, specifically the "phenomenology of enjoyment" (ibid.: 49). In the course of studies involving "long interviews, questionnaires, and other data collected over a dozen years from several thousand respondents", Csikszentmihalyi and his team of researchers noticed that respondents across very different cultural and professional backgrounds used remarkably similar language to report experiences of enjoyment. Interviewees included

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[28] It is worth noting that Massimini and Carli's visualisation of these channels in a circular diagram shows that arousal and anxiety are not, in fact, located at opposite ends of the enjoyment spectrum, but immediately adjacent to each other. Arousal, this suggests, can easily tip over into anxiety with the introduction of minor alterations to a few variables: a tighter deadline, a less supportive workplace climate... Conversely, translators may be able to turn an anxiety-introducing job into a stimulating or arousing one by negotiating a longer deadline or requesting more background information or other additional resources. This clearly demonstrates why it is important for translators to take charge of their own working conditions rather than allowing them to be dictated by other agents in their production networks.

> people who spent a great amount of time and effort in activities that were difficult, yet provided no obvious rewards, such as money or prestige: rock climbers, composers of music, chess players, amateur athletes

as well as "ordinary people leading ordinary existences [...] – surgeons, professors, clerical and assembly-line workers, young mothers, retired people and teenagers" from urban America, "Korea, Japan, Thailand, Australia, various European cultures, and a Navajo reservation" (ibid.: 48). According to the evidence provided in these interviews, optimal experience is associated with a number of "common characteristics":

> a sense that one's skills are adequate to cope with the challenges at hand, in a goal-directed, rule-bound action system that provides clear clues as to how well one is performing. Concentration is so intense that there is no attention left over to think about anything irrelevant, or to worry about problems. Self-consciousness disappears, and the sense of time becomes distorted. An activity that produces such experiences is so gratifying that people are willing to do it for its own sake, with little concern for what they will get out of it, even when it is difficult, or dangerous. (ibid.: 71)

Based on these observations, the researchers isolated "eight major components" that combine to cause "a deep sense of enjoyment that is so rewarding people feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it" (ibid.: 49). Although "[a]ctivities that provide enjoyment are often those that have been designed for this very purpose" such as "[g]ames, sports, and artistic and literary forms", Csikszentmihalyi notes that

> it would be a mistake to assume that only art and leisure can provide optimal experiences. In a healthy culture, productive work and the necessary routines of everyday life are also satisfying. (ibid.:51)

In order for this to happen, a "golden ratio between challenges and skills" must be achieved:

> enjoyment comes at a very specific point: whenever the opportunities for action perceived by the individual are equal to his or her capabilities. [...] Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person's capacity to act. (ibid.: 52)

In some respects, many of the tasks that make up a professional translator's typical daily routine fit perfectly within Csikszentmihalyi's criteria for enjoyable or "optimal" experience:

> First, the experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing. Second, we must be able to concentrate on what we are doing. Third and fourth, the concentration is usually possible because because the task undertaken has clear goals and provides immediate feedback. Fifth, one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life. Sixth, enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions. Seventh, concern for the self disappears, yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over. Finally, the sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by in minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours.
> (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 49)

Translation work typically has to be completed within a specified period of time; translators themselves develop a fairly good idea of how long a given project will take them and would not normally accept work unless they feel confident that it can be completed before the deadline. Equally, their work has “clear goals” – putting a specific piece of source-language text of a given length into the target language – and although the issue of “immediate feedback” may be less straightforward in terms of responses from clients or end-users of translations, Csikszentmihalyi only stipulates that feedback must be “logically related to a goal in which one has invested psychic energy” (ibid.: 57). In other words, for many activities it can be sufficient to see the successful outcome of a task completed in accordance with the pre-defined goals: in this case, a finished translation in which every tricky issue has been resolved to the translator’s satisfaction.

Finally, Csikszentmihalyi refers to the “concern for the self disappear[ing]” during the flow experience, “yet paradoxically the sense of self emerg[ing] stronger after the flow experience is over” (ibid.: 49). This echoes the sense in which translators put their own voice at the service of another speaker’s words, “predicat[ing] their entire professional activity and self-image on subordination to the various social authorities controlling translation”, as Robinson (1997: 77) suggests: “The translator can be a fully functioning individual outside the task of translation, but must submit to authority *as* a translator.”

Kronenberg (2011: 5) describes an experience of this kind from his own personal practice:

> I once translated an expert testimony in a patent infringement case. I never fully understood the particulars of the case, although I had a grasp of the technical vocabulary, which was not all that extensive. But the testimony was written in such a way that I could follow a complex argument from thought to thought over fifteen pages. *I felt as if I were on a tightrope. If the author abandoned me, I’d fall into the abyss and might have to admit that I was translating over my head.* But he didn’t

> abandon me. *By the time I reached the end, I knew that I had nailed that translation.* [...] *The writing was so crisp, the grammar so precise, the transitions so logical, that all I had to do was go willingly along.*
> (emphases added)

Kronenberg primarily attributes his optimal experience to the quality of the source text, adding:

> [I]t occurred to me that perhaps this was one way of recognizing first-rate expository prose of a certain sort – that it could be followed and translated even before it was fully understood […].
> (ibid.)

However, he is specifically concerned about the "cost of being endlessly jarred out of our own process and the flow of the text" (ibid.: 9-10) and the risk of segment-by-segment translation having an adverse effect on translators' ability to experience this state of total immersion, and consequently on the "smoothness [of the target text] and sometimes even on meaning" (ibid.: 9).

Csikszentmihalyi's understanding of the flow experience, as encapsulated in the following description, may be an ideal state in which to produce fast and accurate translations:

> Although the flow experience appears to be effortless, it is far from being so. It often requires strenuous physical exertion, or highly disciplined mental activity. It does not happen without the application of skilled performance. Any lapse in concentration will erase it. And yet while it lasts, consciousness works smoothly, action follows action seamlessly. In normal life, we keep interrupting what we do with doubts and questions. [...] Repeatedly we question the necessity of our actions, and evaluate critically the reasons for carrying them out. But in flow there is no need to reflect, because the action carries us forward as if by magic. (ibid.: 54)

However, it is also likely that translators will be less responsive to messages from the trade side of their business the more deeply engaged they are in the craft of translating. "One of the most common descriptions of optimal experience is that time no longer seems to pass the way it ordinarily does," as Csikszentmihalyi observes:

> The objective, external duration we measure with reference to outside events [...] is rendered irrelevant by the rhythms dictated by the activity. Often hours seem to pass by in minutes; in general, most people report that time seems to pass much faster. [...] It is not clear whether this dimension of flow is just an epiphenomenon – a by-product of the intense concentration required for the activity at hand – or whether it is something that contributes in its own right to the positive quality of the experience. Although it seems likely that losing track of the clock is not one of the major elements of enjoyment, freedom from the tyranny of time does add to the exhilaration we feel during a state of complete involvement. (ibid.: 66-67)

Looming deadlines may lose some of their urgency in a state that tends towards obliviousness to time and place. Conversely, the constant threat of interruption – the awareness, however subliminal, that the phone may ring at any moment, or an e-mail or Skype notification ping up on the screen – is unlikely to be conducive to achieving and sustaining translatorial flow, as comments by survey respondents confirm (see section 4.9). Inasmuch as the widespread adoption of smartphone technology has made constant availability possible, it has also made temporary unavailability increasingly unacceptable. Replying to a client's e-mail at the supermarket checkout, with or without "whining children in tow" (Neidhardt et al. 2016: 216), is one thing; not replying – at the risk of losing out on a new job or alienating the client by failing to respond instantly to a query – while immersed in a translation may be another thing altogether.

2.5. Making the Process Visible: Mechanical Reproduction v. Interpretive Action

In a professional translator’s dual perspective of simultaneously operating in both modes of time, *How long will it take to translate this?* is a perfectly reasonable question to ask at the level of “instantaneous time” and perfectly unanswerable at the level of “mnemonic time”, where every translation is always by its very nature unfinished, “a provisional answer to the question, ‘can this text be translated?’” (Cronin 2003: 132). Equally, *It will take as long as it takes* is at once a perfectly reasonable and profoundly unprofessional response.

By the same token, untranslatability at the “instantaneous” level of the “wordface” is rarely ontological or ideological, but quite often contingent and pragmatic. Words or phrases are untranslatable not per se, but under the constraints imposed by the *skopos*, e.g. lack of context or character restrictions for Google ads, tweets or user interfaces for software applications, where translator’s notes or lengthy explanations are out of the question and omission is frequently the only option open to the translator. Professional translators with a background in academic training who are looking for a way to honour both sides of this proposition may well conclude that it cannot be done and that therefore theoretical reflection is an unaffordable luxury for professional practitioners working under current market conditions.

In the terms proposed in this section, this thesis as a whole may be read as an attempt to externalise practitioners’ internal views of their profession – but also, in relation to my own professional practice, an attempt to internalise a range of external views in a way that is productive and sustainable. In answer to Wagner's contention that "[m]essages from the ivory tower tend not to penetrate as far as the wordface" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 1), I would respond that the boundaries between the practice of translation as a profession and the study of translation as an academic discipline are in fact porous and permeable, as her own book-length dialogue with Andrew Chesterman eloquently demonstrates. So, too, are the boundaries between the practice of translation as a profession and the provision of translation as a service, and it is the messages penetrating the wordface from this side – frequently phrased as urgent demands for instant attention – on which a professional translator's livelihood depends. These conflicting messages in turn give rise to conflicting loyalties, both external and internal(ised) – in no particular order: to the immediate work provider, the end client further upstream, the reader, the text, the author, the community of translators, a professional ethos, a language community and/or cultural tradition.

Framed in its bluntest terms, this conflict is between a translatorial ethics of transparency that longs to make the process visible,[29] and a professional ethics of frictionless service provision, which strives to conceal it; between the knowledge – part tacit,[30] part taught – that "any translation is always a provisional answer to the question, 'can this text be translated?'" (Cronin 2003: 132), and the existential need to provide a satisfactory response to the work provider's question *How long will it take/How much will it cost to translate this text?*. While it would be unwise to tell a client that *what you are getting for the money you are paying me is a provisional answer to the question "Can this text be translated?"*, it can nevertheless be useful for translators to position their internal knowledge in relation to an alternative external perspective that radically questions the premises of their professional practice – rather than co-opting them into an instrumental model of translation as service provision, as the perspectives of translation industry stakeholders tend to do.

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[29] The ethical and practical implications of this desire have been emphatically problematised by Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995). Clive Scott (2014) and Chantal Wright (2013) have provided examples that demonstrate what "making the process visible" might mean in practical terms.

[30] Originally coined by Michael Polanyi (1966), the concept of "tacit" or "implicit" knowledge describes practice-based knowledge acquired through experience rather than formalised or "explicit" learning, whose holders are often unable to fully articulate what they know. I have introduced the term here to account for my assumption that professional practitioners with no formal grounding in translation

Ensuring that these tensions remain productive and sustainable, rather than merely stressful and paralysing, is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks professional translators at any stage of their career are confronted with. The onus, I would argue, is not just on Translation Studies scholars to make sure messages they consider relevant to professional practitioners do "penetrate as far as the wordface". It is also on translators themselves to be receptive to messages from the ivory tower that may be relevant to their professional practice, e.g. by attending academic conferences and engaging in dialogue with scholars. By failing to do so, translators risk aligning their internal understanding of their profession with an external perspective increasingly fixated on profit and productivity, output

---

theory may well share an (albeit tacit) awareness of the tensions and conflicts discussed in this section. I am aware that this argument blurs and destabilises the distinction between internal and external perspectives by acknowledging that there is a sense in which theory is not external to practice at all, but is rather an attempt at explicating such tacit knowledge.

speed and turnaround times, deadlines and bottom lines, to the exclusion and detriment of more properly translatorial concerns.

In this context, it is also worth noting that penetration between the wordface and the translation industry tends to be largely one-directional, with work providers rarely showing much interest in listening to messages from (individual) translators. Messages from the wordface of the kind presented in Part II of this thesis are more likely to penetrate as far as the ivory tower – and arguably, institutional allies, including professional associations as well as university departments, can help amplify such messages.

What, then, would it mean to simultaneously internalise an external view and externalise an internal view of professional translatorial practice? Tentatively and non-prescriptively, I will argue that it can mean valuing the craft of translation as a process while recognising that, for the work providers who enable the professional practice of translation, its value lies primarily or exclusively in the product. (As discussed in the concluding chapter, this may well change in the near future with the increasingly widespread adoption of advances in neural machine translation and the concomitant devaluation of translation as a product.) It can mean bringing the external perspective of academic scholarship to bear on one's own professional practice. Perhaps most importantly, it can mean equipping aspiring professionals with the skills required to build a career that is rewarding intellectually as well as financially.

II. Views from the Wordface

Chapter 3

From Academic Training to Professional Practice

3.1. Key Findings

Survey questions 8 to 11 were designed to elicit information on respondents' experiences of their initial transition into professional practice and early career progression:

Q8. *Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?*

Q9. *Did you feel well-supported during the early stages of your career as a professional translator or interpreter? Please select the answer(s) that most closely reflect(s) your experience and/or use the text box below to comment. Can you think of anything that could be done to offer more support to new translators and interpreters?*

Q10. *How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?*

Q11. *Have you done any translation/interpreting-related internships or work placements?*

Responses to these questions, which are discussed in detail in the following sections, show that

- 50.4 per cent of all survey respondents were able to make a living from professional translation and/or interpreting within two years of starting their careers;
- for respondents specialising in literary translation, this proportion drops to 29.58 per cent (20.68 per cent for respondents who exclusively translate literary texts); respondents in these two subsets

were three times as likely to select the option *I still can't make my living from professional translation/interpreting* compared to respondents specialising in legal translation (despite these precarious career prospects, and the marginalised position of literary translators described in some respondents' comments about their relationships with editors and publishers, it is worth noting that literary translation is seen as a desirable field in which many respondents aspire to work, as responses in other sections of the questionnaire confirm);

- in all but one of the various subsets examined (respondents with no translation- or interpreting degree who were able to make a living from professional translation/interpreting within a year), fewer than one in four respondents said they had *not needed much support* during the early stages of their careers;
- there is a statistical correlation between the (perceived) availability of early-career support and the length of time it took respondents to earn their living from professional translation;
- there is a statistical correlation between successful early career progression and sustainable satisfaction with current remuneration and workload;
- effective forms of support reported or proposed by respondents frequently require collaboration between various institutional and individual stakeholders and include
    - ➢ guidance/advice from more experienced colleagues (formal mentorship arrangements/"buddy" schemes and/or more informal peer-to-peer support)
    - ➢ networking opportunities

    - business skills training delivered by Translation Studies departments, university careers services and/or professional associations;
- physical support structures in specific geographic locations reported by earlier cohorts of graduates are migrating online, where they are replaced and/or supplemented by virtual networks, e.g. Facebook groups or the Emerging Translators Network; similarly, free-text comments relating to Q11 suggest that (unpaid) internships are replacing the entry-level in-house positions that enabled a number of respondents in the cohort of earlier graduates to start their careers, while mentoring schemes are also becoming more widely available to new translators;
- respondents express a strong awareness of the necessity for new translators to be resourceful and proactive in identifying their own needs and accessing appropriate sources of support;
- respondents who had completed internships or work placements (27.9% of all survey respondents) were found more likely to have needed less than two years to earn a living from translation and/or interpreting than those who had not by a margin of 12.3 percentage points (59.25% v. 46.88%);
- the main benefits of internships or work placements reported by respondents include
    - hands-on experience
    - increased confidence in their own competencies
    - feedback from experienced professionals

- better understanding of how language service providers/publishing houses operate
- contacts in the translation and/or publishing industries.

3.2. Early Career Progression

Two competing narratives emerge from respondents' comments relating to their initial transition into a professional career, neither of which offers a great deal of hope or encouragement to aspiring professionals. One is about existential hardship endured and overcome (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording; except where stated otherwise, all respondents quoted below selected *Less than a year* in answer to Q10. *How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?*):

> Retrospectively, I was still **scraping by and ruined my personal life** as a result.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"
> Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

> To put "less than a year" in perspective: That first year was **very frugal living in the poor part of town**. So it's a matter of perspective.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design]

> I have reduced my workload in my second year as a freelance translator. In my first year, I would **regularly work 50-hour weeks, which I realised would not [be] a sustainable lifestyle in the long run**. I have therefore reduced my workload to a point where I make enough on a monthly basis without sacrificing my work-life balance.
>
> [Male respondent, Luxembourg
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts]

The second narrative is about lucky breaks that respondents believe played an instrumental role in enabling them to make a living from translation:

> After graduating from college, I attended the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies (IUC) and was **lucky** to have a teacher who introduced me to the CEO of a translation firm that would eventually hire me on as a full time translation manager after I finished the program. Although I mostly managed translators in that position, I did still do some translation myself and later moved to another company where I am translating full time. If you only count the second job as "professional translation", then I guess it would be 2 to 5 years.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Employed as an in-house translator
> Video games]
>
> I believe I was **lucky** in how fast I managed to earn a living wage
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Supplements teaching salary with translations
> Finance, marketing/advertising, sports, engineering and natural sciences]
>
> I was **lucky** and got my first job via recommendation.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
BA in English Philology from a Czech university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Legal]

I was **lucky enough** to find an in-house traineeship 7 months after graduation, but pay was initially very low and I did have to leave the country to get it!

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MSc from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Employed as an in-house translator
Business, marketing/advertising, corporate, PR, video game localisation]

I was **lucky enough** to find work in-house and all my support came from colleagues

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA Hons and MA from two UK universities, graduated before 2007
Legal, business, marketing/advertising, tourism, Christian theology]

I was **lucky**. I walked straight into a job as an in-house translator with an agency. In 1999, it had 7 in-house translators (different lang combos); this year (2017) it has one... and I have the impression that they keep him on, not just because he is brilliant (multi-lingual) but also because he is part of the furniture. I suspect he would not be replaced if he chose to leave....

[Female respondent, UK
CIoL Diploma in Translation, passed before 2007
Non-fiction books, Marketing/advertising, travel+tourism, arts+museums, fashion+cosmetics, food+cookery, education+training, immigration+human rights/charities]

I had the **good fortune** to have friends already in the industry who helped me get started.

[Male respondent, Japan

> Degree in creative writing
>
> "[W]ork[s] primarily as a translator but still teach[es] a few ESL classes on the side" and occasionally works as an interpreter
>
> Legal, IT/user interfaces, academic articles, video games/entertainment]

> I'm **fortunate** to have met a very supportive circle of learned and generous freelance translators but have never had, nor sought, institutional support.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, arts, architecture/design, "also edit[s] English written by non-native (mainly academic) speakers"]

> No support whatsoever from my political science school. Strangers for whom I did volunteer translation work while still in school recommended me for my first paid job and then it went on basically through recommendations. So I also got **unexpected help and experience a lot of gratefulness**. I should mention I never had a career plan and pursued also theater studies/work. But it took me 12 years to make a (survival level) living out translation, including 3 years during which I taught translation at university (impostor's syndrome at the beginning but then I felt it really helped me build self-confidence and call myself a translator).
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Academic articles, non-fiction books and audiovisual translation (subtitling)
>
> Selected *More than 5 years* in answer to Q10, adding: "I always had other jobs/unemployment wages, except for this year"]

The comments quoted above suggest that gender identification may be a factor in making survey respondents more likely to choose one of these success stories over the other, with respondents who identify as male favouring a heroic narrative of self-denial and respondents who identify as female preferring one of greater humility and self-deprecation. (Although more research would be needed to test this hypothesis, it seems worth bearing in mind in this context that – as discussed in chapter 4 on working conditions – survey respondents who identify as male were found two and a half times as likely as their female counterparts to report a typical weekly workload of over 40 hours, less likely by a margin of 11.2 percentage points to be satisfied with their current workload, and overall appear less concerned with maintaining a healthy workload of 25 to 30 hours a week.)

Other respondents mention various forms of financial and other support they received from their respective governments, professional associations, and in many cases from fellow translators. These responses are discussed in more detail in section 3.3 below.

Although the data shows that more than half of respondents needed less than two years to make a living from professional translation/interpreting, another way to say this is that almost half of respondents were unable to earn what they consider a sustainable living for the first two years (or more) of their careers – including 7.5 per cent who said it took them more than five years, and 14 per cent who selected the option *I still can’t make my living from professional translation/interpreting*. There are various reasons – due to personal circumstances and/or external conditions – why individuals may find themselves unable to make a living in their chosen profession. Some respondents who selected this option may still be at very early stages of their careers. The wording of the predefined answers was only designed to distinguish between respondents who feel they *can’t make a living from professional translation* and those who – again for various reasons – choose not to and would presumably select either *Not applicable* or *Prefer not to say*.

As shown in tables 3.01a to c below, gender identification, specialist domain and, to a lesser degree, academic background were found to have a statistical impact on respondents' early career progression. (See section 3.6 below for more detail on the specific circumstances pertaining to respondents specialising in literary translation.) In addition to the data presented in the tables, the survey findings also show that the percentage of those who state they *still can't make a living from professional translation or interpreting* is higher among respondents who are not members of a professional translators' association (16.32%) than among those who are (12.83%).

Table 3.01.a. Responses to Q10. *How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?* filtered by respondents' gender identification and internship experience (substantial variation highlighted in darkening shades of orange from just below 5 to above 10 percentage points).

	All respondents who answered Q10 (n=292)	Of these:			
		Respondents who identify as female (n=217)	Respondents who identify as male (n=67)	Respondents who undertook internships/work experience placements (n=81)	Respondents who did not undertake internships/work experience placements (n=209)
Less than a year	24.7%	22.58%	31.34%	25.92%	23.92%
1 to 2 years	25.7%	25.8%	23.88%	33.33%	22.96%
2 to 5 years	19.9%	18.89%	22.38%	17.28%	21.05%
More than five years	7.5%	9.21%	2.98% (2)	3.70%	9.09%
I still can't make a living	14%	13.82%	13.43%	13.58%	13.87%
Not applicable	7.2%	8.75%	4.47% (3)	6.17%	7.65%
Prefer not to say	1% (3)	0.92% (2)	1.49% (1)	-	1.43% (3)

Table 3.01.b. Responses to Q10 filtered by respondents' academic background and year of graduation.

	All respondents who answered Q10 (n=292)	Of these:			
		Respondents who graduated before 2007 (n=89)	Respondents who graduated 2007-2012 (n=34)	Respondents who graduated after 2012 (n=44)	Respondents with no T&I-related degree (n=122)
Less than a year	24.7%	20.22%	41.17%	27.27%	22.95%
1 to 2 years	25.7%	29.21%	26.47%	13.63%	27.05%
2 to 5 years	19.9%	23.59%	17.64%	9.09%	22.13%
More than five years	7.5%	10.11%	-	9.09%	6.55%
I still can't make a living	14%	11.23%	8.82%	22.72%	13.93%
Not	7.2%	4.49%	2.94% (1)	18.18%	6.55%

applicable					
Prefer not to say	1% (3)	1.12% (1)	2.94% (1)	-	0.81% (1)

Table 3.01.c. Responses to Q10 filtered by respondents' specialist domains. (NB: There is some overlap between the subsets selected for comparison since five respondents list both legal and literary translation among their specialisations.)

	All respondents who answered Q10 (n=292)	Of these:	
		Respondents who specialise/only specialise in literary translation (n=98/29)	Respondents who specialise in legal translation (n=65)
Less than a year	24.7%	12.24%/6.89%	36.92%
1 to 2 years	25.7%	17.34%/13.79%	30.76%
2 to 5 years	19.9%	25.51/20.68%	13.84%
More than five years	7.5%	8.16/17.24%	7.69%
I still can't make a living	14%	24.48/24.13%	7.69%
Not applicable	7.2%	11.22/13.79%	3.07%
Prefer not to say	1% (3)	1.02/3.44% (1)	-

The correlated findings presented in table 3.02. below suggest that, while a successful start to a career in professional translation is no guarantor of sustainable satisfaction, overall satisfaction with current working conditions drops for respondents whose transition into a successful professional career took longer.

Table 3.02. Correlation between respondents' early career progression/length of transition period and their reported levels of stress and satisfaction with their career preparation during degree programme, current remuneration and workload (highest and lowest values for each row highlighted in bold).

	All survey respondents who answered the relevant questions	Of these: Survey respondents who were able to make a living from translation within				
		less than a year	one to two years	two to five years	more than five years	still can't make a living
Mean average satisfaction with preparation during degree programme (on a scale of 0 to 5)	3.08	3.07	**3.41**	2.90	**2.25**	3.12
Mean average stress levels (on a scale of 0 to 10)	5.13	5.25	**5.09**	**5.09**	5.27	**5.30**

Mean average satisfaction with current rates/salary (on a scale of 0 to 10)	6.0 5.21	**6.48** **6.44**	6.45 5.12	5.98 3.75	5.77 4.0	**4.82** **6.0**
Satisfaction with current workload:	n=277	n=65	n=73	n=57	n=22	n=40
I would like to work less, but can't afford to reduce my workload	11.9%	10.76%	**9.58%**	14.03%	**18.18%**	10%
I would like to work less, but don't like to disappoint clients	13%	**23.07%**	15.06%	8.77%	**0.00%**	7.5%
I would like to work more, but can't find the work	16.2%	**3.07%**	13.69%	21.05%	13.63%	**40%**
I would like to work more, but can't due to external circumstances	15.2%	12.30%	16.43%	**8.77%**	22.72%	**17.5%**
I have already reduced my workload	5.4%	7.69%	9.58%	-	4.54% (1)	-
My current workload suits me perfectly	37.2%	40%	34.24%	**47.36%**	40.90%	**25%**

Notably, respondents' satisfaction with their current rates decreases progressively for those who needed longer to make a living from professional translation. Answers to both questions depend to a large extent on subjective expectations, as the comments collected in table 3.03 below suggest. Accordingly, any correlations between reported levels of satisfaction with current rates and career progression may tell us as much about respondents' subjective expectations as about their objective working conditions: higher expectations – conditioned by factors that include socio-economic background and environment, education etc. – are likely to lead to lower levels of satisfaction. Arguably, this reservation would be of graver concern if sustainable success, as defined in this thesis, were not itself to a large extent a measure of subjective preferences and priorities – as survey responses to the questions about the most/least stressful and enjoyable aspects of working as a professional translator attest, one respondent's comfort zone may well be another's nightmare scenario.

Table 3.03. Selection of free-text comments highlighting the relationship between satisfaction levels and subjective expectations.

> Generally I am happy with the amount I earn. I think I charge more than some freelancers. However, when I compare my earnings with friends with different careers, I feel a little under-valued considering we have similar levels of intelligence, education etc
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Legal]
>
> I'm used to extreme precariousness so any money feels good I guess, but if I started counting the hours and the hourly rate, I think it would switch to VERY UNHAPPY.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, audiovisual translation (subtitling)]
>
> "Make a living" depends a good deal on your lifestyle and circumstances...
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Poetry, literary and genre fiction]
>
> of course it depends on what you mean by "a living"

[Female respondent, United States
Ph.D. in Philology, graduated before 2007
Legal, academic articles, literary fiction]

“make a living” being “just able to cover rent and living costs, perpetual fear that it might not be enough next month”

[Female respondent, Hong Kong
No T&I-related degree
Poetry, literary fiction]

the money I make is very low and only can be stretched because I live very modestly in a country with much lower living expenses

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
Poetry, literary fiction]

If I compare my rates to other people’s, I probably fall at the lower end of the scale, but I’m happy that what I charge supports the lifestyle I currently want to have, and I think that’s the important thing.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty]

I’d love to make more money, and don’t feel I make very much given how hard I work and my level of skill. However, I am stuck in a market and I am also not very good at making myself visible. I’m not the highest paid translator in my fields, but my rates are also far from rock bottom, so in that regard I am doing okay. It’s just that translation isn’t very well paid – particularly the kind I do – and I have never put enough effort into the business side, which has been my choice to some extent, and one I can live with.

[Female respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree

> Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction]
>
> I don’t mind the workload I have; the problem is that it is demoralizing to work for so little money. Especially as I get older and compare what I make to others my age, and also as I get older, it is increasingly important not simply to “earn a living” but to be saving money for the future (retirement? ha!). It is one thing when you are in your 20s or 30s, but when you are in your 50s, it feels different. I know from my friends who are artists and musicians that this is an issue for them as well – does the pay level allow those who work in a creative profession to practice it all their lives, or is it only viable while they are young and/or have no family to support and no health or housing issues?
>
> [Male respondent, Switzerland
> No T&I-related degree
> Arts, poetry]

Perhaps more problematic than the lack of objective standards is the lack of transparency about rates – which several respondents address directly or indirectly in the comments quoted below (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording) – coupled with the awareness of the risk that commercially inexperienced novices who are satisfied with less than what established colleagues would consider acceptable may, however inadvertently, contribute to a downward spiral of diminishing expectations and rewards.

> I still don’t have any idea whether the rates I receive are ok compared to others working in my language pair in the same field. There seems to be **very little transparency around rates**. Perhaps I need to be more assertive with agencies
>
> [Female respondent, UK

> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

> I still think that the major barrier to entry to the market – or what makes starting out difficult – is **lack of transparency in pricing**. No-one really wants to talk about it and it can make the difference between a comfortable working life and unbelievable stress, as well as the difference in employers who are worth working for and those who aren't.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"
> Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

Although it does not necessarily follow that a direct causal link between successful early career progression and sustainable satisfaction can be assumed, these findings do lend additional weight to the claims made in this thesis about the importance of early-career support to help new translators manage the transition into professional practice more swiftly.

3.3. Availability of Early-Career Support

In answer to Q9. *Did you feel well-supported during the early stages of your career as a professional translator or interpreter?*, a majority of respondents (70.2%) agreed that they had to find their own support, although their experiences diverged as to the availability of such support, with 42.2 per cent saying they had found it readily available, while 28 per cent said they had not. (Although the question allowed respondents to select more than one answer, these two answers were in fact mutually contradictory and only one respondent selected both, adding a comment to explain that she had found support "somewhat available" and specifying:

> Luckily I found Corinne McKay and Success by RX which helped a lot in terms of marketing, but nothing on improving translation skills.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Literary and genre fiction, cartoons, comics, games])

Tables 3.04a and 3.04e below show responses to this question correlated with respondents' gender identification, time of graduation and current location. The fluctuations between different cohorts of graduates indicate, on the one hand, that support from various sources has become more available in recent years, which is unsurprising given the rise of the internet and the concerted efforts by professional associations and academic institutions over roughly the same period of time. On the other hand, the figures also suggest a resilience or resourcefulness on the part of respondents for whom less institutional support would have been available, either because they do not hold a translation- or interpreting-related degree, or because they started their careers at a time when universities and professional associations were less efficient at offering relevant guidance. As additional free-text comments relating to this question show, a number of respondents in these two subsets (*no T/I-related degree, graduated before 2007*) received on-the-job training as part of their employment as in-house translators (see table 3.06 below); others set up their own support networks where none had previously been available.

Some respondents also talk about entering professional translation as a second career, to which they brought existing business skills and contacts. It is worth noting in this context that several respondents make a point of asserting their qualification for professional translation work despite not having a translation- or interpreting-related degree:

> I don’t have a *degree* using the definition you give above, but I do have postgraduate qualifications and I and my clients see me as fully qualified
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> Medical/pharmaceutical, music]

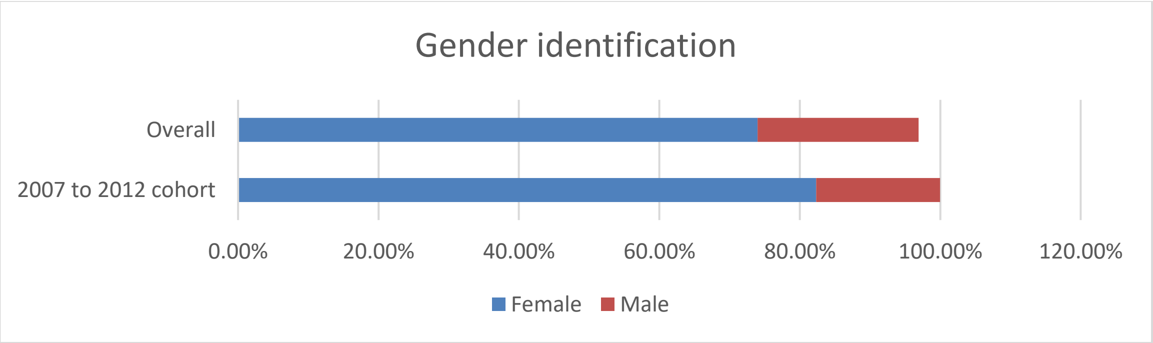
> Phew, you’re making BIG assumptions about education. I didn’t go to a university but am very well qualified as a translator. There are more routes than via a university degree. This survey seems to be aimed at (relatively) young people.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> Semi-retired
> Legal, finance, business]

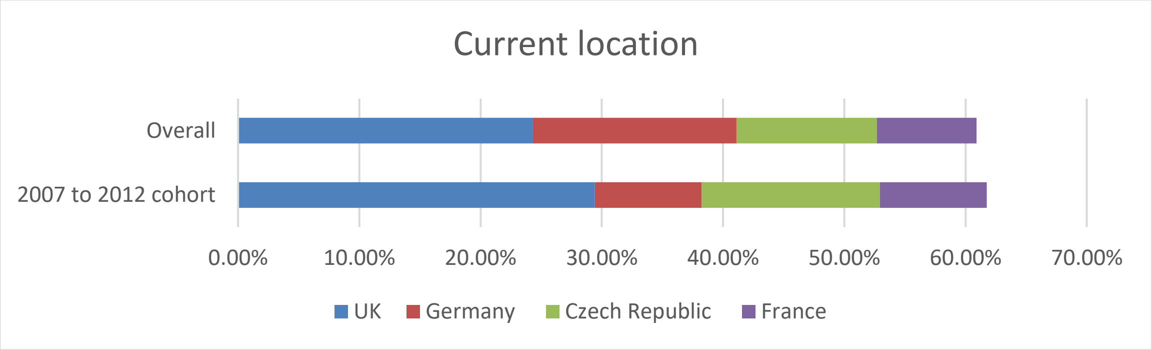
The wording of Q7. *Do you have a translation/interpreting-related degree?* did leave it up to respondents to define *translation/interpreting-related degree.* Responses and comments clearly show that some respondents counted pure language degrees as *translation/interpreting-related*, while others did not. It would therefore be more accurate to say that (some of the) responses to this question reflect respondents’ perception of the relevance of their degrees, which is likely to be influenced by their backgrounds and cultural factors, e.g. whether or not their relevant translators’ association recognises language degrees as adequate qualification.

The cohort of respondents who graduated between 2007 and 2012 is the only subset tested for which no evident link between early career progression and (perceived) availability of support was established. Respondents in this cohort were found to be less likely to say they had *found support readily available* than respondents in the other cohorts tested, and more likely to say they had *not found support readily available* and *would* *have liked more support* both from their universities and their professional associations. Accordingly, the figures presented in table 3.04.a below seem to indicate a slump between the pre-2007 and the after-2012 cohorts of graduates, as if to denote a lost generation of translators who may have started their careers at the wrong time, as old (analogue) support structures were failing and new (digital) ones had not yet been fully established.

However, respondents in the 2007 to 2012 cohort were also found to be more likely to say *they had not needed much support*. As the findings presented in table 3.01.b above and tables 3.04.b to d below show, this perceived lack of support appears not to have impeded the early career progression of this cohort as a whole, whose members were in fact found to be considerably more likely than respondents in any other cohort to earn a living from professional translation or interpreting within less than a year of starting their careers. Further research would be required to determine whether these findings represent a verifiable trend or merely a fluke in the present dataset that may be due to the small size and atypical composition of this particular subset of 34 respondents. (As shown in figures 3.i.a and 3.i.b below, the 2007 to 2102 cohort deviates from the overall survey population in terms of gender identification and current location.)

Figures 3.i.a and b. Atypical composition of 2007 to 2012 cohort compared to overall survey population.





In all other subsets tested, the figures presented in tables 3.04.b and 3.04.c show a distinct statistical correlation between the (perceived) availability or lack of support and respondents' early career progression, as reflected in the length of time it took until they felt able to make a living from professional translation or interpreting. Respondents struggling to make a living as professional translators or interpreters were less likely to have found support readily available than those who were able to do so within the first year of their professional practice. (As with the figures presented in table 3.02 on the correlation between respondents' early career progression and satisfaction with their career preparation during their degree programme, these correlations may be indicative of retrospection bias, whereby respondents' retrospective assessment of a process or experience may be influenced by the eventual – positive or negative – outcome of that process or experience. Accordingly, respondents struggling to earn a living may be more likely to feel let down by a perceived lack of early-career support, while those who prospered more quickly may be more inclined to feel they were well-supported.)

As some respondents point out, there is also an argument to be made about the importance of personal resourcefulness and initiative in accessing available support (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording):

ITI was brilliant, and my university careers service provided a business start-up grant. In both cases, **I had to take the initiative** to find out what support was available.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Medical/pharmaceutical]

with a fair amount of **research and asking around** there is some support available

[Female respondent, Australia
No T&I-related degree
Business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/ design]

I treated my early translation career **as a numbers game, which is similar to how I treated my multiple earlier experiences as a more traditional job seeker**: I sought out a large number of potential contacts, sent out tweaked resumes to each of those contacts, basing my volume of inquiries on the expectation that I'd likely only hear back from a small fraction. I never tracked actual numbers, but I typically had the mindset that if I queried ten agencies or direct clients, I'd hear back from two or three and end up getting occasional or maybe even regular work from one. When work seemed to be coming slower than I wanted or needed, I'd set aside another day to unearth another ten potential contacts and tailor resumes to send: That would be my "work" for the day. As I started getting more job inquiries than I could reasonably schedule, I looked at my list of existing contacts and decided which I would most prefer to cut based on rate, interest or ease of working with that contact's material, and the degree of personal relationship we'd built to that point.

[Male respondent, Japan
BA in Japanese, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, marketing/ advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> My teachers were helpful with special study arrangements during my translation internship with the European Commission. I graduated immediately after that and did not feel I needed any help. But **I'm an extremely business-oriented mind**, some of my classmates were struggling and ended up giving up translation completely because they just couldn't establish themselves in the market.
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> MA in English-language translation from a Czech university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Legal, finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising materials, academic articles]

> I network and make connections, **the school opens the door, but one has to do the work**. I am very grateful to my school, though.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> MA/BA (joint) in Translation and Interpreting and MA in Translation and Localization Management, graduated after 2012
> Combines employment as a project manager for a language service provider with self-employment as a translator
> Legal, business, marketing/advertising, arts sectors, academic articles, IT/user interfaces]

To some extent, these are competencies that can be fostered in aspiring translators along with their ability to identify and implement effective translation strategies, research terminology etc.

It also strikes me as worth noting that the proportion of respondents who say they had *not needed much support* remains below one in four in all but one of the various subsets tested. (28.57 per cent of the 28 respondents with no translation- or interpreting degree who selected *Less than a year* in response to Q10 about early career progression selected this option.) As with the references to luck quoted at the beginning of this chapter, respondents may be downplaying – or underestimating – their own achievements and capabilities by discounting the possibility that they would have done equally well with less or no support. Despite these reservations, the evidence presented in this section does indicate that universities, professional translators' associations and other stakeholders can make (and are already making) a positive difference by offering early-career support to new translators in the form of mentorship schemes, networking opportunities, legal and practical guidance, business skills training etc. Another respondent, who does acknowledge that her career progression "depended completely on my own efforts", explains:

> My special fields didn't fit to professional associations at that time. I worked without external support for more than 15 years.

Based on this experience, she offers the following advice to new translators:

> They should join a translators' association right on, even during studying, be open for networking, attend seminars and conferences – and never be afraid of more experienced colleagues.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
>
> Diploma in medical translation from a German university, graduated before 2007
>
> Medical/pharmaceutical, non-fiction books, literary fiction]

More suggestions for additional support are discussed in section 3.5.

Table 3.04.a. Responses to Q9 about the availability of career support correlated with respondents' gender identification (substantial variation highlighted in darkening shades of orange from just below 5 to above 10 percentage points) and year of graduation (highest and lowest values for each row highlighted in bold).

	Overall (n=282)	Of these:					
		Respondents who identify as female (n=209)	Respondents who identify as male (n=65)	Degree completed before 2007 (n=87)	Degree completed 2007-2012 (n=34)	Degree completed after 2012 (n=44)	No T&I-related degree (n=111)
I had to find my own support, but found it was	42.2%	41.14%	47.69%	34.48%	**29.41 %**	50%	**51.35 %**

readily available							
I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available	28%	27.75%	27.69%	36.78%	**41.17 %**	**18.18 %**	19.81%
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my university	5% (14)	5.74% (12)	1.53% (1)	4.59% (4)	8.82% (3)	**9.09% (4)**	**2.7% (3)**
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my professional translators' association	12.4%	13.39%	9.23%	14.94%	**5.88% (2)**	**18.18 %**	10.81%
I would have liked more support from my university	16.3%	16.26%	15.38%	18.39%	**47.05 %**	25%	**1.8% (2)**
I would have liked more support from my professional translators' association	7.8%	8.61%	6.15%	10.34%	**20.58 %**	**2.27% (2)**	4.5% (5)
I didn't feel I needed much support	15.2%	13.87%	20%	**10.34 %**	**20.58 %**	13.63%	18.91%
I find it difficult to ask for help	8.9%	11%	3.07% (2)	10.34%	**11.76 %**	9.09% (4)	**6.3% (7)**
Not applicable	1.4% (4)	1.43% (3)	1.53% (1)	-	-	-	2.7% (3)
Prefer not to say	1.1% (3)	0.47% (1)	3.07% (2)	1.15% (1)	-	-	1.8% (2)

Table 3.04.b. Responses to Q9 about the availability of career support by respondents who selected *Less than a year* in response to Q10 about early career progression correlated with respondents' gender identification (substantial variation highlighted in darkening shades of orange from just below 5 to above 10 percentage points) and year of graduation (highest and lowest values highlighted for each row).

	Overall (n=69)	Of these:					
		Respondents who identify as female (n=47)	Respondents who identify as male (n=21)	Degree completed before 2007 (n=17)	Degree completed 2007-2012 (n=14)	Degree completed after 2012 (n=12)	No T&I-related degree (n=28)
I had to find my own	49.27 %	48.93%	52.38%	47.05%	28.57%	75%	50%

support, but found it was readily available							
I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available	10.14%	10.63%	9.52%	5.88%	21.42%	8.33%	7.14%
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my university	10.14%	12.76%	4.76% (1)	5.88%	14.28%	16.66%	7.14%
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my professional translators' association	14.49%	14.89%	14.28%	29.41%	14.28%	8.33%	7.14%
I would have liked more support from my university	18.84%	14.89%	28.57%	17.64%	42.85%	25%	3.57%
I would have liked more support from my professional translators' association	7.24%	6.38%	9.52%	11.76%	21.42%	-	-
I didn't feel I needed much support	20.28%	19.14%	19.04%	11.76%	21.42%	8.33%	28.57%
I find it difficult to ask for help	7.24%	10.63%	-	5.88%	14.28%	8.33%	3.57%
Not applicable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prefer not to say	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3.04.c. Responses to Q9 about the availability of career support by respondents who selected *I still can't make a living from professional translation or interpreting* in response to Q10 about early career progression correlated with respondents' gender identification (substantial variation highlighted in darkening shades of orange from just below 5 to above 10 percentage points) and year of graduation (highest and lowest values for each row highlighted in bold).

	Overall (n=40)	Of these:					
		Respondents who identify as female	Respondents who identify as male	Degree completed before 2007	Degree completed 2007-2012	Degree completed after 2012	No T&I-related degree (n=17)

		(n=29)	(n=9)	(n=10)	(n=3)	(n=10)	
I had to find my own support, but found it was readily available	45%	37.93%	66.66%	**30%**	33.33%	**60%**	47.05%
I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available	32.5%	34.48%	22.22%	50%	**66.66%**	20%	**17.64%**
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my university	2.5% (1)	3.44 % (1)	-	0.00%	0.00%	**10%**	0.00%
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my professional translators' association	15%	17.24%	11.11%	10%	**0.00%**	**20%**	17.64%
I would have liked more support from my university	20%	20.68%	-	10%	**66.66%**	40%	**0.00%**
I would have liked more support from my professional translators' association	17.5%	17.24%	22.22%	20%	**66.66%**	**0.00%**	17.64%
I didn't feel I needed much support	7.5%	6.89%	11.11%	10%	**0.00%**	**0.00%**	**11.76%**
I find it difficult to ask for help	17.5%	20.68%	-	**20%**	**0.00%**	**20%**	11.76%
Not applicable	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prefer not to say	2.5% (1)	3.44 % (1)	-	10%	-	-	-

Table 3.04.d. Distribution of negative responses by respondents who graduated between 2007 and 2012 to Q9 about the availability of career support and responses to Q8: *Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator /interpreter?*, correlated with responses to Q 10 about early career progression.

	All respondents in this cohort (n=34)	Of these, filtered by responses to Q 10: *How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?*				
		Less than a year (n=14)	1 to 2 years (n=9)	2 to 5 years (n=6)	More than five years (n=0)	I still can't make a living (n=3)
I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available	41.17%	21.42%	44.44%	50%	-	66.66%
I would have liked more support from my university	47.05%	42.85%	55.55%	50%	-	66.66%
I would have liked more support from my professional translators' association	20.58%	21.42%	11.11%	16.66%	-	66.66%
Mean average rating (on a scale of 0 to 5) in response to Q8	3.03	2.84	3.66	3.0	-	2.33

Table 3.04.e. Responses to Q9 about the availability of career support correlated with respondents' current location; highest and lowest values for each row highlighted in bold.

	Overall (n=282)	Of these:				
		Respondents based in the UK (n=70)	Respondents based in Germany (n=47)	Respondents based in the Czech Rep. (n=33)	Respondents based in the US (n=24)	Respondents based in France (n=23)
I had to find my own support, but found it was readily available	42.2%	**37.14%**	46.8%	36.36%	41.66%	**47.82%**
I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available	28%	24.28%	25.53%	**33.33%**	**33.33%**	**21.73%**
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my university	5% (14)	5.71% (4)	**2.12% (1)**	3.03% (1)	12.5% (3)	**13.04% (3)**
Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my professional translators' association	12.4%	17.14%	12.76%	**3.03% (1)**	8.33% (2)	**21.73%**
I would have liked more support from my university	16.3%	12.85%	12.76%	15.15%	**8.33% (2)**	**21.73%**
I would have liked more support from my	7.8%	7.14%		3.03%	8.33%	**13.04%**

professional translators' association			**2.12% (1)**	(1)	(2)	**(3)**
I didn't feel I needed much support	15.2%	14.28%	19.14%	**24.24%**	16.66%	**0.00%**
I find it difficult to ask for help	8.9%	10%	4.25%	6.06% (2)	12.5% (3)	**13.04%(3**)
Not applicable	1.4% (4)	2.85% (2)	-	6.06% (2)	-	-
Prefer not to say	1.1% (3)	1.42% (1)	-	3.03% (1)	-	-

Finally, the figures presented in table 3.04.e also show considerable variation between respondents based in different locations, which might likewise merit more focussed scrutiny to control for other variables such as respondents' language combinations and specialist domains. As a tentative hypothesis, the available data suggest that career support both from professional associations and academic institutions may be more readily available in some countries than in others, and that – perhaps even as a consequence – respondents in some countries may be more likely to expect support from these organisations. It may also be worth noting that these findings are at odds with the observations offered by one respondent about differences between the education system in the UK and France (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording):

> I'm always a little baffled when reading this type of questions in translation-related surveys: why should I expect support from others when starting out as a freelance translator? I needed a lot of information about the business side and about the technical/linguistic side when I started out, like any beginner, but always felt the information was out there and it was up to me to make the effort to go and find it. And I feel that once you set out to get the information, it is readily available.
>
> That said, my reaction might be down to **a difference between expectations and alumni culture around universities in the UK and in France**, the country I'm from and where I studied: in the UK, universities are selective and you pay significant tuition fees so there is a strong esprit de corps and as

> a student or alumnus/a, you expect the university to provide support, almost like a service that is part of the package you purchased. In France, there is no selection to get into university and tuition fees are nominal but you are pretty much on your own so, unless one studied at one of the only two further-education colleges specialised in translation that exist in France (that I know of), where I expect it might be a little more like in the UK, no French would-be translator would expect anybody to help them set up in what is by definition a career as an independent professional, and most of the time a self-employed one.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, arts, tourism, food & drink, fashion and beauty, theology, video games]

In additional comments, some respondents mention online resources, while many emphasise the support they received from fellow translators in formal or informal, often localised, networks:

> Fellow translators at international unions (like FIT, UITA) were very useful
>
> [Male respondent, Switzerland
> No T&I-related degree
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, non-fiction books, articles for a Sunday newspaper]

> Established translators in Paris were very helpful.
>
> [Male respondent, France
> MA in Mediaeval and Modern Languages from a UK university, graduated before 2007
> Arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction, translations for NGOs]

> I found a **loose group of translators in Berlin**, and they've been lovely.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, business, marketing/advertising, engineering, arts]

In fact, I mainly found support in **Facebook groups for translators**.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/User interfaces, marketing/advertising, website localisation, e-learning, e-commerce, tourism]

I started freelancing in 2002 and there wasn't a ton of information out there on how to run a freelance business, but I quickly met **other freelancers through my local translators' association and a local all-women's freelancers group**, and they were an excellent resource.

[Female respondent, United States
No T&I-related degree
Marketing/advertising, international development, non-fiction books]

Other, more experienced translators have been my best source of support – and indeed of work!

[Female respondent, UK
MA in Comparative Literature (Translation specialism), graduated between 2007 and 2012
Combines self-employment as a translator with editing books for publishers Literary fiction]

Support largely from online communities of translators

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Earns part of his income from outsourcing work to other translators
Legal, business, marketing/advertising sectors]

I joined **an unofficial translators' group in Berlin** (Stammtisch) with regular dinners and an online group. This basically **made my career, via referrals and lots of advice and knowledge**. Also, starting with an in-house job while I built up freelance clients on nights and weekends made taking the plunge less scary.

[Male respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree

Academic articles, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction, arts, museums]

I started working **in-house, with excellent colleagues** who were really helpful.

[Female respondent, Denmark

BSc in Information Science with German as a subsidiary subject and Postgraduate Special Language Diploma, graduated before 2007

Translates part-time while drawing a retirement pension

Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

A fellow member of the local professional organisation acted as mentor (although it wasn’t an official term or task back then)

[Female respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree

Medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

It took me some time to realise what kind of support I needed and where to find it. The **best help have always been fellow colleagues**.

[Female respondent, Poland

B.A. in Translation and Interpreting and B.A. in English Studies, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Legal, finance, marketing/advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, tourism and gastronomy]

At the time, the **Welsh government offered a mentoring scheme for new businesses** and this helped me to define what I needed to do to get started and gave me milestones to stick to. I also found the **powwows via proz.com** and the fellow translators I met there were and remain a constant source of support, inspiration and friendship :-)

> [Female respondent, UK
> BA in Modern Languages, graduated before 2007
> Marketing/advertising, engineering]

These comments evoke a strong sense of a community – both in the virtual and physical sense – of practitioners who readily share advice and offer help to new members. "Translators are the world's most generous colleagues!", as one respondent remarks in answer to a different survey question.

Several respondents also talk about the difficulty of "not knowing what kind of questions to ask and where to ask them", as one of them puts it. Others add:

> It took me some time to realise what kind of support I needed and where to find it. […]
>
> [Female respondent, Poland
> B.A. in Translation and Interpreting and B.A. in English Studies
> Legal, finance, marketing/advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, tourism and gastronomy]

> A couple of tutors at my university were very keen to help and answered a lot of questions for me, but I found that it was **difficult to know *what* I should have been asking** – I mostly felt my way along based on what I already knew about freelancing (both my parents have been self-employed since before I was born). I looked at what other people were asking in online translator forums, but I'm always hesitant to ask anything myself – some of the replies to perceived "stupid questions" can be brutal!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty]

3.4. Internship Experiences

Respondents' internship experiences vary greatly, with roughly a quarter of the total survey population reporting experiences that proved useful for their subsequent career progression – typically as trainees, interns or junior project managers in translation agencies. This figure is substantially higher for respondents who hold a translation- or interpreting-related degree and substantially lower for respondents with no translation- or interpreting-related degree, as shown in table 3.05 below. As shown in table 3.01.a above, the likelihood of being able to earn a living from professional translation/interpreting within two years increased by 12.3 percentage points for respondents who undertook an internship or work experience compared to the majority who did not.

Table 3.05. Correlation between respondents' year of graduation and internship experiences.

	All respondents who answered Q11 (n=290)	Of these:			
		Respondents who graduated before 2007 (n=88)	Respondents who graduated 2007-2012 (n=34)	Respondents who graduated after 2012 (n=44)	Respondents with no T&I-related degree (n=121)
Yes – useful	25.5%	30.68%	50%	34.09%	10.74%
Yes – not useful	2.4%	3.4%	2.94% (1)	2.27% (1)	1.65% (2)
No, I haven't	56.8%	52.27%	29.41%	45.45%	72.72%
No, but I wish I had	15.2%	13.63%	17.64%	18.18%	14.87%
Prefer not to say	-	-	-	-	-

Many respondents who did complete internships or work experience placements highlight the value of gaining insight into commercial workflows and making contacts in the translation or publishing industry – in some cases finding their first clients – while others emphasise the benefits of formal or informal mentorship arrangements with experienced colleagues. At the other end of the spectrum, a few comments draw attention to the more problematic aspects of internships as under- or unpaid labour that “only serve[s] to cheapen the profession,” as one respondent argues, adding: “There is no substitute for hands-on experience as a business owner.” Another says: “Internships are so badly paid and the working conditions so unreasonable that it is impossible to earn a living or work on the side” (comment translated from German). It is worth noting, however, that the experiences described by respondents are short one-off placements, as opposed to the protracted periods of serial internships that have become common in other disciplines across the media and cultural sector (Bebnowski 2012, Perlin 2011).

Although one respondent, who “organised a work placement myself”, argues that “this is vital for students and should be included in all courses”, there is a sense that some of the most valuable experiences appear to have been those arranged by the respondents on their own initiative. Mandatory placements, on the other hands, are sometimes experienced as obligations – something respondents feel they “had to do” or were “sent” to do – rather than opportunities. It would be interesting, although beyond the scope of my current investigation, to examine these findings in the wider context of recent literature on the benefits, drawbacks and socio-economic issues associated with the rise of internships over the past few decades (cf. Bradley and Van Hoof 2005, Graduate Prospects 2011, Tholen 2013, Vuolo and Mortimer 2012).

Other respondents refer to early-career in-house positions as a kind of apprenticeship for subsequent freelance careers, as the following comments exemplify.

Table 3.06. Selection of free-text comments referring to in-house positions as training for freelance careers.

Not sure how to answer this – working in-house in an agency (Germany) for 3 years then as a staff translator for 11 years, so, extremely useful, and completely different to working as a freelance translator.

[Female respondent, Australia
T&I-related BA from a UK university, graduated before 2007
Legal, finance, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles, customs, international affairs/policymaking]

Not necessary, as I spent five years working in-house.

[Female respondent, Denmark
BSc in Information Science with German as a subsidiary subject and Postgraduate Special Language Diploma, graduated before 2007
Translates part-time while drawing a retirement pension
Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

I wasn’t aware of any, but because of the way I got into translation (I was hired to work on a French-English dictionary project and shortly afterwards was given a job by the publisher who had published a book I had written that included quite a lot of translation) I was fairly confident that I knew how to translate, I just had and still have very little idea how to get work.

[Female respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction]

Didn’t need to – worked in-house full time

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Derives part of his income from outsourcing work to other translators

Legal, business, marketing/advertising]

Not really, although after just a couple of months freelancing I accepted an in-house position at an agency, where I stayed for a little over a year, so poorly paid and exploited that it might as well have been an internship. I was well-informed enough to realize that the job was terrible and that I could make much more on my own, but since I lacked any kind of formal training I felt it was an opportunity to gain experience while having a little less personal responsibility for those translations, and without having to worry about all the business aspects. In hindsight I still feel like this was a wise move, although six or nine months of that probably would have been enough. (In those conditions, anyway, with little or no actual supervision, editing or feedback.)

[Female respondent, Italy

No T&I-related degree

Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction]

Such internships didn’t exist in my early career. What I did find helpful was getting occasional work writing reader’s reports and reviews: this gave me valuable insights into how the publishing world works. I also worked in-house in various publishing houses, in low-paid temporary jobs first, until I got more secure work.

[Female respondent, Ireland

BA and MA in Languages from an Irish university, both of which included translation modules, graduated before 2007

Combines self-employment as a translator with teaching in adult education and self-employment as a copyeditor and proofreader

Non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction, arts]

3.5. Respondents' Proposals for Additional Support

In the final part of Q9 about the availability of support during the early stages of their careers, respondents were invited to put forward their own suggestions for any measures that would *offer more support to new translators and interpreters*. This question received a total of 139 free-text responses (although two respondents simply answered "No" to the question *Can you think of anything that could be done to offer more support to new translators and interpreters?*, while another one said "Yes"). There is a particularly strong emphasis on mentorships, which are mentioned in almost a quarter of all responses. Other proposals include

- business/entrepreneurial skills training

> Hearing from the many individuals who come out of uni with an MA, there seems to be a serious lack of preparation for the business side of the job. Being a translator usually means being self-employed, and not just translating all day, every day: you have to run a business! Few people seem to realise that as they enrol on a translation course, and give up as they come out of it. Rates also need to be addressed: academics are often out of touch and suggest ridiculously low rates that undermine the industry.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> BA in EN & ES, "1 out of 4 modules in translation and MA in EN, 1 out of 4 modules in translation", graduated before 2007
> Arts, psychology]

> For me personally, the entrepreneur mindset was something that I really had to learn along the way. It would be nice if there were (more) courses to prepare recent graduates for self-employment, so they can learn e.g. how to find and keep clients, how to market themselves etc.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
> No T&I-related degree

Medical/pharmaceutical sector]

Encourage them to use careers services at their place of study or government services in how to set up their own business. Personally I don't think business skills should be part of the taught curriculum as the focus should be on translation – but I know colleagues who disagree!

[Female respondent, Finland
MA Polish and History, graduated before 2007
Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles in the humanities – "esp. history and theology"]

- networking opportunities

Maybe, a regular meeting with university lecturers (practitioners in the field of translation/interpreting) and former fellow students might be a good way of engaging in active exchange and to kickstart one's career at the beginning.

[Female respondent, Germany
BA in Language, Culture, Translation and MA in Conference Interpreting, both from German universities, graduated after 2012
Divides her time "more or less equally" between freelance translation and interpreting
Business, IT/user interfaces, engineering, automotive]

University could host a networking group or forum for alumni.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
Academic articles, business, engineering, automotive]

- collaborations between institutional and individual stakeholders

Unis should develop closer relationships with agencies/clients, offer more traineeships, real-life practice, mentors

[Female respondent, Germany
MA in Translation from a UK university, graduated before 2007
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive]

Arrange translation and interpreting centres at faculties which would provide students with support

[Male respondent, Slovakia

MA and PhD in Translation Studies, both from Slovak universities, graduated before 2007

Combines self-employment as a translator and interpreter with academic research/teaching

Business, medical/pharmaceutical, arts, non-fiction books]

I did not study translation but I taught it and it was my impression that it was helpful for students to network with each other, maybe work on joint projects, start a small translation co-op, etc. In general co-ops seem like a good idea to me to not have to deal with all the unfairness and insecurity on your own like I did.

[Female respondent, Belgium

No T&I-related degree

Academic articles, non-fiction books and audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

Yes, universities should establish a relationship with professional associations as a support for new translators and interpreters.

[Female respondent, Spain

T&I-related MA from a Spanish university, graduated after 2012

Medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, engineering]

In terms of literary work, it would help a lot if the publishing houses made open calls, whether for sample translations or for recruiting translators for selected books. More mentoring schemes would also be highly valued, or seminars or other events at which new translators can find out how to approach publishers, how to present samples or projects, how to get a foot in the door, essentially. More events at which authors and publishers could meet translators would be really useful for making more projects come to fruition with a greater variety of translators involved.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic

> MA in Literary Translation and MA in Modern and Medieval Languages, both from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, literary fiction, arts]

> More willingness from older, established translators to talk frankly about price. Perhaps even recommendations on minimum prices for language groups. Short internships with freelancers. Deliberate attempts to weed out poor quality, underqualified price-cutters.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"
> Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

Other respondents use their answers to this question as an opportunity to voice concerns about the state of the translation industry in general and current working conditions for translators in particular:

> A market where quality translation is appreciated
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> MA in Translation from a Czech university, graduated after 2012
> Employed as an in-house translator
> Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, sports, arts]

> better official pricing policy
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> Legal, finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, architecture/design, automotive]

> I don't know. Translators are so squeezed by technology, mergers and acquisitions, off-shoring, and translation portals that rates are going down. I have actually cautioned bright young people with a gift for languages not to go into translation, but to use their language in other arenas.
>
> [Male respondent, United States

> No T&I-related degree
> “[U]sed to translate medical/pharma and patents but gave that up some years ago” and now specialises in translating academic articles and non-fiction books (“mostly intellectual and cultural history”)]

Several respondents stress the importance for new translators to take initiative and seek out their own support:

> I’m not sure – perhaps support could be more widely advertised – but I think you need to be able to take initiative to succeed as a self-employed professional anyway.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical]

> I think we can find enough support already. But we have to look for it, that is sure.
>
> [Female respondent, France
> Master’s degree in Foreign Languages, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising]

> Again, I might be a bit harsh and it may be a very French perspective but I feel that if you’re not able to go out there and start a business without somebody to hold your hand and make soothing, encouraging noises to ease you on your way, the translation/interpreting career is not for you – because it is a profession where you’ll be freelance (most likely) so you need to be self-reliant and because the job requires people who are able to do efficient research without external help and who are confident enough to make a judgment call about how one particular sentence should be translated and to potentially defend that choice before the client.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, arts, tourism, food & drink, fashion and beauty, theology, video games]

Difficult to say that in general. The university courses could adapt more of the real working life, that would be a better preparation. Apart from that I would say it's everybody's own responsibility to request support when and where needed from colleagues, associations like BDÜ, communities like Facebook or Proz.com...

[Female respondent, Germany
T&I-related diploma and MA, graduated before 2007
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising]

No. If you're going to make it in this business, you really have to be self-motivated. I would however add that new translators need to be supported to understand that they are running a business, not a two-bit sideline, and every time they treat it as an "add-on", they damage the standing of the profession.

[Female respondent, UK
Diploma Interpreting & Translation and BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007
Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy]

Not really as I firmly believe there is a lot, and a lot more than e.g. 10 years ago, of support offered by experienced colleagues. I'd say that young colleagues would just need to really accept that they are "just youngsters" when they get out of university, and that there is a lot to learn about real life.
(Not only to me) it seems that many young/new colleagues are just too much convinced that they are the very best (since they now have a degree) and there's no one who could teach them anything (as they are, in their own eyes, so smart).

[Female respondent, Austria
CERAPT [Czech Board for Translation and Interpreting] Exam, passed before 2007
Combines self-employment as a translator and interpreter with running a B&B
Legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, arts, hospitality]

On a less confrontational note, another respondent emphasises the diversity of opportunities available to professional translators:

> Show them that there are many ways to define success, and that they do not have to do what everyone else does. Demonstrate this with examples from the industry of professionals doing things "their way", and doing them very well. Emphasise that translation is a valuable and valued skill – and teach students how to pinpoint the value they can bring for clients.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> BA Hons Hispanic Studies, graduated before 2007
> Combines self-employment as a translator, outsourcing work to other translators or interpreters and working as a content and copywriter
> Marketing/advertising, arts]

3.6. "Virtually on the Breadline": Career Prospects for Literary Translators

Across different locations and domain specialisms, a number of survey responses to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?* reflect a view of literary translation as highly desirable and sought-after work:

> breaking into literary translation
>
> [Female respondent, France
> No T&I-related degree
> Supplements her income from academic research/teaching with freelance translation
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, arts, architecture/design, fashion]

> Doing literary translations
>
> [Female respondent, Australia
> No T&I-related degree
> Primarily earns her income as a teacher and solicitor
> Legal]

> Working on literary/creative texts more often.

> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> MA in Literary Translation and MA in Modern and Medieval Languages, both from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, literary fiction, arts]

> Concentrating wholly on literary fiction and creative non-fic.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/design, literary and genre fiction]

> More continuous time to devote to literary translation, without other (financially necessary) work impinging.
>
> [Female respondent, Ireland
> BA and MA in Languages from an Irish university, both of which included translation modules, graduated before 2007
> Combines self-employment as a translator with teaching in adult education and self-employment as a copyeditor and proofreader
> Non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction, arts]

> An inbox suddenly full of well-paid literary jobs involving authors I respect.
>
> [Female respondent, Italy
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction]

This view is supported by the observation that disagreement with the contention *I don’t want to be a translator for the rest of my working life* is even stronger among respondents specialising in literary translation than in the overall survey population, as figures 3.ii.a and 3.ii.b below show.

Figure 3.ii.a Proportion of survey respondents who in answer to Q26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?* disagree with the contention *I don’t want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway.*

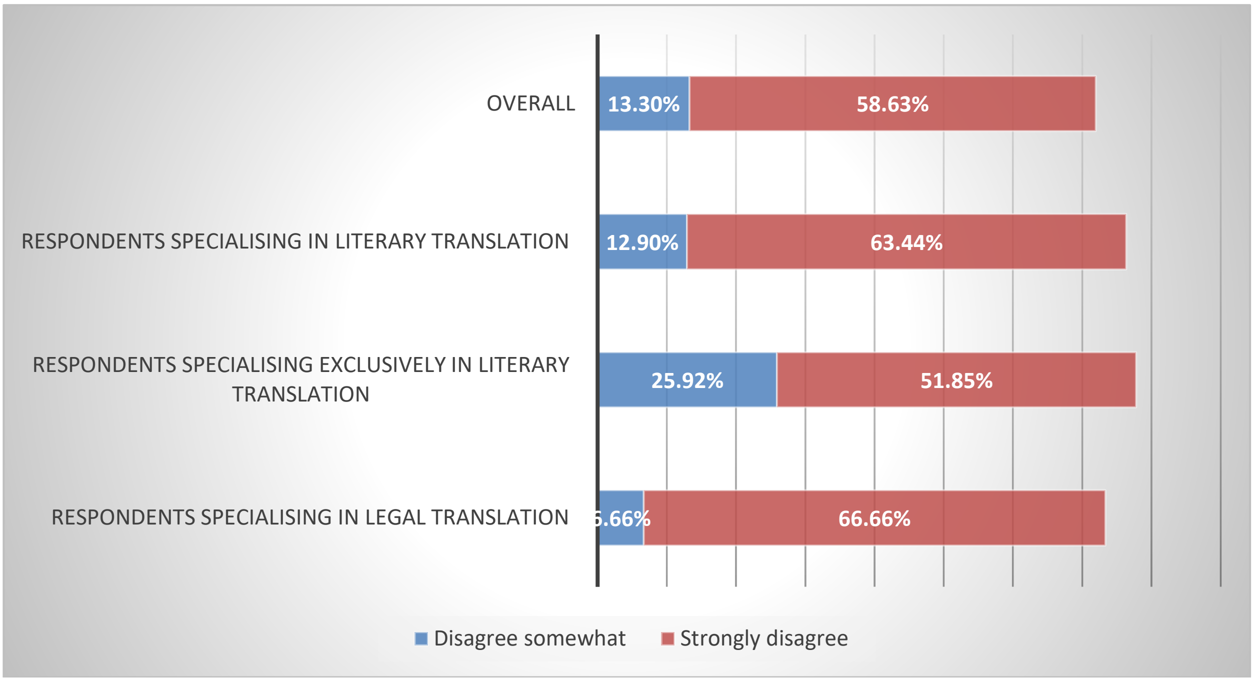
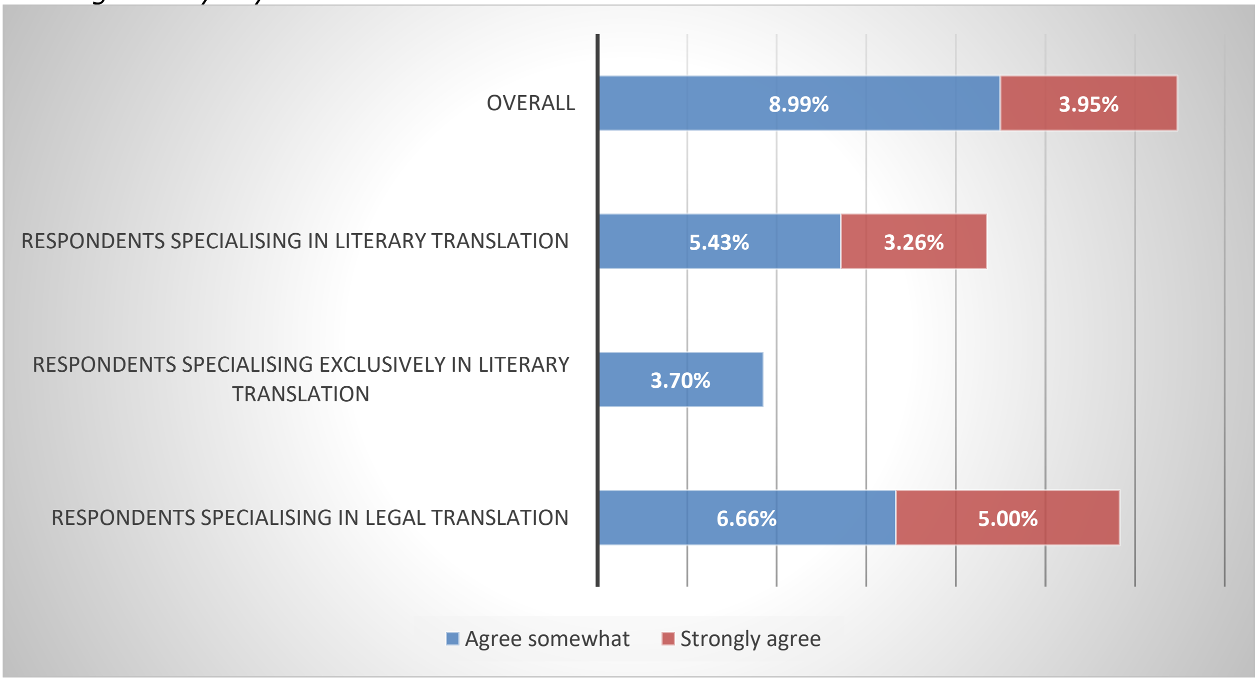


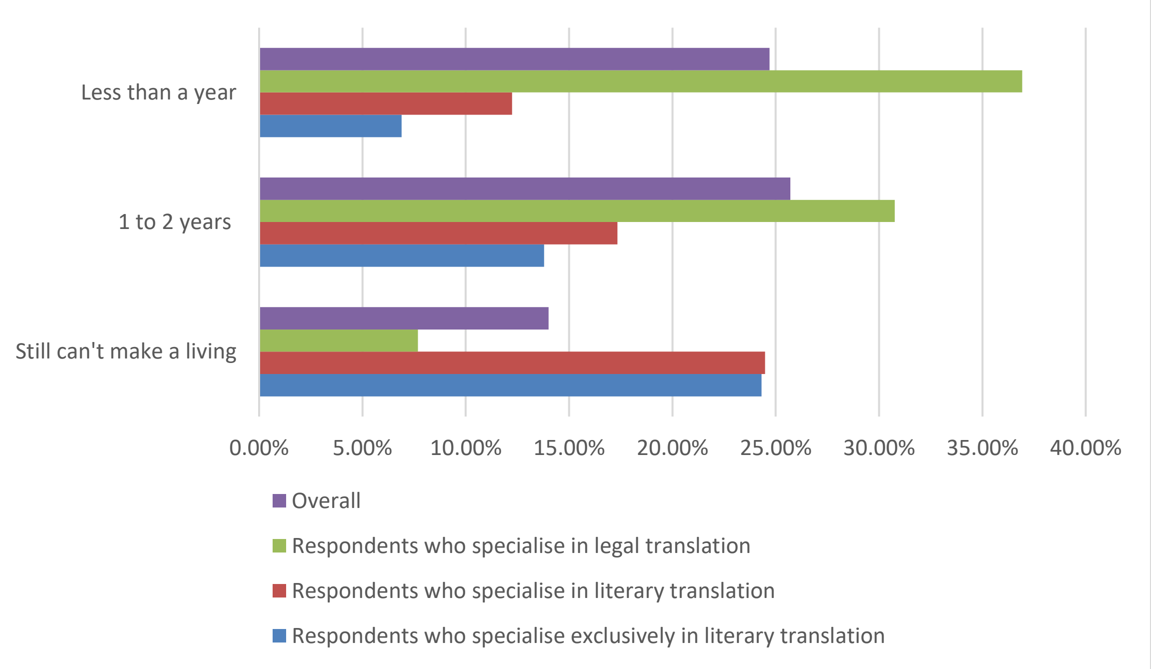
Figure 3.ii.b Proportion of survey respondents who in answer to Q26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?* agree with the contention *I don’t want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway.*



Although clearly a dream job for a number of respondents, literary translation emerges as a less attractive career choice in other respects.

Survey responses also show that aspiring literary translators find it harder to earn a living in their chosen profession than translators specialising in other domains. As shown in section 3.2 above, over 50 per cent of the overall survey population were able to make a living from translation within two years of starting their careers. Respondents who specialise in literary translation (including literary fiction, genre fiction, comics, children's books and poetry) were found to need substantially longer, with only 29.58 per cent succeeding within the same period. For respondents who exclusively specialise in literary translation, the number dropped to 20.68 per cent, while respondents in both subsets were three times as likely to select the option *I still can't make my living from professional translation/interpreting* than respondents specialising in legal translation (see Figure 3.iii. below).[31]

Figure 3.iii. Correlation between responses to Q10. *How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?* and respondents' specialisation as legal or literary translators.



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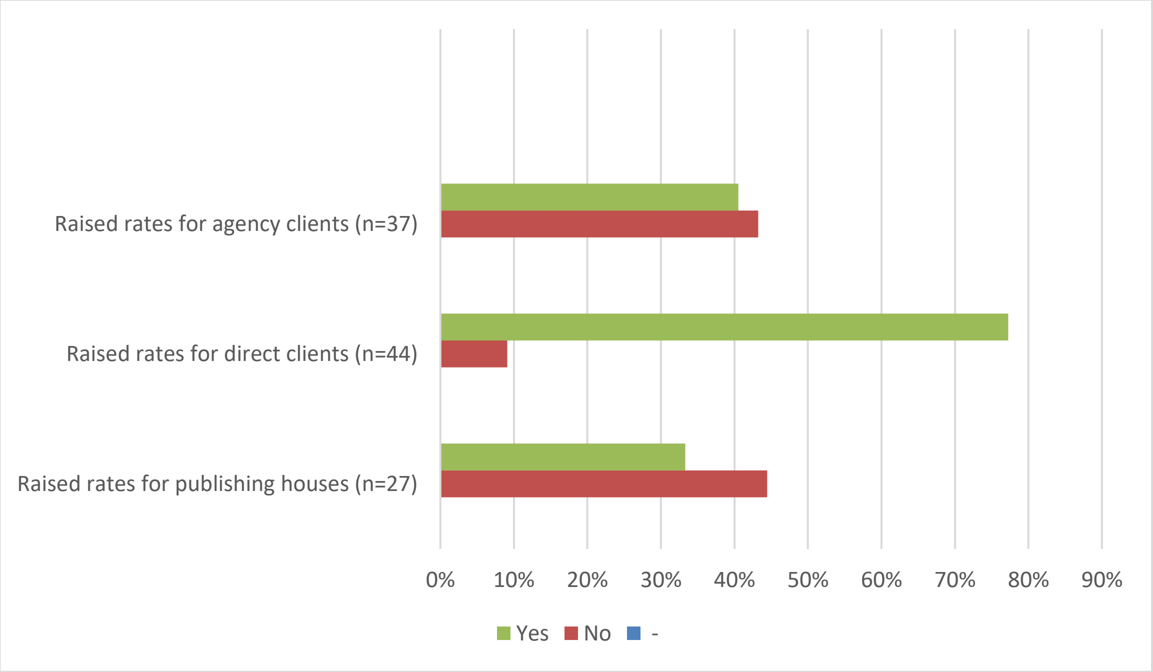
[31] As Juliette Scott (2019: 12) notes, while "the legal specialism is often held, anecdotally, to be one of the better paid [...], the actual situation in the legal field is difficult to ascertain [...] due to the complexity of the market" and the reluctance of self-employed translators "to make their tariffs public". The findings presented here lend some credence to the anecdotal perception.

The charts below show responses to a quantitative follow-up survey on rates, which was sent to all respondents who had provided contact details for follow-up interviews. Of the 53 respondents who completed this questionnaire, 19 specialise in translating literary texts (literary fiction, genre fiction, poetry, children's books), none of them exclusively. As the figures presented below indicate, respondents to this follow-up survey were found less likely to have raised, and more likely to have lowered, their rates for publishing houses than for agency or direct clients in the last two years.

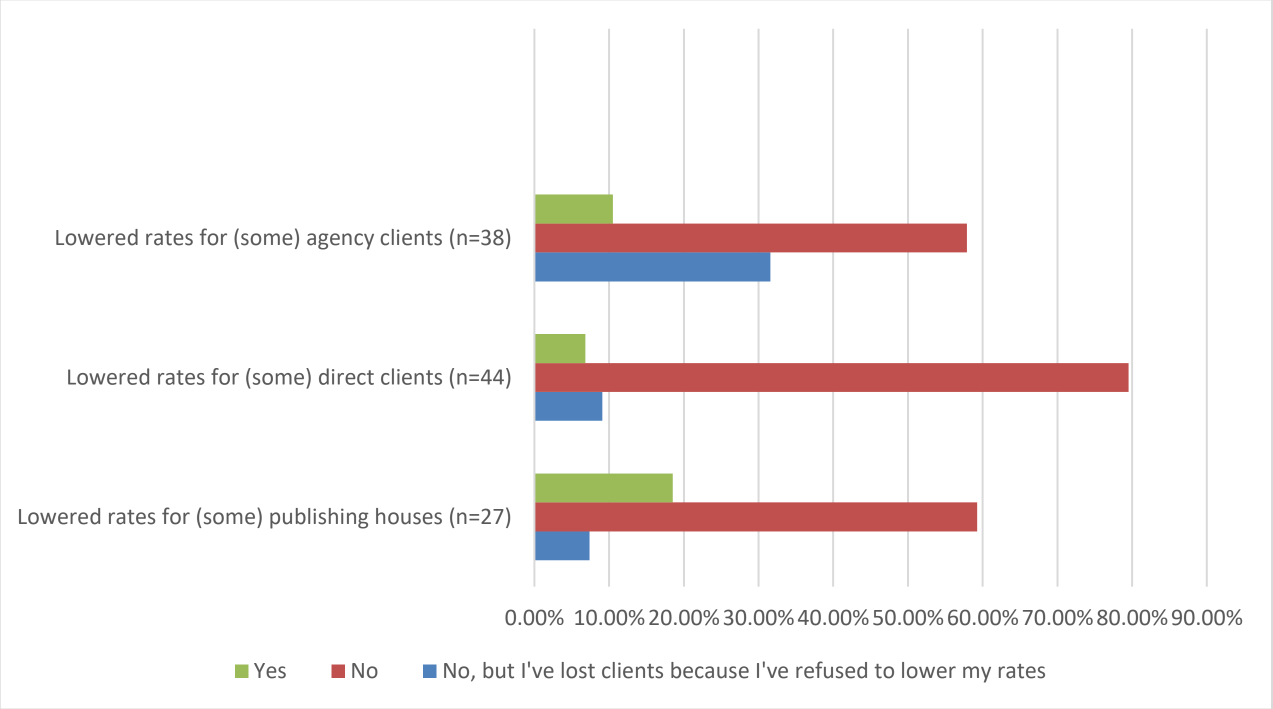
Figure 3.iv.a. Responses to the follow-up survey question: *Have you been able to raise your translation rates over the past two years?* (Each n represents the subset of all respondents who answered the respective question and did not tick the option *Not applicable – I don't work for [agency clients, direct/private clients, publishing houses]*)



Free-text responses that refer to literary translation
First contract with publishing house in the last 2 years
Have only just started working with publishers this year so do not know yet
I have done one job for a publishing house and am looking for my second one.
I haven't tried to raise them.
I have raised my rates as the TA "observed" rate went up. My direct clients tend

to find this a useful and reassuring benchmark. I haven't raised my euro rate; however, as the pound has fallen against the euro since Brexit, my rate has in fact risen since 2016. Before that it had fallen quite a lot, since I haven't changed my euro rate for at least 5 years.

Figure 3.iv.b. Responses to the follow-up survey question: *Have you had to lower your translation rates over the past two years?* (Each n represents the subset of all respondents who answered the respective question and did not tick the option *Not applicable – I don't work for [agency clients, direct/private clients, publishing houses]*)



Free-text responses that refer to literary translation
It varies. I have taken a lower rate for a publisher where I wanted to do the job and it was clear that the rate was non-negotiable. In other cases, interesting publishing jobs have walked off into the sunset because I've refused to meet their rate.

Additional comments by respondents who specialise in literary translation
I haven't actually lost any clients, but I think I quite often don't get new ones because they think they can get the same job for less. They don't usually say this, but occasionally they do. One, I remember, told me they'd gone for a translator who was "substantially cheaper". I resisted the urge to email them back saying "Best of luck!" Who knows, the cheaper person might also have been very good.

In the past two or three years I haven't raised my rates for most individual clients (maybe just a couple); it's been more a question of quoting higher when I begin working with new ones - for my bread-and-butter art jobs, at least. I lose jobs all the time because of rates, or assume because of rates, because when someone never writes back after a quote that's usually the reason. And in general, I can afford to stick to my guns with art and history jobs because I've always had a steady flow of work. I quote much lower for literary - if it's the author paying out-of-pocket, as often happens with IT>EN publishing proposals and so on, I have a minimum that's about two-thirds my normal art job rate. At the moment, I don't have all that many literary job offers for texts I'm really interested in translating, so when one comes along I'm more than willing to lower my rate to some degree. But I am a little concerned about how I'll get by on rates like that if I manage to get to the point where I'm spending as much time on fiction and poetry as I'd like to spend. Coming from the world of semi-technical translation, in a language pair where there are few enough professionals that steady work is almost guaranteed if you're reasonably good at your job, I've never been reluctant to shoot high-ish: actually, when bargaining I've often felt like I had a responsibility to my IT>EN peers to keep us all from being dragged down to the kind of rates I see for EN>IT, which is a completely different market. But with literature I fret a lot more, because it's not as if the authors or publishers are usually making a killing, either. It's all a tricky balance of finding the rate that will allow you to devote the time it takes to do a good job - I'm slow, and seem to get slower year by year - but that the client will actually be able to afford.
I received a 10% "bonus" on one specific project, but otherwise my rates have not kept up with inflation/CPI.
I set my rate according to my own interest in the project and what seems fair under the specific circumstances, but I have rarely received what would be considered even legal wages for effort in any other industry, and I have been taken advantage of so many times that I am now refusing almost all commissions.

As will be shown in chapter 6 on definitions of professional identity, survey respondents who specialise in literary translation – either exclusively or among other domains – express a weaker focus on the "instrumental" model of translation as service provision, and a stronger sense of more empowering and creative definitions of their professional identity as *word artists*, *intercultural mediators* and *language experts*. Compared to the overall survey population and to the subset of legal translators, respondents who specialise in literary translation feel less stressed and less satisfied with their current remuneration, as the figures presented in table 3.07 below show. Compared to the overall survey population and the other subsets tested, respondents who exclusively translated literature report the lowest stress levels and greatest satisfaction with their current workload combined with low levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration. (However, it is worth noting that literary translators are overrepresented in the cluster of *least content* respondents examined in section 4.7 below.)

Table 3.07. Mean average levels of satisfaction with current remuneration, mean average stress levels and satisfaction with current workload filtered by gender identification and (literary/legal) specialisation.

	Overall mean average (on a scale of 0 to 10)	Respondents who specialise in literary translation/ exclusively translate literature	Respondents who specialise in legal translation
Satisfaction with current rates/	6.0	5.21/5.07	6.42
current salary as in-house translators	5.21	3.85/4.6	5.0
Stress levels	5.13	5.09/4.62	5.32
Proportion of respondents satisfied with their current workload	37.2%	32.96%/41.37%	38.46%

Table 3.08. Additional free-text comments on satisfaction with current remuneration from respondents who specialise in literary translation filtered by satisfaction score (out of 10). Comments by respondents who exclusively translate literary texts are highlighted in blue.

1	For most projects, the financial compensation is exploitative.
	The fares are not suitable.
2	My individual clients pay the industry-recommended rates for my translation language pair, which I feel are on the low side for the amount of time and energy involved, but have reconciled myself with for now. Many of the prestigious literary journals pay well below this and well after submission (sometimes up to a year), which I find immensely frustrating.
	I'm getting the "going rate", but the "going rate" for translation (especially literary translation) is very poor--or I am very slow! My mean average hourly earnings often works out at the equivalent of minimum wage, and that's without factoring any admin time in.

	book publishers=catastrophe, courtyards=really not much, translation agencies=usually not much, private companies= so so
	I'd love to make more money, and don't feel I make very much given how hard I work and my level of skill. However, I am stuck in a market and I am also not very good at making myself visible. I'm not the highest paid translator in my fields, but my rates are also far from rock bottom, so in that regard I am doing okay. It's just that translation isn't very well paid – particularly the kind I do – and I have never put enough effort into the business side, which has been my choice to some extent, and one I can live with.
3	The rate I'm getting at the moment is good compared with mean average rates, but it's the trickiest book you could imagine so I'm putting in far more hours than I'd normally expect to.
	[…] I am very unhappy (1) with the rates paid by literary publishers, but since I also work for journals and other clients who pay a lot better, I have selected 3, since you asked for an "overall" score. [translated from German]
	When it comes to literary translation, the rate that most publishing houses pay is not enough to be called a living wage--at least not for me, living in New York City. When I do literary translation for private individuals, I can usually charge a rate that is significantly higher, if still not what I would consider a living wage.
	The large companies are currently publishing a lot of E-books, and they are trying to reduce costs, but no matter where a translated book appears it still takes the same amount of time to translate.
4	Translators in my country are paid extremely badly; the best one can get for English-Czech translation (fiction) is 6,7 EUR per 1800 key strokes, which is rather rare. Most often it's around 6 EUR. I am only lucky because I mostly translate from Japanese, where the rate is circa 10 EUR for 1800 key strokes (fiction and comics), but it is also not enough, given that the language is very demanding.
	I can't get enough work, and what I find is never paid what it "should" be paid, and never in a timely manner either. Having to wait 3 months to get paid (or worse) and needing to send invoices over and over and beg for what is owed to me is exhausting and makes me very anxious (which not finding enough work is already also doing).
	The fees for literary translation are generally very low in the Czech Republic, especially when compared with other European countries. It's a long-lasting problem. When compared with the mean average in the Czech Republic, I'm doing extremely well, because I translate for one of the first-rate publishing house here. However, I still think everybody here (including me) should be paid better for literary translation.
5	In Australia we would have to charge more than currently to make a living, but raising our rates would lock us out of the global market. Colleagues living in other parts of the world can make a living for less $/day, hence global rates are lower. The Australian market is tiny, so we need to be active globally to have the volume of work required for full-time earning capacity.
	In Canada literary translation rates are fixed by granting agencies. It's enough for a first and maybe second draft but not all the other work surrounding it.
	I usually ask for and receive so-called standard rates; the money goes farther because I live abroad
6	I feel that the fact work is coming in very regularly or that incoming job inquiries frequently must be rejected means that the translator is operating under his or her market value: Time should be invested in

	building new clients at slightly higher rates and dropping the least desirable existing clients until an equilibrium where the translator isn't necessarily working at the maximum number of words he or she would be able to physically manage in a week.
	I make a decent living, but this is because I do a lot of work. Would like to shift to doing less work for a better rate.
7	I constantly fear that the page rate will get even lower than it already is. Companies don't value good translations, unfortunately.
	I'm very happy with my "commercial" rate, which is roughly double what I get for literary translation as an advance or fee before royalties.
	It varies. I am well paid by publishers in terms of the observed TA rate, but it is still very low. I compensate by taking on much more highly paid commercial work.
	My rate is linked to the TA observed rate of GBP95 per 1000 words – which is what most of my UK-based colleagues charge. However, I am paid locally (in Norwegian kroner). Since the pound has fallen drastically against the kroner since the UK referendum, I have experienced a fall in my per-word rate in real terms. Although I attempted to negotiate a NOK rate change to reflect this, I found my clients very reluctant, and was forced to accept that I would simply have to take the hit or lose work.
	I think there is still room for improvement
	I am currently translating two books for my husband's newly started publishing company. When the books are sold, we have an agreement that I can send him an invoice, but until the books appear on the market I cannot send those invoices. So I am looking forward to being able to send a decent invoice to a decent company. The only reason I do not write 9, is because I know it will not be possible until at the earliest in March 2018, and more likely August
8	I think translators in general should be paid more, but within my language pair and specializations I'm regularly earning medium-to-high rates and don't feel I can complain too much (I just wish my rates for literature could be more like my rates for art criticism). I'm a person with pretty modest needs and for a number of years was also able to support my partner on my income, so by my standards I'm doing ok.
	Mostly, I get good rates these days. However, I'd like to do more literary translation (which pays much less than my other work) and can't really afford to make the switch.
	Usually get TA rate as standard, which is fine but I do obviously have the supplement of my full-time job
9	I never accept work that does not pay handsomely.
	There is room for improvement, but I am regularly paid £0.09-0.10 per word, which works out as around £12000 for a 450-page book, which is 6 months work. Ideally, I would be charging £0.12 per word and easily making £30k pro rata (i.e. less, but for part-time hours) but I am not quite there yet.

A 2008 report by the Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires (CEATL) on the "Comparative income of literary translators in Europe" (Fock et al. 2008: 7) found that in 13 out of the 23 European countries/regions surveyed, the majority of literary translators “earn their living mainly from professional activities other than literary translation (technical translation, teaching or other)”:

> In 8 countries/regions [literary translators who work full time on literary translation and who earn their living mainly from literary translation] are rare (less than 10% of all active [literary] translators), if they exist at all: Basque Country, Belgium (Fr.), Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia, Switzerland, United Kingdom (ibid.)

In my own survey, 21 out of a total of 292 respondents list literary translation as their only primary source of income, although two of them qualify their responses in free-text comments:

> But I am currently not earning much, after having been on maternity leave, and the company I had done two books for, closed down.
>
> […] when I did make a living [after 2 to 5 years], I got a lousy pay, but had a lot of work, I finally had a good company I worked for, who paid a decent living wage, nothing incredible, put decent and better than “dole”, then I took maternity leave and when I returned, the company I had worked for with the okay salary had been taken over, and the next time the larger company offered me a translation the pay would equal something less than the Danish equivalent of “the dole”. This last year I have translated two books and am in the process of self-publishing those books. But it would have been impossible if I had not been a “kept” translator/woman. Hubby has picked up all the tabs, all the way through 2017.
>
> [Female respondent, Denmark
>
> Masters degree in English with Rhetoric as an elected module, “with as many elective [literature] classes as possible”, from a Danish university, graduated before 2007
>
> Literary and genre fiction (“mostly science fiction, fantasy and romance”)]

> We lived and still live primarily on my husband’s salary. I don’t really know whether I would be able to support myself.

> [Female respondent, Denmark
> MA in Comparative Literature, graduated before 2007
> Genre fiction]

Another three respondents in this subset state that they *still can't make a living from professional translation or interpreting*.

While none of this may come as much of a surprise to those involved in training and mentoring literary translators, these findings underscore the gravity and urgency of the situation. With regard to the difficulty of making a living from literary translation, they are also consistent with the conclusions of the CEATL report, which collected data from member organisations to present an array of figures and facts relating to the current working conditions for literary translators in different markets across Europe and found that

> literary translators cannot survive in the conditions imposed on them by "the market". This is a serious social problem on a continent that is meant to be developed, multilingual and multicultural, but it is also and most importantly a very serious artistic and cultural problem. Indeed, what does it say about the quality of literary exchange between our societies if literary translators are forced to dash off their work just to be able to earn a basic living? (Fock et al. 2008: 71)

Specifically:

> Looking at gross income we can see that literary translators earn much less than workers in the manufacturing and services sector. Those working for the lowest rates earn at best two thirds (and in nine countries not even 40%) of what an industrial worker earns; and in six countries, even those working for the maximum rate do not earn more than two thirds of the mean average gross income in the manufacturing and services sector.
> […]
> In Italy, the situation is disastrous. In Greece, Germany, Finland, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland, the material situation of

> translators is critical and professional literary translators are virtually on the breadline. (ibid.: 69)

In a more recent survey of its own members, the professional association of literary translators in Germany (VdÜ) found that rates paid for literary translation dropped by over 16 per cent in real terms between 2001 and 2016 to a mean average rate of €18.65 per standard page (1,500 characters including spaces).[32] According to the CEATL report (Fock et al. 2008: 63-65), the mean average gross annual income earned by a full-time literary translator in Germany at the time of publication was 18,200 euros, less than half the mean average annual pre-tax wage of 41,694 euros in the manufacturing and service sector.

Across Europe, gross annual incomes for full-time literary translators were highest in the UK and Ireland at 30,750/28,725 euros respectively – although the report claims that these figures are "meaningless because there are no professional literary translators in these countries, or virtually none" (ibid.: 70) – followed by Norway and Sweden at 28,140/25,880 euros respectively, and lowest in Slovakia and the Czech Republic at 6,825/4,425 euros respectively (compared to mean average annual wages of 7,040/8,284 euros before taxes in the manufacturing and service sector). Conversely, the two latter countries are singled out in the report as the "real 'European champions' of literary translation [...] with a proportion of 80% [of all new works published] in fiction" (ibid.: 68).

The 16 respondents to my own survey who earn a living from full-time literary translation, and would thus qualify as "professional literary translators" according to the criteria defined in the CEATL report,[33] are currently based in the following countries: Czech Republic (3), Germany (3), United Kingdom (2), France (2), Switzerland (2), Belgium, Hong Kong, Slovakia and the United States. (The remaining 71 respondents who specialise in literary translation derive a part of their income from translation work in other specialist domains and/or other sources including academic teaching/research, editing and pensions.)

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[32] https://literaturuebersetzer.de/berufspraktisches/umfragen-studien/, last retrieved 23 October 2018.

This is not at all to argue that aspiring translators ought to be discouraged from specialising in fields that are less likely to provide a sustainable livelihood. What it does show, I would argue, is that new translators wishing to specialise in these domains – specifically, in literary translation – are likely to need extra support during the transition period, including support from publishers, who after all have a stake in ensuring that future generations of talented literary translators are able to thrive. The extent to which they can also benefit from diversifying into more lucrative domains is unclear from these findings and may merit further investigation.

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[33] As defined for the purposes of the CEATL survey report,

> [t]he notion of "professional literary translator" applies to all **literary translators who work full time on literary translation** and who earn their living mainly from literary translation and occasionally from translation-related literary activities (lectures and talks, readings, book publishing, literary criticism, etc.). The notion of "active literary translator" applies to all **literary translators who publish at least one literary translation every two to three years**, but who earn their living mainly from professional activities other than literary translation (technical translation, teaching or other).
>
> (Fock et al. 2008: 7; bold highlighting in original)

The awareness that these issues are not unique to literary translation, but are widespread across the creative professions, does not make them any less urgent or any easier to resolve. In this context, it is also worth noting that literary translation is generally regarded as one of the few domains that are comparatively immune to the threat of automation (cf. Large 2019). There is, then, the spectre of a worst-case scenario that – beyond a shrinking premium segment of transcreation and high-end bilingual copywriting largely occupied by established professionals with long-term relationships to existing clients, where any new work is typically commissioned by referral or recommendation – would offer emerging translators a choice between poorly paid but creative and interesting work in literary translation and the increasingly "massified" (Gouadec 2007) and "Uberized" (Kronenberg 2016/2) post-editing market.

Chapter 4

Perceptions of Current Working Conditions

4.1. Key Findings

Survey questions 12 to 16 and 19 to 22 were designed to elicit information on respondents' current workload, satisfaction with their working conditions and enjoyment of their work:

Q12. *If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply.*

Looking back over the last 6 months, how many different clients have you regularly worked for?

Looking back over the last 6 months, where did you get your work from?

Q13. *How many hours a week do you typically spend on professional translation work (including related activities such as proofreading/editing or transcreation, but not marketing, invoicing and other admin work)?*

How many hours a week do you typically spend on marketing, invoicing and other admin tasks relating to your work as professional translator?

Q14. *Are you happy with your current workload, or would you prefer to work more/less? Please select the answer that most closely reflects your personal experience at this stage of your career, and/or use the text box below to comment.*

Q15. *As a freelance translator, how happy are you (overall) with the rates you are currently getting paid for your translation work?*

As an in-house translator, how happy are you with the salary you are currently getting paid for your translation work?

Q16. *When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which of the* *following factors tend to be most important to you? Please select up to three answers and feel free to use the text box to comment.*

Q19. *The translator and Translation Studies scholar Douglas Robinson describes flow as "the subliminal state in which translation is fastest, most reliable and most enjoyable – so enjoyable that it can become addictive, like painting, novel-writing or other forms of creative expression". Do you ever experience this state when translating?*

Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?*

Q21. *If you could name one aspect that you find most unpleasant about working as a professional translator, what would it be?*

Q22. *On a scale from 0 to 10, how stressful do you find your job as a professional translator?*

Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find most stressful?

Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find least stressful?

As will be shown in chapter 6 on professional identity, almost 60 per cent of survey respondents define themselves as *service providers*. Despite this, the responses presented in this current chapter, which are discussed in detail in the following sections, indicate that many perceive their work as translators – described as "the work itself", "the actual work" or "the work as such" in a number of responses – as separate from, and less stressful than, their work as providers of translation services. This distinction, which is explicit in some responses and implicit in many others, appears to point beyond the simple difference between billable and non-billable work towards the (a)synchronous passing of "mnemonic" and "instantaneous time" (Cronin: loc. cit., cf. discussion in chapter 2): the *different speeds* of deep engagement with a translation and efficient project delivery referred to in the title of this thesis. Responses to Q19 about the frequency with which respondents experience the "flow" state (Robinson 2012: 203-204, see section 2.4 above) provide at least a partial explanation for many respondents' passionate attachment to *craft*, as opposed to *trade*, aspects of their professional practice.

Administrative tasks, which the majority (56.8%) of respondents estimate take up less than five hours of their weekly working time, constitute a source of stress or annoyance for some – "would love to have a secretary handle them!", as one respondent says. Others do not mind them ("boring but not that stressful," as one respondent puts it) or consider them a "necessary evil" or "a small part [that] has to be done to keep the business running" and is preferable to the stresses of in-house employment, while several respondents invest in software solutions or support from professional experts to manage "stressing and least enjoyable tasks (IT, accounting, etc.)".

Client interactions constitute another aspect of professional practice that many respondents experience as extrinsic to, and sometimes disruptive of, "the work itself". Several respondents single out "discussing jobs with clients", "[c]ommunication with clients", "working with my usual long-standing customers on any projects they have for me", "[h]aving a pool of a few loyal, regular clients who keep me (almost) constantly busy", "[t]hanking clients for their payment" and "[g]etting positive feedback from appreciative clients" as the least stressful aspect of their professional practice. Others report less positive experiences with clients or editors they describe as "difficult", "unreasonable", "completely oblivious", "unprofessional", "argumentative", "inattentive" or "thoughtless".

Overall, the "love" or "passion" many respondents profess for "translating itself" does not extend to the market environment that enables them to earn their living from that passion. Time pressure emerges as a constant and near-ubiquitous issue that dominates many respondents' experience of their professional practice and is inextricably linked to concerns about remuneration, work/life balance and the standard of quality respondents feel able to deliver under these conditions.

Specifically, responses to the questions in this section show that

- deadlines are an overwhelming concern for a substantial number of respondents;
- with 87.7 per cent of all survey respondents selecting *Self-employment as a translator* as a primary income source, the unpredictability of demand for their work from one day to the next ("feast or famine") – which can make it difficult for self-employed professionals to feel sufficiently in control of their time to plan in advance, take time off etc. – emerges as another important issue;
- while 37.2 per cent of all survey respondents are satisfied with their current workload, the majority would prefer to work more (31.4%) or less (24.9%), with respondents who say they would like to work less but cannot afford to reduce their workload reporting higher mean average stress levels than respondents in any of the other relevant subsets;
- somewhat surprisingly, respondents who regularly work for a higher

number of clients were found more likely to report lower stress levels and higher levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration and workload than respondents with fewer regular clients;

- there is a statistical nexus linking lower reported stress levels, higher levels of satisfaction with current rates/salary and satisfaction with current workload, on the one hand, and higher reported stress levels, lower levels of satisfaction with current rates/salary and feeling overworked but unable to cut down for financial reasons, on the other hand;
- an overwhelming majority of respondents report that they experience the flow state *sometimes* (72.3%) or *all the time* (10%) when translating;
- gender identification was found to have a more substantial statistical impact on time/workload management than any other metrics tested in the course of this research.

Specifically, respondents identifying as male were found to be less likely (by a margin of 11.2 percentage points) to be satisfied with their current workload than respondents who identify as female, and two and a half times as likely to report typical workloads of over 40 hours a week. They are also less likely, by a margin of almost ten percentage points, to work between 20 and 30 hours, which a number of respondents specify as an ideal workload to aim for; and less likely, by a margin of almost five percentage points, to report workloads of 30 to 40 hours, which are statistically correlated with lower stress levels and greater satisfaction. Although none of them use the term, several (male) respondents describe behaviour that might be classed as workaholic according to the definition provided by the

OED: "A person to whom work is extremely or excessively important, esp. one who voluntarily works very long hours; a person addicted to working." (cf. Killinger 1991, Robinson 2014)

Conversely, respondents who identify as female were found almost twice as likely to say that they were unable to take on more translation work *due to external circumstances*, which suggests they more frequently take on other responsibilities such as childcare or other family commitments in addition to their professional careers.

Gender identification was also found to have an impact on the relative importance respondents ascribe to specific factors (competence, project size and relationship to client) when deciding whether to accept a translation request. Across all subsets tested, *Timescales/deadline* was found to be the most important priority, followed by *Payment – Good rates* in the majority of subsets tested.

4.2. Time/Workload Management

Time management is an important consideration in an industry where deadlines tend to be tight and lead-in times short to non-existent. This is not an isolated factor; it is inextricably linked to other key concerns that shape respondents' experiences of and attitudes towards their working conditions. "I often feel that my best 'time management' strategy is to charge high enough rates that I don't have to work crazy hours in order to meet my deadlines," as one of them explains, adding:

> I do think that a significant source of stress for a lot of translators is that they charge such low rates that they have to work too many hours in order to earn their target income. I definitely have students in my classes who have to *translate* more than 40 hours a week in order to reach their target income,

> so non-billable time goes on top of that. To me, that is way too much and a prescription for burnout.
>
> [*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on time management, for which no background information was collected*]

A similar concern is expressed in the following comment in response to Q15 about satisfaction with current remuneration:

> I make a decent living, but this is because I do a lot of work. Would like to shift to doing less work for a better rate.
>
> [Male respondent, UK
>
> T&I-related MSc from a UK university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, architecture/design, automotive, academic articles, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction]

"Better pay (as I would feel less rushed)", another respondent says in answer to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?* Topping another respondent's wish list are "[h]igher rates and longer deadlines, so I can concentrate on the work and pay it as much attention as it deserves". Similarly, another respondent argues that

> […] charging higher rates will […] [e]nable me to devote the time I need to each translation project to ensure the quality I can be really proud of. Low rates sometimes means rushing and doing a job you can't take as much pride in...
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> BA in German and English, CIoL Diploma in Translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Business, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive sectors]

Others feel that time pressure has an adverse effect on the quality they are able to deliver. These concerns are particularly prevalent among recent graduates, as responses to Q21 about the *most unpleasant* aspect of their professional practice show:

> Not having enough time to do a really good job on every translation
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

> having to lower my standards of quality in order to get more work done
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> T&I-related MA from a Czech university, graduated after 2012
> Employed as an in-house translator
> Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, sports, arts]

> Having to work to very tight deadlines and feeling I could have done better given more time.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Academic articles, business, engineering, automotive, institutional/political]

> Higher rates and longer deadlines, so I can concentrate on the work and pay it as much attention as it deserves.
>
> [Male respondent, Slovakia
> T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Legal, marketing/advertising]

(However, as one respondent points out:

> Most clients seem to accept that quality is sacrificed at the expense of a quick turnaround.
>
> [*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on time management, for which no background information was collected*])

As in other issues relating to their working conditions, individual respondents set different priorities, as the following two comments show. A “steady flow of projects” is a source of comfort for the first respondent and a sign “that the translator is operating under his or her market value” for the second:

> […] I do however believe that slightly lower (but decent) rates are more than acceptable if there is a steady flow of projects, which has been the case for me.
>
> [Male respondent, Luxembourg
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts]

> I feel that the fact work is coming in very regularly or that incoming job inquiries frequently must be rejected means that the translator is operating under his or her market value: Time should be invested in building new clients at slightly higher rates and dropping the least desirable existing clients until an equilibrium where the translator isn't necessarily working at the maximum number of words he or she would be able to physically manage in a week.
>
> [Male respondent, Japan
> BA in Japanese, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces and marketing/advertising sectors, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

In answer to Q16, 85.1 per cent of all respondents list *Timescales/Deadline* among the three most important factors in deciding whether to accept or turn down a translation project (followed by *Payment – Good Rates* [68%] and *Whether I feel competent to take the job* [60.9%] in second and third places).

Fewer than half of respondents (44.1%) list *interest in the text and/or subject matter* among their top three priorities. (Even a respondent who in answer to another question says, "I never take on material I dislike" does not list *Whether the text/subject matter interests me* among her top three priorities.) This figure is higher for earlier cohorts of respondents with a translation- or interpreting related degree who graduated before 2012, and substantially lower for the subset of most recent graduates of translation- or interpreting-related degrees. Conversely, respondents in the subset of most recent graduates are more likely than earlier cohorts to prioritise *feeling competent to take the job.* Taken together, these findings suggest a progression from the initial struggle for economic survival to a subsequent shift towards greater emphasis on sustainable satisfaction and enjoyment that affords a greater number of respondents the financial security and confidence in their own abilities to prioritise *interest in the text/subject matter* over, or at least among, other considerations.

The proportion of respondents who list *interest in the text and/or subject matter* among their top three priorities is substantially higher for the subset of respondents specialising in literary translation, where this factor takes precedence over *feeling competent to take the job* and – for respondents specialising exclusively in literary translation – over *good rates*.

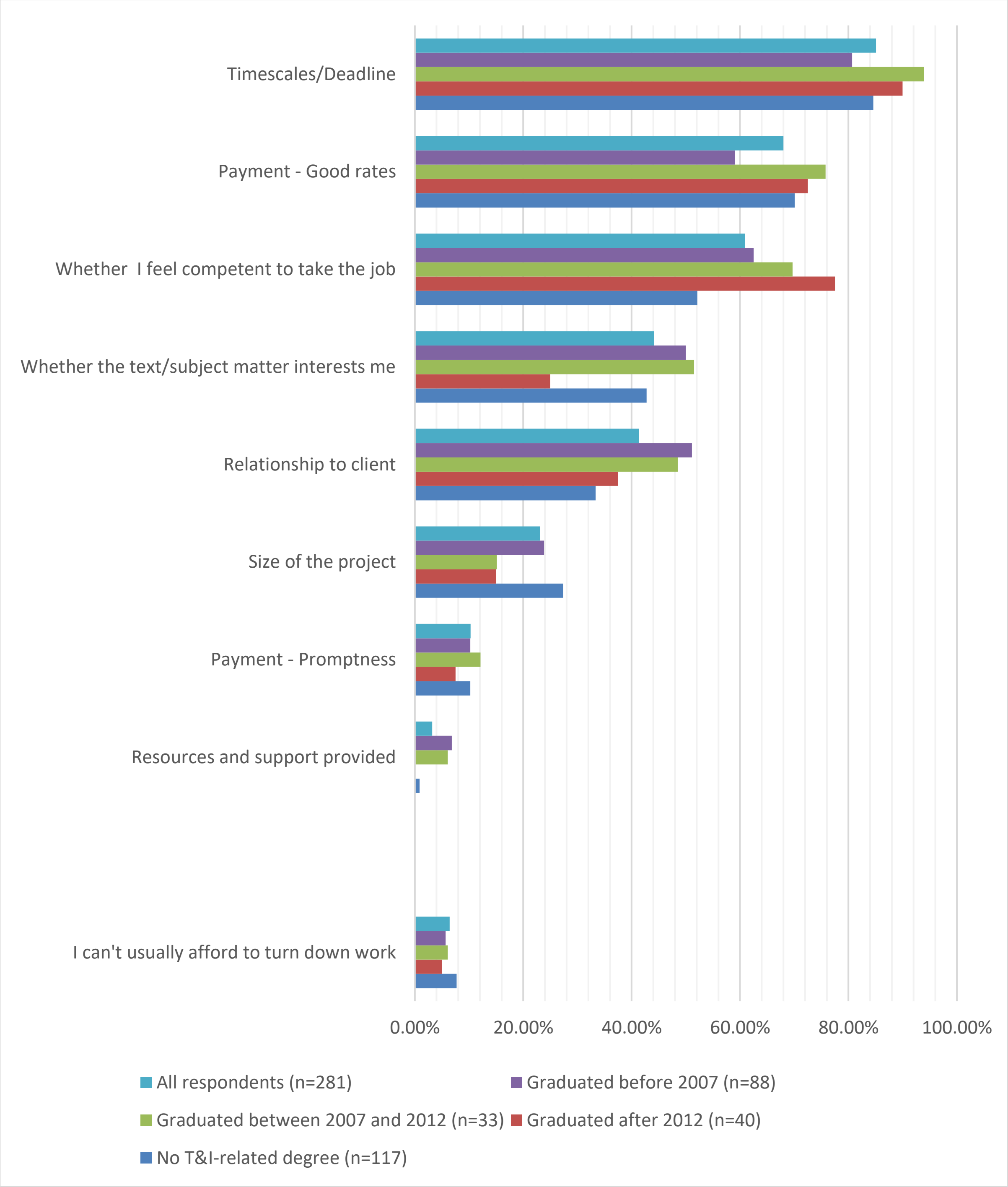
The findings show some variation in percentage values: out of the different subsets tested, respondents who graduated between 2007 and 2012 were found most likely (93.93%) to list *Timescales/Deadline* among their three top priorities, while respondents who specialise exclusively in literary translation were least likely (75.86%). This factor remains a priority for respondents at different stages of their careers, as the correlation with year of graduation in figure 4.i.a indicates, and independent of gender identification and (literary/legal) specialisation, as the correlated findings presented in figures 4.i.b and 4.i.c show. (The findings also show that academic background, gender identification and specialisation all have a marked statistical impact on the relative priority of other factors. Specifically,

- *Whether I feel competent to take the job* was found to matter more to the subset of most recent graduates than any other subset tested

[77.5%], as discussed above, and substantially less to respondents with no translation- or interpreting-related degree [52.13%].

- Gender identification was found to have an impact on the importance of *feeling competent* [65.07% for female v. 46.15% for male respondents], *Size of the project* [20.09% v. 30.76%] and *Relationship to client* [40.19% v. 44.61%].
- The most pronounced differences between respondents who specialise in literary and legal translation emerged in the relative priority they ascribe to *interest in the subject matter* [59.78%/65.51% for literary v. 30.76% for legal translators], *feeling competent* [45.65%/41.37% v. 66.15%] and *good rates* [59.78%/62.06% v.70.76%].)

Figure 4.i.a. Responses to Q16. *When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which of the following factors tend to be most important to you? Please select up to three answers and feel free to use the text box to comment* filtered by respondents' year of graduation.



Other:	Respondents who graduated before 2007 (n=88)	Respondents who graduated 2007-2012 (n=33)	Respondents who graduated after 2012 (n=40)	Respondents with no T&I-related degree (n=117)
I would have written that I cannot afford to turn down jobs, but with Hubby's consent I turned down a lousy deal, that	1			

would have undermined the pay for all translators in Denmark... Unfortunately someone else, I actually know online took that same job!				
I can only turn down a job if I have no capacity or if the work is not related to my field of expertise	1			
Whether I'm expected to work in an inconvenient online tool such as Across or Memsource				1
Ethical motives: I wish to contribute as little as possible to the terrifying damages of global capitalism so I work almost exclusively for non-profit organizations, festivals etc.				1
I can use the tools I want				1

Figure 4.i.b. Responses to Q16. *When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which of the following factors tend to be most important to you? Please select up to three answers and feel free to use the text box to comment* filtered by respondents' gender identification.

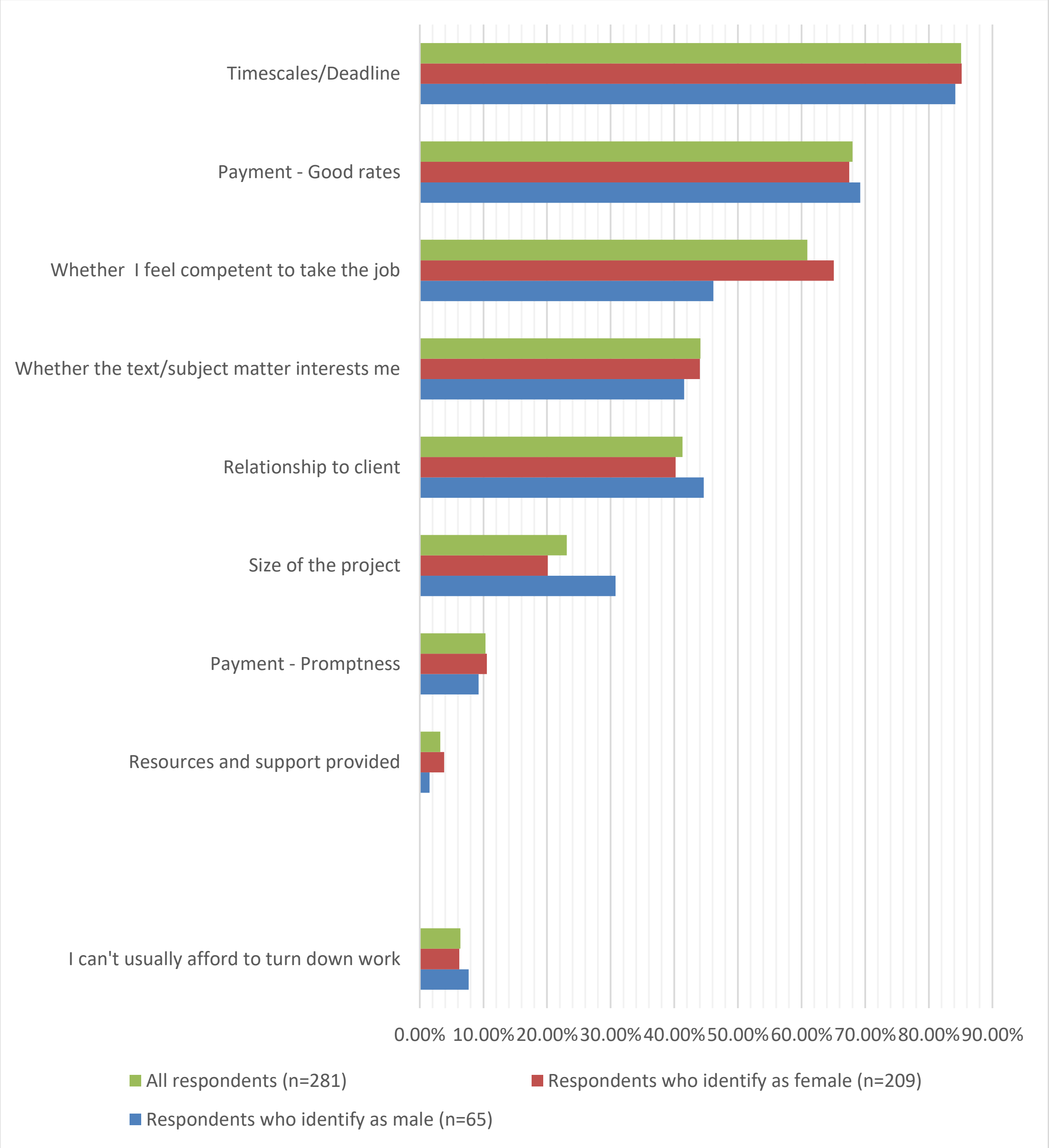
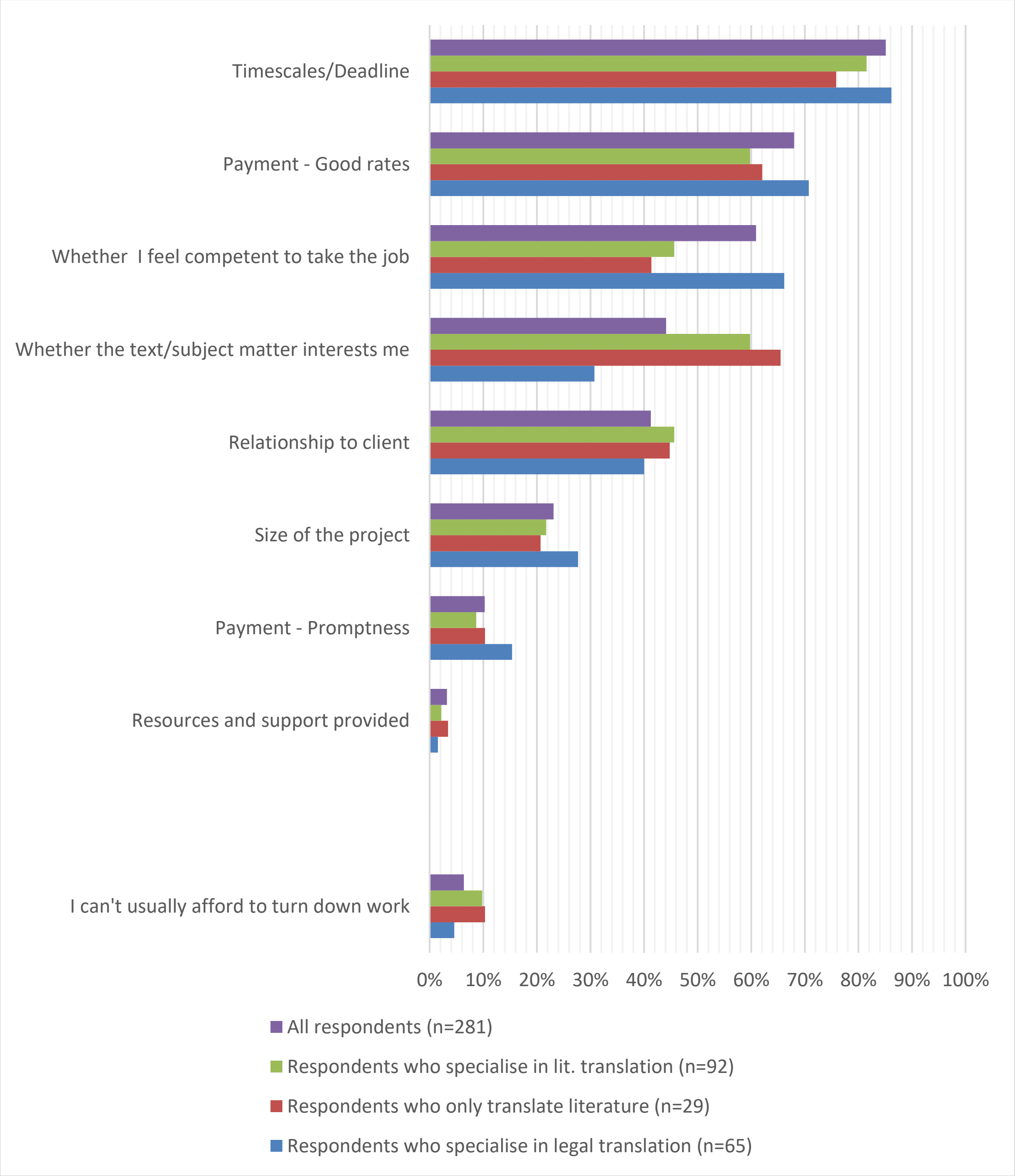


Figure 4.i.c. Responses to Q16. *When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which of the following factors tend to be most important to you? Please select up to three answers and feel free to use the text box to comment* filtered by respondents' specialist domains (legal and literary translation).



Throughout the survey, the near-constant pressure of deadlines, which is the pressure of "the instantaneous time of globalization" (Cronin 2003: 71), emerges as a key concern for professional practitioners. Deadlines are mentioned 167 times in comments and free-text responses to other questions, often in conjunction with adjectives like "tight" or "unrealistic", most frequently in response to questions 20 to 22 about the *most unpleasant* and *most stressful* aspects of working as a professional translator:

- 15 times in response to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?*
- 22 times in response to Q21. *If you could name one aspect that you find most unpleasant about working as a professional translator, what would it be?*
- 98 times in response to Q22. *Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find most stressful?*

For one respondent, this takes on such overwhelming importance that he finds himself

> […] always thinking about deadlines, and I don't really get to go home at the end of the day. Even when I've met my goals for the day, I'm still thinking about when projects are due, etc. almost constantly.
>
> [Male respondent, Japan
> Degree in creative writing
> "[W]ork[s] primarily as a translator but still teach[es] a few ESL classes on the side" and occasionally works as an interpreter
> Legal, IT/user interfaces, academic articles, video games/entertainment]

At first glance, this may seem an unsurprising result. Deadlines are, after all, stressful by design. Although not usually life-or-death emergencies as the term might suggest,[34] they are intended to put time pressure on upstream suppliers in order to instil in them a sense of urgency that may be warranted by external factors (e.g. a set publication date, scheduling of editing and/or other subsequent workflows, a specific time-bound event for which the translation is needed) but can also be completely arbitrary (e.g. the Friday end-of-business deadline that has the translator working frantically all day to deliver on time, only to receive a cheery automated *Have a great weekend! – I'm out of the office until next Wednesday and won't be checking my e-mails* in response). A deadline marks the precise point in time at which time runs out; where "mnemonic time" (Cronin 2003: 71; see chapter 2 above) – the translator's internal knowledge of translation as a process that takes as long as it takes and, in a sense, always remains provisional and uncompleted – runs up against "instantaneous time" (ibid.), in which the client expects to receive a finished product. Multiple deadlines in the course of a day multiply these effects and amplify the feeling of working constantly under pressure. This stress can be a positive, even pleasurable experience when it is linked to a sense of professional accomplishment and pride in successfully completing a task.

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[34] The OED dates the term back to an entry in the 1860 edition of Chambers's Encyclopedia, where it is used to mean "a line that does not move or run", with other early uses listed as the "do-not-cross" line in American Civil War prisons, "beyond which a prisoner is liable to be shot down" (1864), and the "guide-line marked on the bed of a printing-press" in American newspaper jargon (1917). According to the

There is also a notable difference between working towards a long-term deadline for a large project (a book-length commission, for example) that requires advance planning, stamina, pacing and self-discipline, on the one hand, and the relentless time pressure of racing towards one short-term deadline after another on a weekly or even daily basis, on the other hand. Both can become quite toxic if an inexperienced or over-ambitious translator fails to schedule enough downtime away from the computer, and over the course of a long-term project this effect can either multiply or be mitigated.

OED, "deadline" was first used in the contemporary sense in 1920.

In an effort to sustain short-term cash-flow while working on a more substantial project that may not generate any income until well after completion, self-employment often entails a combination of both types of work. Freelance translators, then, need to develop strategies to cope with the different pressures involved, as several survey respondents acknowledge in answer to Q22 on the most stressful aspect(s) of working as a professional translator:

> Constant short deadlines coming in on top of longer-term literary work.
>
> [Respondent based in France
> Research-based MPhil in poetry translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> I am bad at keeping deadlines on long-term projects. Short-term projects are fine, but on the really long ones, they tend to slide.
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, arts, academic articles, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, film subtitling and film script translation]

While it may reasonably be argued that a translator's workload management is his or her own – not the client's – responsibility, it is connected to other factors that affect clients more directly. Specifically, translation quality may suffer as a consequence of translating too many words in too little time; as Cronin (2003: 71) has pointed out: "Unrealistic deadlines produce dead lines". This, in turn, is influenced by rates, which determine how much work a translator has to complete within a given period of time in order to make a sustainable living. In this context, the issue of transparency – or rather, the lack of transparency – across the supply chain also needs to be considered.

Other respondents single out the unpredictable and precarious nature and lack of advance planning as one of the problematic (*unpleasant* or *stressful*) aspects of working as professional translators.

> I still feel that I have to accept almost everything to build a network of contacts; and I also tend to feel that I do not work enough and I should be able to reduce my sleep needs etc.
>
> [Respondent based in the Czech Republic
>
> MA in English and American Studies, specialisation English Language and ELT, graduated after 2012
>
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, literary fiction, sports, architecture/design; also works as a copywriter (in Czech) and occasional editor and proofreader]

Conversely, another respondent talks about the “peace of mind” that comes from “[h]aving a pool of a few loyal, regular clients who keep me (almost) constantly busy […]”.

As will be shown in chapter 5 below, almost one in five respondents cite lack of time as a reason for not engaging in theoretical reflection. Although one respondent maintains that “Only translation is time-consuming”, several others use the same term to describe other aspects of their work:

> [...] Time-consuming negotiation process – emailing back and forth.
>
> [Male respondent, UK
>
> T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university
>
> Medical/pharmaceutical]

> I’ve included answering emails in [the 10 to 15 hours per week spent on admin tasks], which is very time-consuming. […]
>
> [Female respondent, Italy
>
> No T&I-related degree

> Academic articles, texts relating to the arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction]

> […] Invoicing, accounts and chasing payments when necessary is time-consuming and boring.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> BA Joint Hons. Russian and French from a UK university and CIOL Dip. Trans., graduated before 2007
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical]

In a similar vein, another respondent reports:

> Administrative tasks always take too much time. It’s particularly exhausting when changing countries and having to start everything anew (i.e. mastering the system, in which ways you never fit the boxes, etc.). […]
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

The time consumed by these tasks is the instantaneous time of translation-as-a-trade, while the mnemonic time of deep engagement with the difficult business of *just translating* passes separately and simultaneously. “It would be lovely to just stop the clock completely for a while!”, as one respondent says. This (a)synchronicity may well be the true source of the pressure many translators feel, often compounded by unpredictable “feast or famine” cycles and the difficulty of any advance, let alone long-term planning, as these comments show:

> You never know when you will have work and when you won’t as there seems to be hardly any long-term planning for translation work on the client side; when there is work, deadlines are often short and you have to juggle multiple projects at the same time.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany

BA in Language, Culture, Translation and MA in Conference Interpreting, both from German universities, graduated after 2012

Divides her time "more or less equally" between freelance translation and interpreting

Business, IT/user interfaces, engineering, automotive]

I am happy with my workload, but I wish that it was less unpredictable – some weeks are extremely busy, and others are very quiet.

[Female respondent, UK

T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012

Combines self-employment as a translator with self-employment as a copy editor and proofreader

Business, marketing/advertising, patents]

Unpredictable workload, usually my best clients seem to synchronize their urgent needs.

[Female respondent, France

T&I-related MA equivalent from a French university, graduated before 2007

Business, academic articles, engineering, arts, non-fiction books, industry, science]

The unpredictability of jobs. Sometimes a day cannot have enough hours, sometimes it's "All Quiet on the Western Front".

[Male respondent, Germany

T&I-related diploma from a German university, graduated before 2007

Legal, business, marketing/advertising, automotive, internal communications]

In my active years from 2003 – 2009 it was feast and famine. I had to work at weekends to get jobs. I invoiced when I had time, mostly once a month.

[Female respondent, Germany

Dip Trans CIoL / State exam as translator and interpreter in Germany, passed before 2007

Marketing/advertising, arts, film and TV]

4.3. Juggling Different Props at Different Speeds

This thesis is concerned with positioning translators in empowering and rewarding roles as highly competent knowledge workers and professional experts. In comments and free-text answers, a number of survey respondents themselves evoke an entirely different skillset to describe their professional practice: that of the juggler, whose dexterous reflexes, intense single-minded focus and precise time-keeping enable her to keep multiple objects in the air for sustained periods of time against the pull of gravity. In answer to various survey questions, respondents talk about the difficulties of

- "juggling deadlines sometimes"
- "Juggling workflow, as it's quite common for three clients to want delivery on the same day."
- "Juggling different jobs; the fact that if you are ill (and I have had some significant health issues) the work is still there waiting, piling up, unlike an office job where you are visibly absent and then visibly back and catching up"
- "[…] juggling both translation and teaching […]"

  "[…] juggling the desire to spend more time with my children and the desire to translate more. I turn down a lot of work which I would like to do but cannot in the hours I work. […]"

  [both comments by the same respondent in answer to different questions]

- "[…] juggling clients who are late delivering […]"
- "Juggling several different themes at once"
- "Juggling various jobs and deadlines (especially when I want to be free to concentrate on a project but I 'have to' fit in jobs for regular

clients)”

- “[…] juggling home & work”
- “[…] juggling work and childcare”

[All respondents quoted above identify as female, with different specialisms and academic backgrounds. They are based in the UK (4), Germany (2), Spain, France and Canada respectively.]

Others elaborate:

> […] I find it difficult to juggle more than one longer job at a time: if I get flowing on a translation, I don’t stop even if I should so that I can also work on the other job I need to work on.
>
> [Male respondent, Czech Republic
> No T&I-related degree
> Arts]

> I work full time and find it hard to juggle this with my parenting responsibilities and a hidden disability. I’m working on increasing my hourly rate so I can work fewer hours - progress is slow but things are improving.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical]

> You never know when you will have work and when you won’t, as there seems to be hardly any long-term planning for translation work on the client side; when there is work, deadlines are often short and you have to juggle multiple projects at the same time.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> BA in Language, Culture, Translation and MA in Conference Interpreting, both from German universities, graduated after 2012
> Divides her time “more or less equally” between freelance translation and interpreting
> Business, IT/user interfaces, engineering, automotive]

> [A state of flow is] harder to achieve these days with the amount of work I'm juggling and burnout creeping in, sadly.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, arts, genre fiction and video game localization]

> […] The income from translation work alone would not cover my living expenses and business overheads, so I juggle other streams of work too.
>
> [*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on enjoyability, for which no background information was collected*]

Beyond the clichéd turn of phrase, this strikes me as a genuine attempt to articulate internal knowledge of how it feels to reconcile various, sometimes conflicting client expectations with the challenges and constraints of earning a living from translation as a sole trader or micro-entrepreneur: the constant fear of dropping a single ball, the necessary pretence of effortless control, the thrill of accomplishment when everything is going well. And while accomplished jugglers are able to manage a dozen or more props at the same time, they rarely mix more than two different types of objects in one sequence.[35]

In other references to circus acrobatics, several respondents describe their professional practice as a balancing act, while another compares it to walking a tightrope:

> Balancing it with childcare!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA Hons, graduated before 2007

---

[35] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1qOSIRUVJk and Jay Gilligan's 2013 TEDx talk on "The Evolution of Juggling" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YB_sfnwbgvk). For an example of a professional juggler mixing different props in the same sequence, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-sAyxtz7QM (all last retrieved on 20 September 2019).

Combines self-employment as a translator, outsourcing work to other translators or interpreters and working as a content and copywriter
Marketing/advertising, arts]

My biggest challenge is balancing my translation work (which pays well, and which I mostly enjoy, but which can leave me drained and in confidence crises more often than I like to admit) with my other work as a fitness/dance instructor (which I adore and which makes me happy, but which isn't as financially beneficial to me). […]

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty]

I think a lot has to do with being self-employed rather than being a translator, i.e. finding that balance of work and avoiding too many working weekends or stressful timelines.

[Female respondent, Ireland
T&I-related degree, graduated before 2007
Combines self-employment as a translator with self-employment as an IT/business consultant
Medical/pharmaceutical, business, marketing/advertising, website localisation]

The challenge of balancing urgency/too much work.

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Business, marketing/advertising, arts]

To reduce stress, you have to learn to believe in yourself by trusting your skills (social, technical, marketing, sales, etc.), and to accept that, in translation like in every art or craft, practice makes not perfect… This is probably hard for most of us because you have to be confident while all the time challenging your knowledge and your habits. Should we say that we are tightrope walkers? Definitely.

> [*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on enjoyment, for which no background information was collected*]

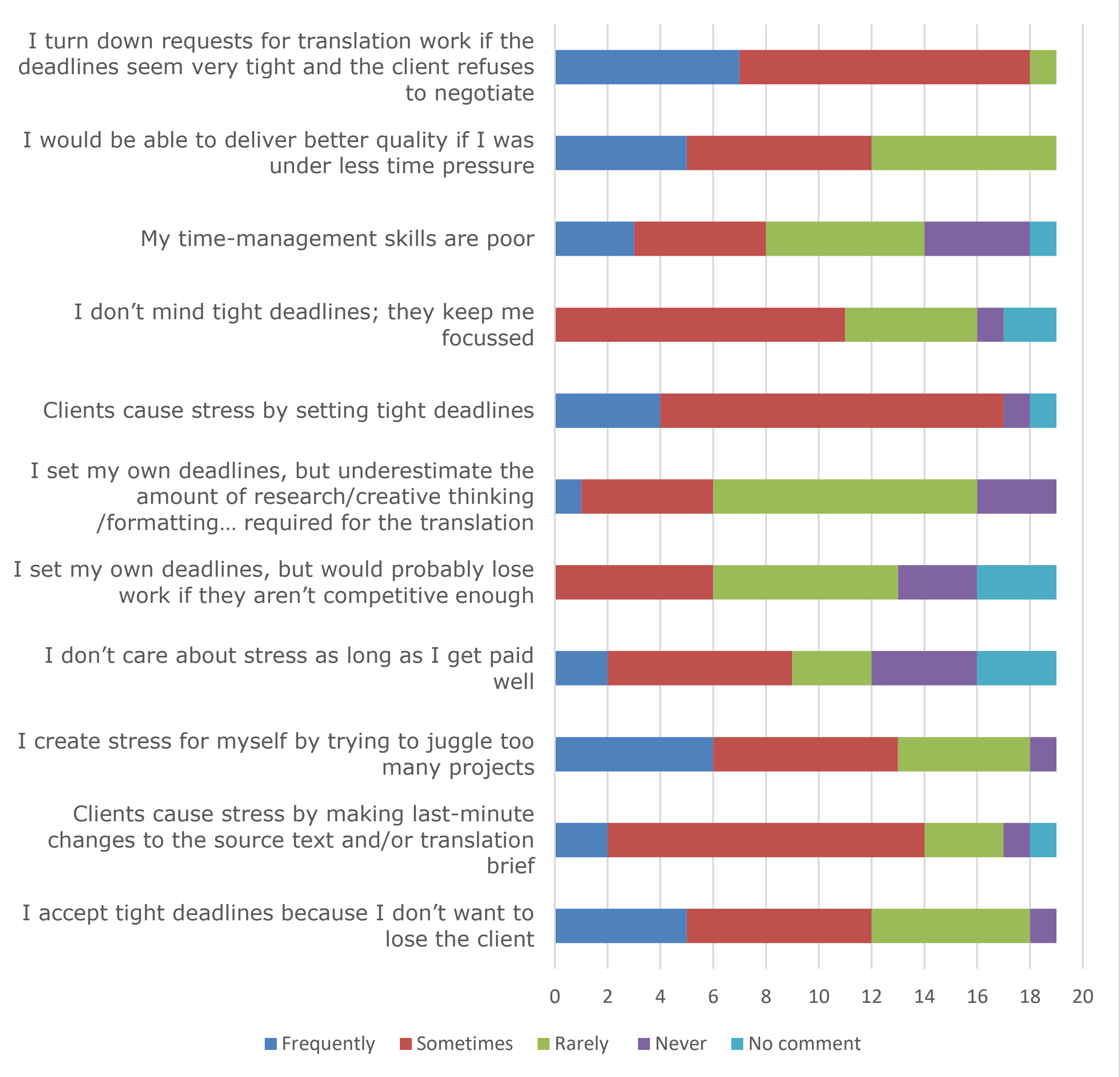
The experiences described in these comments are not unique or specific to translators; they will probably sound familiar to professionals struggling to reconcile expectations of constant availability, instant responsiveness and deep commitment to their work in other disciplines. My point here is precisely that these experiences are extrinsic to, but add complexity and stress to the intrinsically complex nature of, translating itself. I am further arguing that these extrinsic challenges are likely to be detrimental to translators' optimum ability to perform their core tasks and thus require effective coping strategies.

As survey responses also demonstrate, professional translators are not only having to juggle various, sometimes conflicting demands and expectations – they are in fact juggling different types of objects at different speeds, all against the gravitational pull of time itself. On the practical day-to-day level, this plays out most relentlessly in the struggle to find a balance between constant availability and instant responsiveness to clients, on the one hand, and the urge to ignore e-mails and keep the phone turned off while focussing on the work these clients pay for, on the other hand.

With translation work typically paid by volume (per word, 1,000 words, standard line or standard page), translating for a living can often feel like a race against time even when deadlines are more generous – rather than a slow, contemplative process of careful deliberation, elimination, procrastination while waiting for the right, or sometimes the least wrong, word or turn of phrase to become apparent: "laborious and painful (even physically speaking)", as one survey respondent describes it, while another says: "Each sentence is a slog. […]"

Since this emerges as such an overwhelming concern for many survey respondents, I decided to conduct a follow-up survey on time management. This was sent to respondents who had cited deadlines and/or time pressure as the *most stressful* and/or *unpleasant* aspect of their professional practice and had provided a contact e-mail address for further questions, and received 19 responses in total. The distribution of responses to a number of statements about time pressure and deadlines, as shown in figure 4.ii below, suggests that respondents are more likely to hold clients – rather than their own time management, organisational or negotiation skills – responsible for any deadline-related stress they experience. Accordingly, many appear to see this aspect of their working conditions as something that is imposed on them by others, and may well be perceived as particularly stressful and unpleasant because it is not within their own control, as I will argue in section 4.11 below.

Figure 4.ii. Distribution of responses to follow-up questionnaire about time management.



As shown in table 4.01.a below, respondents who are satisfied with their current workloads are more likely than the overall survey population to work 20 to 30 or 30 to 40 hours, less likely to work over 40 hours, and less likely to experience strong fluctuation in their workloads. The correlation between responses to questions 13 and 14 with respondents' reported stress levels shows that respondents who work between 30 and 40 hours a week are most likely to report the greatest levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration and workload in conjunction with comparatively low stress levels.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the findings show a sharp decline in the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with their current workload for those who report weekly workloads of more than 40 hours (see figure 4.iii.b below). Of the 37 respondents in this subset, a total of 25 (67.5%, compared to 24.9% overall) state that they would like to work less, with a 13/12 split between *I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests* and *I can't afford to reduce my workload*.

Satisfaction with respondents' current workload is linked to lower stress levels and greater levels of satisfaction with current remuneration (see table 4.01.b). Predictably, the 33 respondents who for Q14 selected the option *I would like to work less, but can't afford to reduce their workload* reported the highest mean average stress levels and lowest levels of satisfaction with current remuneration, while the 103 respondents who selected *My current workload suits me perfectly* were both least stressed and most satisfied with their rates.

Table 4.01.a Correlation between respondents' reported workloads and satisfaction with current workload. Red highlighting denotes dissatisfaction with current workload; green highlighting denotes satisfaction with current workload; bold highlighting denotes variance of five or more percentage points compared to the overall survey population.

	Typical weekly workload reported by respondents					
	under 10 hours	10 to 20 hours	20 to 30 hours	30 to 40 hours	over 40 hours	Varies wildly from one week to the next
All respondents who answered Q14 (n=277)	3.24%	12.27%	28.51%	26.35%	13.35%	15.16%
Respondents who would like to work less, but can't afford to reduce their workload	0.00%	**3.03%**	**18.18%**	27.27%	**36.36%**	15.15%

(n=33)						
Respondents who would like to work less, but don't like to disappoint clients (n=36)	0.00%	8.33%	**19.44%**	**36.11%**	**36.11%**	**0.00%**
Respondents who would like to work more, but can't find the work (n=45)	4.44%	13.33%	24.44%	**15.55%**	**6.66%**	**35.55%**
Respondents who would like to work more, but can't due to external circumstances (n=42)	**9.52%**	**26.19%**	33.33%	**7.14%**	**2.38%**	19.04%
Respondents who have already reduced their workload (n=15)	6.66%	13.33%	33.33%	26.66%	**0.00%**	20%
Respondents who are satisfied with their current workload (n=103)	1.94%	10.67%	**34.95%**	**34.95%**	**6.79%**	**8.73%**

Table 4.01.b Correlation between respondents' reported stress levels and workloads. Red highlighting denotes dissatisfaction with current workload; green highlighting denotes satisfaction with current workload.

	Respondents who					
	would like to work less, but can't afford to reduce their workload (n=33)	would like to work less, but don't like to disappoint clients (n=36)	would like to work more, but can't find the work (n=45)	would like to work more, but can't due to external circumstances (n=42)	have already reduced their workload (n=15)	are satisfied with their current workload (n=103)
Mean average stress levels (on a scale of 0 to 10)	6.48	5.75	5.38	5.35	4.85	4.33
Satisfaction with current remuneration (on a scale of 1 to 10)	4.28	6.44	5.43	5.80	6.46	6.63

Figure 4.iii.a Correlation between respondents' reported workloads, stress levels and levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration.

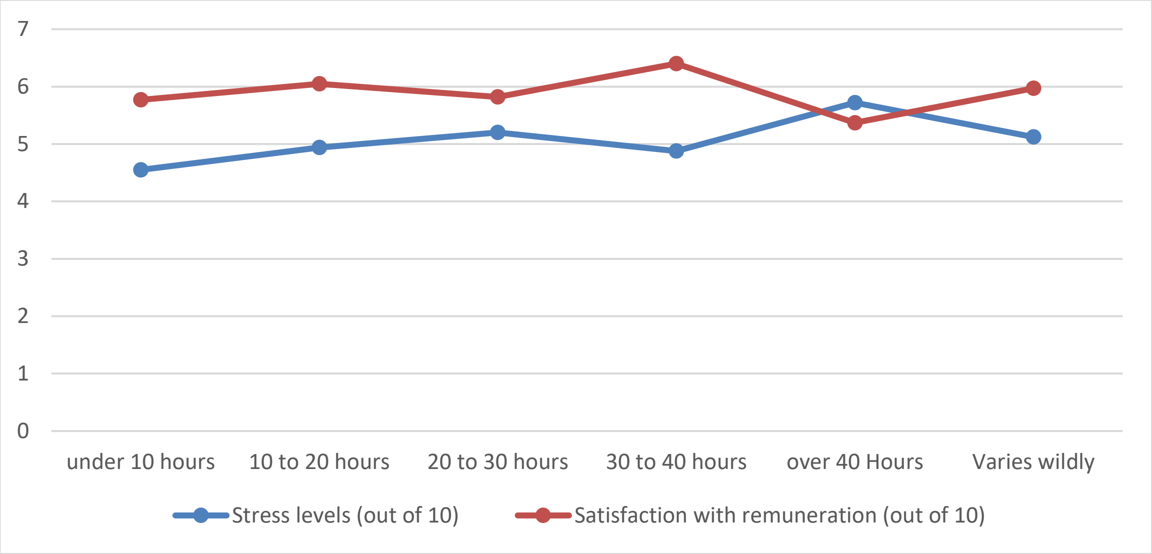
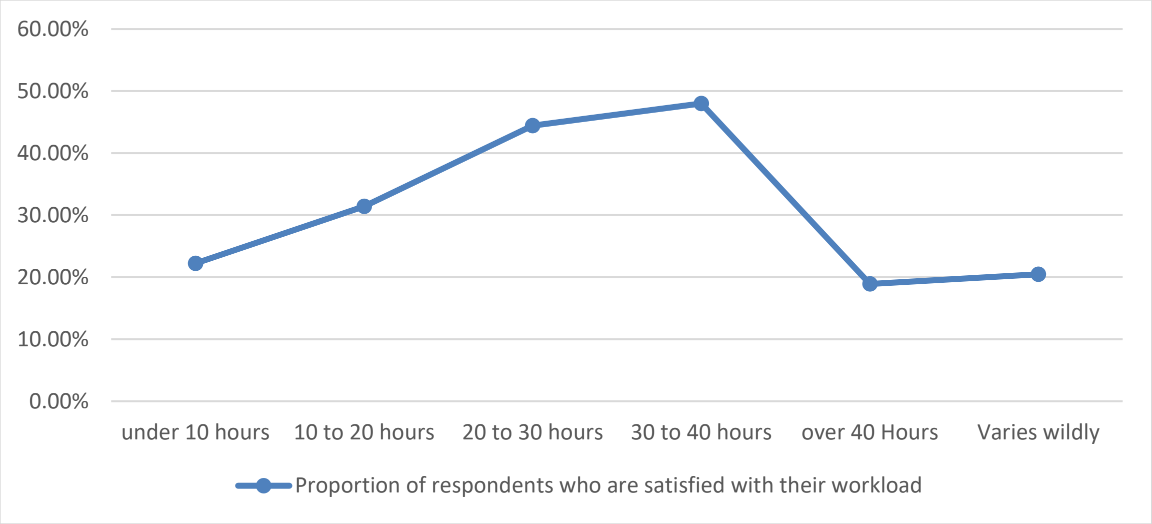


Figure 4.iii.b Correlation between respondents' reported workloads and satisfaction with their current workload.



As several respondents point out, the number of hours worked per week is not the only factor that makes their workloads less or more sustainable. Other considerations include the types and variety of work, different types of clients, workload distribution, payment and worry about future commissions, as the comments collected in table 4.02 below show. As another respondent argues, the fear and worry referenced in some of these comments can be overcome with experience:

> I love the work in general. It's interesting, never boring. And personally, the "feast or famine" aspect doesn't really bother

> me. Over time I’ve learned that I will make enough money over the course of the year, so when I have a slow week, it’s a good chance to catch up on administrative work, rather than a reason to panic.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, international development, non-fiction books]

Table 4.02. Selection of free-text comments in response to Q14 about workload satisfaction relating to considerations other than number of working hours (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording).

> I would like to further reduce my agency work and broaden my direct client base, I am working on this
>
> [Female respondent, Finland
> MA Polish and History, graduated before 2007
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles in the humanities – “esp. history and theology”]

> I would, however, like to **branch into translating genre fiction**, which may mean reducing/increasing workload
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books]

> I have regular work at the moment, but I’d like to have **new clients to better divide my income and charge differently** (some of my clients are cheap).
>
> [Female respondent, France
> T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising sectors]

> My workload is fine, I would just like my clients to **stop expecting me to work on weekends**.
>
> [Female respondent, France
> T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012

IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books]

[…] I would like a greater variety of work, particularly fiction.

[Female respondent, UK

No T&I-related degree

Combines indexing and self-employment as a translator

Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary fiction, exhibition catalogues, arts and crafts, history, current affairs]

I would like to work less, and to some extent am beginning to do so, but I prefer to make these transitions gradual. Especially since I'm also (intentionally) moving from **having the bulk of my work be relatively short projects to taking on more and more longer ones**, and while that shift is still underway, it's hard to avoid the occasional pile-up.

[Female respondent, Italy

No T&I-related degree

Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction]

The reported workload suits me very well. My **partner's health issues** have just cut it down, hope this won't be for too long.

The problem isn't the amount, it's **getting regular work that's well spaced out**. 5 jobs arriving on one day, all wanted immediately or sooner, and then none at all for the next week isn't helpful!

[Female respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree

Medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

But I would like to get **paid more**.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic

BA in English Philology from a Czech university, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Legal]

Of course, the workload **varies a lot** – from 20 hours in one week up to 80 hours in another. A steady workload of 40-45 hours per week for a longer period is rather rare.

[Female respondent, Germany
MA in Linguistics and Chamber of Commerce certification, graduated before 2007
Legal]

I would prefer to do more regular translation work, but am in a **catch-22 situation** of not being able to take on more because of my full-time job, while also unable to reduce my full-time hours until I can be sure I would have a regular source of translation work. (Obviously I could also just reduce my full-time hours up front, but still need to pay the mortgage etc!)

[Female respondent, UK
Makes her living from academic research/teaching and translates literary fiction]

My problem is that of feast or famine. I would like to have fewer, longer jobs so that I could schedule in some free time. As it is, I do occasionally do books, but my jobs are generally 6-10,000 words, and if I can fit a job in I usually take it as most of my clients are regulars and I don't want to let them down – or lose them. This gives me a rather scrambling existence of **struggling to get everything done, punctuated by fear when I get very little work for sometimes quite significant periods – months – which I don't then take advantage of because I'm too worried about having no work**. I think this is a common experience for freelancers and I still prefer my life to being an employee, but it does mean I'm often overworked.

[Female respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction]

Combination of not being able to afford to and not wanting to disappoint clients. I'm sure I could manage my time better, though. I actually probably could afford to turn down a couple more, but there is a **certain element of fear** that more won't come, even though I logically know more will. I haven't been short of work for ages. I often find the massive jobs that come through have very tight deadlines, and every now and then you need to take one of those and then work like a dog for three weeks.

[Male respondent, Germany

BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"

Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

I would like to work better: more work so that I'm not **constantly worrying about the future**, but better spread out throughout the year so I can have both a bit of financial security AND more manageable weeks. Currently I'm overworked (that's why I'm procrastinating here) but within a few months I'll probably be desperate for more translation work.

[Female respondent, Belgium

No T&I-related degree

Academic articles, non-fiction books, audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

My current workload is sufficient for the time available, but it could be better PAID! If that were the case, I could afford to reduce the number of hours I work but with the current rates and the unpredictability, **I usually have to accept most of what I am offered to keep afloat** (no second income in this household...)

[Female respondent, UK
CIoL Diploma in Translation, passed before 2007
Marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books, travel+tourism, arts+museums, fashion+cosmetics, food+cookery, education+training, immigration+human rights/charities]

Many of my **most nerve-wrecking moments** over a given week have to do with job inquiries that I don't feel interested in or don't feel I can fit into my existing schedule. I **worry that I might lose the client altogether** if I decline their work too often (and regret it later during a slower period of time).

[Male respondent, Japan
BA in Japanese, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces and marketing/advertising sectors, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

I feel that I am usually getting a good price for my work, but I don't see much work out there at those sort of prices. I don't like working for peanuts, but I would love to have more work. I feel like I **will have to go down the cheaper rates route just so that I can get more business**, but I would not think that I'll be getting a fair price.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and diploma, graduated before 2007
Non-fiction books, personal documents, memoirs, diaries, letters (incl Suetterlin transcription)]

4.4. Correlations between Time Pressure and other Stress Factors

Responses to Q15 about respondents' satisfaction with their current remuneration span the full gamut from 1 (*Very unhappy*) to 10 (*Very happy*) and cluster around a mean average score of 5.97 (6.0/5.21 respectively for freelance and in-house work).

The quantitative and qualitative data obtained from a follow-up questionnaire, which was sent to all respondents who had provided contact details for follow-up interviews and received 53 responses, confirm my own experience that regular work from direct clients is the best bet for translators seeking to make a sustainable living in the current market.[36] 77.27 per cent of respondents who work for direct clients were able to raise their rates in the two years prior to the survey, compared to only 40.54 per cent and 33.33 per cent respectively who were able to raise their rates for agency clients and publishing houses. Conversely, only 6.81 per cent of respondents who work for direct clients reported having had to lower their rates in the two years prior to the survey, compared to 10.52 per cent and 18.51 per cent respectively who had to lower their rates for agency clients and publishing houses.[37]

"I am looking to gain some direct clients and hoping to negotiate higher rates than with my agency clients," one of the respondents reports, while another adds:

> I find a radical difference between agency and direct client attitudes toward pricing at this point. It seems that even so-

---

[36] This is also supported by Abdallah's (2012: 46) assertion that

> […] there still are dyadic relations between translators and their direct clients – without intermediaries – and these relations are often experienced and expressed as more rewarding by translators. In such relations, the translator can generally exercise his/her full agency and expertise, which has positive repercussions on the translation quality as well.

[37] A recent "Pulse Survey" among members of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) here in the UK found that 33% of respondents who worked as professional translators had felt *pressure from existing/potential clients to cut rates* over the last 12 months, while 44% expressed concerns about *undercutting by less qualified practitioners*. These figures were even higher among professional interpreters (40% and 53% respectively). The findings are available at: https://www.iti.org.uk/more/news/1191-results-of-the-pulse-survey-are-in, last retrieved 27 September 2019

> called “boutique” or “high-quality” agencies are unwilling to pay what I would consider professional rates, or rates for which a professional would be eager to work. But with direct clients, I really have very little pushback on my rates and regularly raise rates with direct clients.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Legal, business, marketing/advertising texts, non-fiction books, content marketing]

Unlike applying to agencies, which tends to be a straightforward process of filling in an online form, uploading a CV, completing a test translation and perhaps following up with a few e-mails or phone calls, securing work from direct clients requires research, networking, negotiation and marketing efforts that are unrelated to translation competence in the narrow sense and clearly lie outside many respondents’ comfort zones. It also puts freelance translators in competition with corporate LSPs that often invest considerable resources in their marketing, sales and business development strategies. This model of the “prosperous” or “entrepreneurial” translator (cf. Durban and Seidel 2010, Jenner and Jenner 2010) who confidently interacts with clients as an equal partner in a B2B transaction requires translators to spend more time engaging in activities extrinsic to translation itself: marketing, negotiating, communicating with clients. Unless the work is seasonal or very predictable with long lead times, it can also be difficult for self-employed translators to take time off without the risk of losing their direct clients to competitors.

As Kronenberg (2016b) points out, some professional translators may shy away from lucrative contracts with corporate clients for reasons other than a lack of the requisite communication skills. Specifically, Kronenberg’s essay discusses the ethical implications of translators’ identification with “the very corporations responsible for plummeting incomes and the progressive degradation of our work" and complicity in "the profiteering of the big banks and financial institutions". One respondent to my survey explicitly addresses similar ethical concerns in answer to *Q16. When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which […] factors tend to be most important to you?*:

> *Payment – Good rates, Whether the text/subject matter interests me*, Ethical motives: I wish to contribute as little as possible to the terrifying damages of global capitalism so I work almost exclusively for non-profit organizations, festivals etc.
>
> [additional free-text comment by the same respondent:]
>
> It's interesting to investigate the feeling of competency. I've often felt completely incompetent yet desperately needing the money. On the other hand, I've turned down jobs (at times when I was very poor) because it was for corporations or because they offered indecent wages. Teaching – and ageing – caused me to think a lot about the ethics of translation and why we're responsible for the choices we make, like accepting, turning down or creating a job for oneself.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

(However, it is worth noting that, given the lack of supply-chain transparency in the LSP market, these arguments would apply to subcontracting in at least equal measure as to working for direct clients.)

The 2019 "Expectations and Concerns of the European Language Industry" survey reports an overall

> increase in direct business among the independent language professionals (45% report that more than half of their business is with direct customers, compared to 40% in 2018).

In keeping with Abdallah's observations about the increasing prevalence of complex production networks (see section 0.3 above), my own survey findings indicate that more recent graduates are more likely to subcontract work from LSPs than respondents in the earliest cohort, who graduated before 2007 (see figure 4.iv.a below). Respondents who graduated after 2012 were found twice as likely than respondents in earlier cohorts to list LSPs as their exclusive primary work provider. Longitudinal research would be required to establish whether these variations between different subsets reflect a sense of progression from entry-level subcontracting work to more lucrative contracts with direct clients. Abdallah's (2011, 2012) research on production networks suggests that the increase in subcontracting activity between respondents who graduated before and after 2007 reflects a generational shift from the functionalist model of dyadic B2B relationships between language professionals and corporate clients (cf. Nord 1997) to longer supply chains and loosely connected production networks.

The observation that respondents with no translation- or interpreting-related degree were found to be less likely to subcontract from LSPs (see figure 4.iv.c below) may be considered unsurprising given that many LSPs require proof of an academic translation qualification from their subcontractors. However, it may also indicate that respondents with qualifications in other areas are better placed/connected to find direct clients outside the language services industry.

Figure 4.iv.a. Distribution of survey responses to Q12 (*If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply*) correlated with year of graduation.

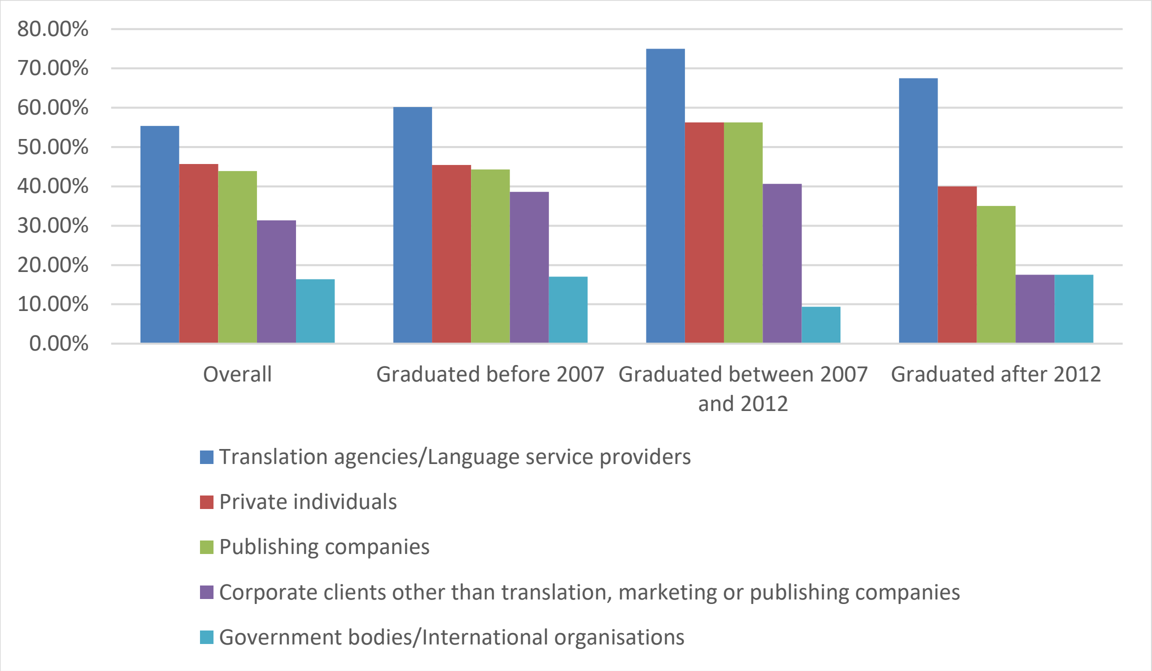


Figure 4.iv.b. Distribution of survey responses to Q12 (*If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply*) correlated with gender identification.

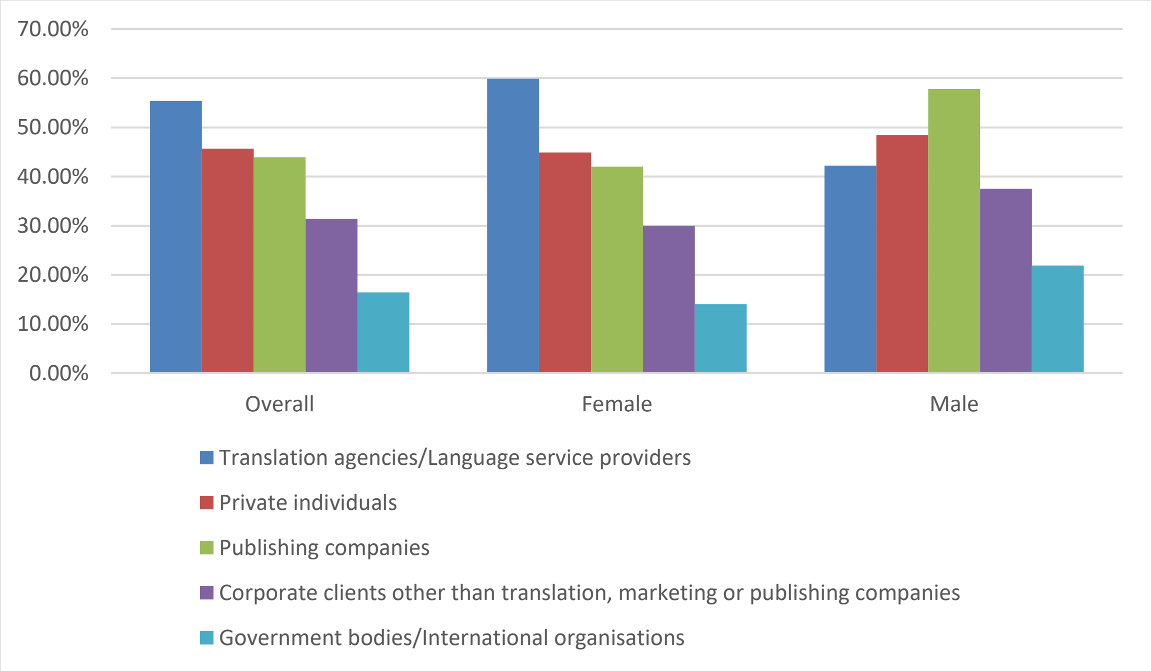
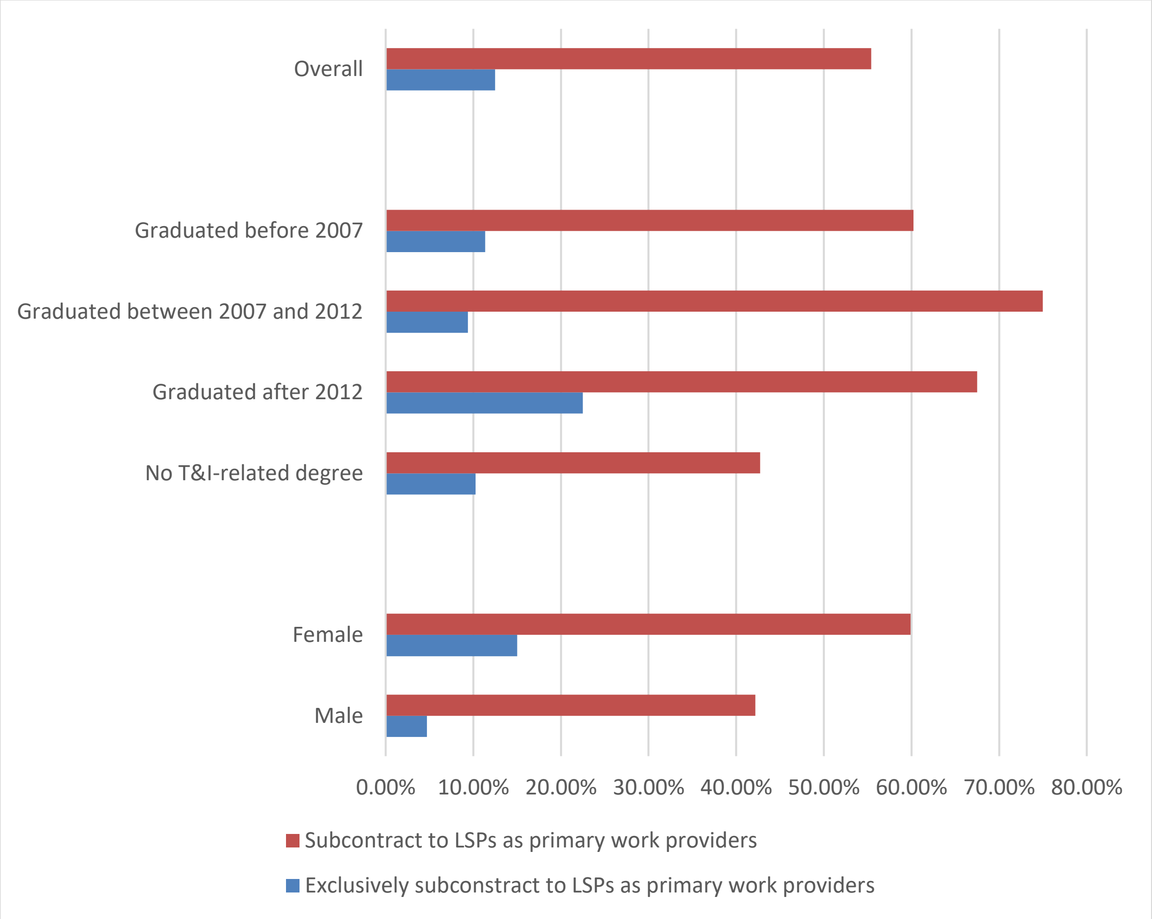


Figure 4.iv.c. Percentage of survey respondents who subcontract work from LSPs, based on responses to Q12. *If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply* and correlated with year of graduation and gender identification.



Of the 53 respondents who completed the follow-up questionnaire on rates, 42 reported having raised their rates for at least one type of client, although seven respondents in this subset also said they had had to lower their rates for at least one type of client. Three further respondents reported having been forced to lower their rates for at least one type of client without raising them for other clients. In the subset of respondents who had been able to raise their rates, the ratio of female to male respondents was consistent with the overall survey population, while respondents identifying as male were slightly underrepresented (1 in 5) in the subset of respondents who reported having lowered their rates.

The decision-making processes described in some respondents' comments show them well aware of the constraints faced by other stakeholders in their production networks (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording):

> I tend to ask **different rates for different clients** (e.g., I'll accept a lower rate from a small publisher than for a large Swiss university...). My experience with agencies is once I've accepted a lower rate (for a final client that wouldn't give more budget), I'm stuck to that lower rate for subsequent projects :s
>
> I lose jobs all the time because of rates, or assume because of rates, because when someone never writes back after a quote that's usually the reason. And in general, **I can afford to stick to my guns with art and history jobs because I've always had a steady flow of work. I quote much lower for literary - if it's the author paying out-of-pocket, as often happens with IT>EN publishing proposals and so on, I have a minimum that's about two-thirds my normal art job rate.** At the moment, I don't have all that many literary job offers for texts I'm really interested in translating, so when one comes along I'm more than willing to lower my rate to some degree. But I am a little concerned about how I'll get by on rates like that if I manage to get to the point where I'm spending as much time on fiction and poetry as I'd like to spend. Coming from the world of semi-technical translation, in a language pair where there are few enough professionals that steady work is almost guaranteed if you're reasonably good at your job, I've never been reluctant to shoot high-ish: actually, **when bargaining I've often felt like I had a responsibility to my IT>EN peers to keep us all from being dragged down to the kind of rates I see for EN>IT, which is a completely different market. But with literature I fret a lot more, because it's not as if the authors or publishers are usually making a killing, either.** It's all a tricky balance of finding the rate that

will allow you to devote the time it takes to do a good job […] but that the client will actually be able to afford.

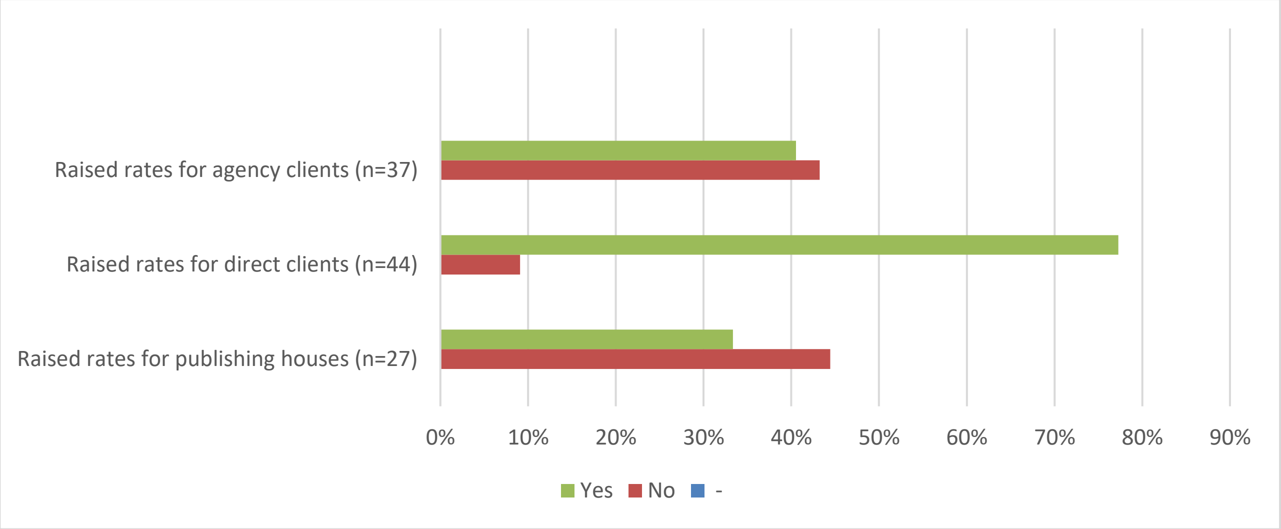
It varies. I have taken a lower rate for a publisher **where I wanted to do the job and it was clear that the rate was non-negotiable**. In other cases, interesting publishing jobs have walked off into the sunset because I've refused to meet their rate.

I set my rate **according to my own interest in the project and what seems fair under the specific circumstances**, but I have rarely received what would be considered even legal wages for effort in any other industry, and I have been taken advantage of so many times that I am now refusing almost all commissions.

For German-to-English in my market, there is definitely a cut-off point between €0.18 and €0.20 per word, where offers at the low end are significantly more likely to be accepted than offers at the high end. However, **if I were more aggressive about my pricing policy**, I'm sure a lot of €0.20 clients would probably pay €0.25 and, **with active marketing**, it would probably not be hard to stay busy at that rate.

I have found with agency clients that **it very much pays to stand your ground**. There are many times that I've been told the budget is a certain amount, or that "all of their other translators agree to X GBP per word", only to find that I'm given the work anyway at my higher rate. So the key for me is to always ask for what I believe my time is worth as they will always try to get the work for less. If they accept it, great; if not, it's possible the relationship wouldn't have been much fun anyway...

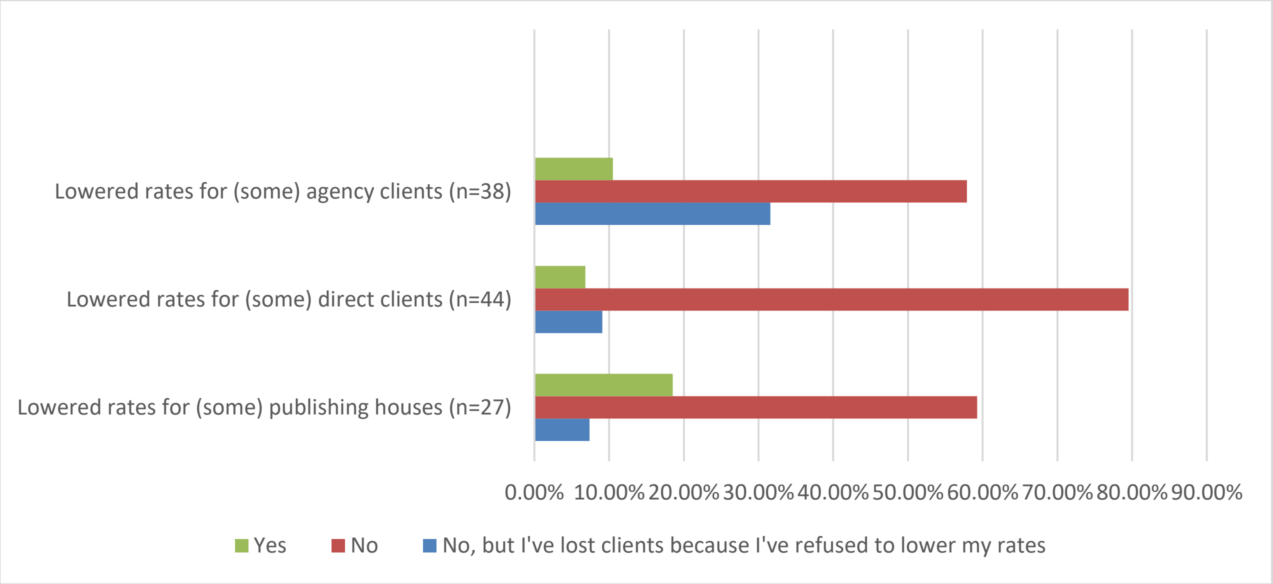
Figure 4.v.a. Responses to the follow-up survey question: *Have you been able to raise your translation rates over the past two years?* (Each n represents the subset of all respondents who answered the respective question and did not select the option *Not applicable – I don't work for [agency clients, direct/private clients, publishing houses]*)



Free-text responses
Yes, for (some) German agencies, No for the remaining DE agencies and GB agencies
I charge more for new clients, but have found it difficult to increase rates with existing ones
I have had to accept marginally lower rates unfortunately. My attempts to negotiate higher rates with new agencies have been unsuccessful so far, although I have had some luck negotiating decent and stable rates.
I have raised them for new agency clients, but not existing ones.
I haven't raised them with existing clients, but I've steadily replaced lower paying agency clients with higher paying ones
existing clients not raised for ca. 3-4 years, new clients pay higher rates
First contract with publishing house in the last 2 years
Have only just started working with publishers this year so do not know yet
I have done one job for a publishing house and am looking for my second one.
I haven't tried to raise them.
Just once for one particular project w/ a very close deadline
I have decided to quote higher rates. Most often, I don't get the job, but sometimes I do.
I have raised my rates as the TA "observed" rate went up. My direct clients tend to find this a useful and reassuring benchmark. I haven't raised my euro rate; however, as the pound has fallen against the euro since Brexit, my rate has in fact risen since 2016. Before that it had fallen quite a lot, since I haven't

changed my euro rate for at least 5 years.
I have very few direct clients, each negotiated on an ad hoc basis, so it's difficult to say.
Last raise more than 2 years ago

Figure 4.v.b. Responses to the follow-up survey question: *Have you had to lower your translation rates over the past two years?* (Each n represents the subset of all respondents who answered the respective question and did not select the option *Not applicable – I don't work for [agency clients, direct/private clients, publishing houses]*)



Free-text responses
It varies. I have taken a lower rate for a publisher where I wanted to do the job and it was clear that the rate was non-negotiable. In other cases, interesting publishing jobs have walked off into the sunset because I've refused to meet their rate.
I have had clients ask me to take on additional services and they then said it was too expensive for that new service, though they continued to use my services for what I do already.

The figures presented in tables 4.03.a and b below show a distinct – and, I would argue, potentially toxic – correlation between above-mean average stress levels and below-mean average levels of satisfaction with current rates or salary, and vice versa. Whereas the direct comparison between the subsets of literary and legal translators (see section 3.6 of this thesis) suggests that the lower stress levels experienced by respondents who specialise in literary translation may perhaps to some extent compensate for their greater dissatisfaction with their remuneration – and, conversely, the greater satisfaction with their current remuneration reported by legal translators for their higher stress levels – this correlation is reversed in the overall survey population, where higher stress levels correlate with lower levels of satisfaction.

Tables 4.03.a and b. Correlation between respondents' reported stress levels and satisfaction with current remuneration.

	All respondents who answered Q 22 on stress levels (n=284)	Of these:		
		Respondents who report mean average stress levels (5 out of 10) (n=63)	Respondents who report below-mean average stress levels (between 0 and 4 out of 10) (n=95)	Respondents who report above-mean average stress levels (between 6 and 10 out of 10) (n=126)
Mean average levels of satisfaction with current remuneration (on a scale of 1 to 10)	5.97	5.66	6.53	5.69

	All respondents who answered Q 15 on satisfaction with current remuneration (n=286)	Of these:		
		Respondents who report mean average satisfaction levels (6 out of 10) (n=40)	Respondents who report below-mean average satisfaction levels (between 1 and 5 out of 10) (n=107)	Respondents who report above-mean average satisfaction levels (between 7 and 10 out of 10) (n=137)
Mean average stress levels (on a scale of 0 to 10)	5.13	5.25	5.49	4.81

A number of respondents make the relationship between stress and financial concerns explicit in their additional comments.

Tables 4.04. Selection of free-text comments relating to the relationship between stress and remuneration.

> Stressful not because of the type of work, but because of working conditions, payment and short deadlines
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction
> Reported stress level: 8 out of 10
> Satisfaction with current remuneration: 4 out of 10]
>
> I love translating but right now I don’t feel my skills are good enough, but I have to work so much to scrape together a tiny wage that I often run out of time to improve my skills.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Literary and genre fiction, cartoons, comics, games
> Reported stress level: 5 out of 10
> Satisfaction with current remuneration: 6 out of 10]
>
> Only because of the money. The tight deadlines are sometimes extremely stressful but I work well under that kind of pressure, albeit losing years of life due to stress maybe, I don’t know...
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, non-fiction books and audiovisual translation (subtitling)
> Reported stress level: 6 out of 10
> Satisfaction with current remuneration: 4 out of 10]
>
> Reducing the workload has reduced the stress, but also my income!
>
> [Female respondent, Spain

> MA Modern Languages from a UK university; two T&I-related degrees from different Spanish universities, graduated before 2007
> Reported stress level: 6 out of 10
> Satisfaction with current remuneration: 9 out of 10]
>
> Having to work faster than I like in order to keep my hourly rates reasonable
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA and diploma, graduated before 2007
> Non-fiction books, personal documents, memoirs, diaries, letters (incl Suetterlin transcription)
> Reported stress level: 6 out of 10
> Satisfaction with current remuneration: 6 out of 10]

A number of survey respondents talk about their work in terms of “love”, “passion” and “pleasure” – although two respondents warn that this very love or passion can also leave translators vulnerable to exploitation:

> Loving your job does not mean setting yourself up for a lifetime of low earnings. However, unfortunately this is the harsh reality in today’s market: low prices have apparently become more important than good work.
> [Respondent based in Switzerland
> No T&I-related degree
> Co-owns and manages a translation agency that specialises in translations for the medical/pharmaceutical and marketing/advertising sectors;
> Comment translated from German]
>
> […] But it is crucial for the general society to realize that literary translation is NOT easy and we do NOT do it for a sheer pleasure. And it is very important to publish GOOD translations as it cultivates human souls to read good texts.
> [Respondent based in the Czech Republic
> MA in English and American studies, graduated after 2012

> Academic articles, non-fiction books, literary fiction, sports and architecture/design
> Also works as a copywriter (in Czech) and occasional editor and proofreader]

This sense of translation as a labour of love comes across most clearly in respondents' free-text answers to Q22. *Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find most/least stressful?*. Almost a third (69 out of 226) of respondents single out "translating itself", "the work as such" and similar variations as the *least stressful aspect of working as a professional translator*. In most cases, this is unconditional, although some respondents specify criteria relating to the quality of the source text and/or the timescales of the project:

- "The times when I have only an enjoyable fiction/creative translation project to work on without interruptions."
- "Translating something I enjoy without time constraints"
- "Working for lengthy periods (1–4 months) on a single book or theme, esp. if it is of personal interest – and I actually learn a great deal from the stuff I translate."
- "Translating texts that are well written and on a subject that interests me"
- "Translating enjoyable, well-written texts with a sensible deadline"
- "Translating non-specific texts that don't require much research"
- "When you can work with a well-written original and feel comfortable with the subject (it is one of your areas of specialisation)"

Another 81 respondents emphasise various aspects of the freedom and flexibility of self-employment, e.g. "being my own boss" (cf. figure 4.vii below).

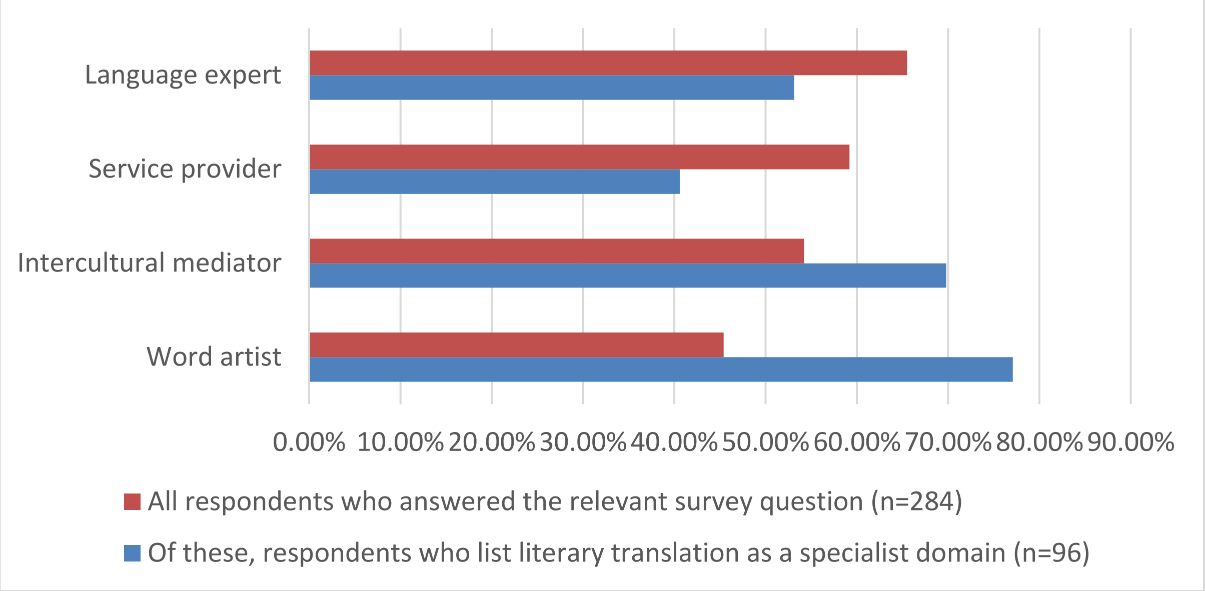
Similar findings from his own survey of 1,115 professional translators and interpreters from 25 countries led David Katan (2009: 149) to conclude that

> translators and interpreters are able to find immense satisfaction, as linguists, looking for and finding *le mot juste*. And, interestingly the positive comments are not just from literary translators.
>
> Hence, we might consider the translating profession a "caring profession", notoriously underpaid, with the only, yet fundamental, difference that translators care for the text rather than for the client.

These observations closely match the description of translators as craftspeople driven by a "desire to do something well for its own sake" (Sennett 2006: 194) presented in chapter 2 of this thesis. To some extent, however, the findings from my survey presented and discussed in chapter 6 below call into question Katan's assertion that "translators care for the text rather than for the client". Except in the subset of literary translators, the proportion of respondents who define themselves as *service providers* exceeds that of respondents who define themselves as *word artists* (see figure 4.vi below). Likewise, Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2014: 77) found that professional translators who participated in their "Capturing Translation Processes" (CTP) research project at Zurich University of Applied Sciences

> were very aware of their role in a service industry. They referred to being efficient, time restrictions, responsibility to the client, and being part of a system or larger organization.

Figure 4.vi. Most popular definitions of respondents' professional identities as translators. (See chapter 6 for a discussion of the relevant findings.)



If "translating itself" is a labour of love for a large number of respondents – including one for whom it "was a life-saver" after a severe injury left her "unable to continue working as a journalist", as she explains in a comment – many of them are considerably less enamoured with the conditions that enable their earning a living from it. This contrast is most starkly apparent in the responses to Q22 about the *most and least stressful aspects of working as a professional translator* (see figure 4.vii below). In both parts of the question, the brevity of many responses implies that they are not only self-explanatory but stating the blindingly obvious. (Sixteen respondents simply specified "Translating" as the least stressful aspect of their professional practice, followed by an exclamation mark in four instances.) This also suggests that many, though by no means all, respondents consider their work as translators ("translating itself") as separate from – rather than an integral aspect of – their work as sellers, providers or suppliers of translations, as the following responses to Q20. *If* *you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?* confirm:

> Less time spent writing emails and answering phone calls :-)
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
>
> T&I-related MA from a Czech university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, literary fiction]

> Less paperwork, emails, negotiations – I would just like to translate
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
>
> T&I-related MA from a Czech university, graduated after 2012
>
> Literary and genre fiction, subtitles, legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising]

Similarly, several respondents emphasise that any stress they experience is caused by factors extrinsic to "translating itself".

> Deadlines and not having enough work are stressful. Translation itself is fun really.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction
>
> Reported stress level: 7 out of 10]

> The translations are not stressful, but the stress stems from the poor wages and the need to always find more work, when I had a new text for proofreading waiting in the pipeline I wasn't quite so stressed.
>
> [Female respondent, Denmark
>
> Masters degree in English with Rhetoric as an elected module, "with as many elective [literature] classes as possible", from a Danish university, graduated before 2007
>
> Literary and genre fiction ("mostly science fiction, fantasy and romance")
>
> Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

> Every job is different. It’s deadlines, sudden surges in workload and sometimes clients and their personalities that determine the stress, not the actual translation.
>
> [Female respondent, Australia
> No T&I-related degree
> Combines employment as an interpreter with self-employment as a translator, with “a fair bit of variation from year to year [as to] which brings in the greatest income within a year”
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles
> Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

> Right now, five, but it’s been such a ten at a couple of points that I’ve risked having nervous breakdowns, due to overwork in one case and non-paying clients in another.
>
> [Female respondent based in Italy
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction
> Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

Of the 69 respondents who identified translating as the least stressful aspect of their work (cf. figure 4.vii), 17 also responded to a follow-up questionnaire on enjoyment factors (see Appendix). In these responses, a selection of which are quoted in full in table 4.05 below, the contrast between the enjoyment of “translation as such” and the stress caused by other aspects of working as a professional translator is explored in greater depth and nuance. In light of the arguments discussed in sections 4.3 above and 4.11 below, it also strikes me as interesting that the responses contain several references to the desirability of feeling “in control” or “in charge”, as well as to the stress of having to “juggle” different tasks.

Table 4.05. Selection of responses to follow-up survey on enjoyment and stress factors relating to the contrast between “translating itself” and other aspects of respondents’ professional practice (no background information collected; bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording).

The **translation process just feels amazing**, from the first contact with the source text to the quest of the perfect word, and don't get me started on research, rewriting, revision, etc. For me it's all about learning and making choices in order to create a "perfect" text that will serve a purpose for someone. It also allows me **to do what I am good at** (ask questions, find solutions, play with the language) while helping someone else. Furthermore, there are times when I'm "in the zone" and this is never stressful! Long story short: **I'm in love with my craft**! I try to spend most of my time on this part of the translation business, **entrusting stressing and least enjoyable tasks (IT, accounting, etc.) to professionals**.

I love working with words; **translation is what I do and what I love doing** (alongside writing). As well as wordsmithing, the research can also be enjoyable and enlightening. **The "side aspects" of running a business, from marketing and dealing with clients' requests, to planning time and juggling multiple assignments, is a "necessary evil"**, although having said that, as an introvert I far prefer working freelance (far fewer distractions), on my own, to being employed in an office, which I also experienced for a few years. **I also love immersing myself in a project and so love working by myself and being in control.**

Actually translating (working with text and two languages) engages my brain, my language skills, my cultural knowledge, the creative aspects of rendering an author's voice in English, and I always learn something new as well. The less enjoyable and more stressful aspects of translation work are finding work, negotiating fees and contracts, having to chase clients for payment (sometimes), and meeting tight deadlines (clients always seem to want delivery sooner than I think is realistic for my schedule, so we usually end up with a compromise). The income from translation work alone would not cover my living expenses and business overheads, so I juggle other streams of work too.

With literary translation, **the creative aspect of the work tends to be very liberating and offers enormous satisfaction** when you feel you have managed to convey all the facets that are there in front of you to be conveyed including the original intrinsic artistic value, that, in the target language, is in fact exclusively your added value. But there seem to be certain influences, positive and negative, that bear upon your productivity and ability to add this value. **So if these can be critically traced and successfully controlled, however minor they seem to be, much of the stress could be reduced, distraction limited and time gained.** Like for example do I start with my post in the morning, or with translation, when is it actually that I seem to be inspired most, where do I work, how do I sit or stand, what food sti[m]ulates me, do I have comfortable temperature, fresh air, enough exercise etc.

Finding the right words, the right way of saying something, is interesting and satisfying. And for this bit, at least, I'm in charge.

What I find enjoyable is a constructing of target sentence from another different source language. **I love translating words all day, the translation job is not stressful** although it can sometime be for example when you have **many jobs and so little time** and decide to decline other jobs.

It's **the part of the job I'm good at**, and I started working as a translator because **I like translating, as opposed to the more business-related parts of the job**. I can just get on with it by myself for long periods of time. I also enjoy researching to find out the meanings of unknown terms, as I can learn more about my area of specialisation.

That the difference between billable (translation) and non-billable project work (marketing, communication with clients, invoicing, compliance with tax and other statutory regulations etc.) also separates the aspects of their professional practice many respondents find *least* and *most stressful* or *unpleasant* strikes me as incidental though not insignificant. There is no indication, either in the responses to the main survey or to the follow-up questionnaires on enjoyment and on time management (see section 4.2 above), that specific aspects of respondents' professional practice are experienced as less or more stressful or unpleasant *because* they are paid or unpaid. The findings presented in section 4.9 on the flow experience suggest a different explanation why respondents enjoy some aspects of their work more than others.

For comparative purposes, the free-text responses to questions 21 (243 responses) and 22 (239/226 responses) have been coded as falling into one of the following categories, as shown in figure 4.vii below:

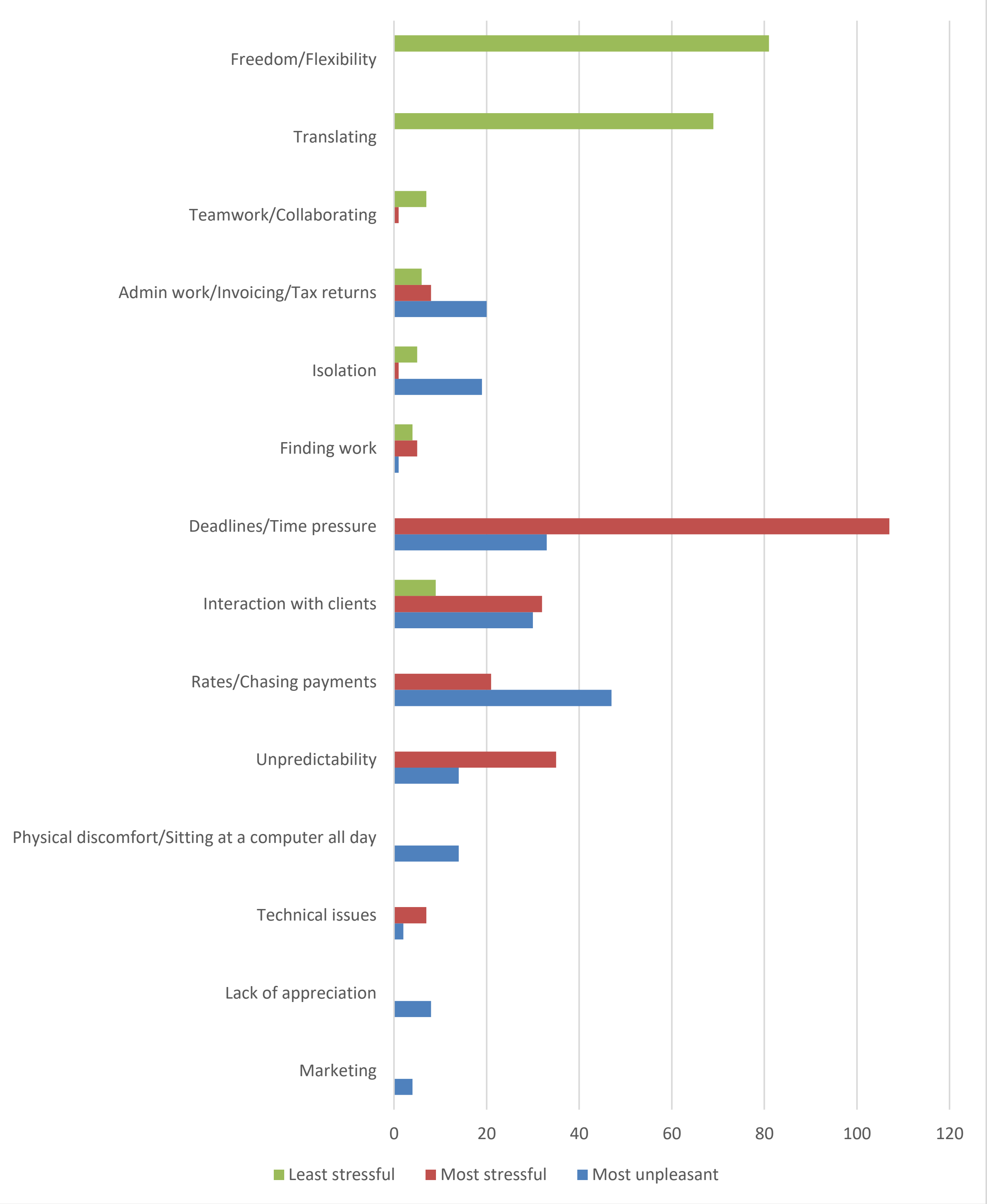
- Deadlines/time pressure
- Rates/payment conditions
  (including *chasing payments)*
- Freedom/flexibility of self-employment
  (including *working from home*, *being my own boss*, *not having to commute*, *no office politics*)
- Interactions with clients (responding to requests for work, negotiating rates and deadlines, other project-related communication, feedback;

cf. section 4.6 below for a detailed discussion)

- The work as such/translation itself
- Teamwork
- Isolation/loneliness
- Physical discomfort (including *sitting in front of a computer all day* and health problems associated with sedentary work)
- IT/technical issues
- Unpredictability/financial uncertainty ("feast or famine")
- Admin work
- Marketing

Other responses also refer to issues of self-doubt, worries about output quality and respondents' lack of confidence in their own translation competencies.

Figure 4.vii. Recurring themes in the free-text responses to Q21 and 22.



While a number of points – "money and recognition", dealing with clients, isolation, admin work – appear on both lists (*most stressful* and *least* *stressful* aspects of working as a professional translator), only one respondent refers to translating itself as being stressful:

> […] Even after about 15 years as a professional translator, I find the initial translation stage relatively stressful: the pressure of getting to the end of the first draft with adequate time to edit, the arguments with myself about getting distracted, the anxiety of not fully understanding the text. It is only when I'm editing my English text, with reference back to the original, and again as an independent text, that I fully enjoy it and relax into the style and the spirit. I tend to feel happiest at this point, as the text is approaching a finished product that I can share with someone else, usually my husband as my first reader.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007
>
> Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, children's books, magazine articles, news and current affairs
>
> Reported stress level: 8 out of 10]

It is worth noting, however, that in comments relating to Q19 about flow experiences, translating is described as "laborious and painful" and as "a slog":

> Each sentence is a slog. The only enjoyment comes at the end when I can look back and see that the work has turned out well.
>
> [Male respondent, France
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Non-fiction books, literary fiction, historical documents, testimonies, personal correspondence
>
> Reported stress level: 8 out of 10]

> I tend to experience [the flow] state when revising my first draft – the first draft is always laborious and painful (even physically speaking).
>
> [Female respondent, T&I-related PhD from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income

Academic articles, literary fiction
Reported stress level: 6 out of 10]

When it clicks, it clicks. When it doesn't, the work is a slog.
[Male respondent, United States
No T&I-related degree
Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income
Poetry, literary fiction, philosophy, literary essays and critical theory
Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

In answers to Q21 and 22, several respondents refer to the "tedium" of translating uninteresting material – "[…] long or very dry texts […]", "boring technical manuals", "routine agency jobs" – the unpleasantness of "[t]ranslating a text one dislikes" or the stress caused by difficult source texts, as in the following responses:

- "Translating a tough text in time that is too short."
- "[…] Very occasionally I might take on a job and then find it is too complex for me – it can be hard to decide whether to complete it to the best of your ability or give up!"
- "Awkward/complicated phrasing in source text"
- "Being out of my depth with subject matter/terminology"
- "[…] difficult translations that require a lot of research and (no less importantly) badly written originals"
- "[…] running into writing I genuinely have difficulty grasping the meaning behind"

With *better rates* (mentioned 50 times), *more time* (36 mentions) and *more recognition* (27 mentions) topping respondents' wish lists, answers to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?* also single out factors extrinsic to "translation itself".

However, a number of respondents also point out that stress is not necessarily a negative experience.

> I thrive on pressure, so this is a good thing.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007
> Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy
> Reported stress level: 7 out of 10]

> I find a little stress (on the level of a challenge that I can handle) stimulating, so it is not necessarily a bad thing.
>
> [Female respondent, Denmark
> BSc in Information Science with German as a subsidiary subject and Postgraduate Special Language Diploma, graduated before 2007
> Translates part-time while drawing a retirement pension
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles
> Reported stress level: 6 out of 10]

Lower reported stress levels may be indicative of greater resilience to stress as much as of less stressful working conditions; as a number of respondents point out, stress is relative and subjective.

Table 4.06. Selection of free-text comments in response to Q22 relating to stress as a relative and subjective experience.

> Relatively speaking: I used to be a schoolteacher and know plenty of people with consistently very stressful jobs.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, architecture/design, visual arts, film
> Reported stress level: 3 out of 10]
>
> I spent many years working in the financial sector as an in-house translator/editor. I am used to very tight deadlines and a high-stress environment. To be honest, despite the relatively low wage, I have experienced a great deal less stress since I went freelance than I had in the preceding 15 years.
>
> [Female respondent, Norway

Degree in French Studies that "incorporated a large amount of literary translation", graduated before 2007

Finance, business, non-fiction books and literary fiction

Reported stress level: 4 out of 10]

The stresses are different than traditional employment. There's a sense of defeat and anxiety if, at the end of the month, my total income for all jobs performed hasn't met the threshold earlier established or expected of myself. Ironically, there is now a gravity to vacations and days off that I did not feel as an employee. (It's not, "Hooray! I have a day off!" anymore so much as "Can I afford to be take this day off? Shouldn't I be working? What if a job inquiry arrives while I'm out of the office?") It's easy not to get started on work until a bit later in the day than I really should, or to keep working late into the night when I'm on a roll.

That said, I've worked in traditional workplaces in the past that I would consider significantly more stressful than my work life now.

[Male respondent, Japan

BA in Japanese, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces and marketing/advertising sectors, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction

Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

Probably less stressful than most jobs.

[Male respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree

Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design

Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

No more or less stressful than any deadline-driven job.

[Female respondent, United States

Ph.D. in Philology, graduated before 2007

Legal, academic articles, literary fiction

Reported stress level: 5 out of 10]

[…] compared with journalism, the work is virtually stress-free. […]

[Female respondent, Australia
B.A. (Hons 1 in French) from an Australian university, graduated before 2007
Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, mining, tourism, personal ID and qualification documents
Reported stress level: 1 out of 10]

Compared with the stress in my previous jobs, I find freelance translating practically stress-free. I enjoy the work; my clients value me and my work and pay on time; the work is interesting.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, environment & sustainable development, social sciences
Reported stress level: 0 out of 10]

4.6. Client Interactions

Answers to different questions suggest that many respondents would be perfectly satisfied with their working conditions as self-employed professionals if it were not for their clients. (The corollary awareness that they would not have any work if it were not for their clients is rarely acknowledged, although one respondent does point out that "you depend entirely on clients".)

This attitude is made explicit in the following comment by a respondent who in answer to Q22 about the *least stressful aspect(s)* of working as a professional translator describes the pleasures of self-employment:

> I can work from home or any other place I choose as long as I have my tools (computer, dictionary, book(s)) with me, I can work in the middle of the night if I prefer it; I have no office, co-workers or even boss since I'm technically self-employed […].

She goes on to qualify this assessment by adding:

> (even though "clients" are my bosses, and mostly, publishers, who are my clients, are very bad ones).
>
> [Female respondent, France
>
> T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

Evidence from the survey and my own experience and observations suggests that this ambivalence – taking pleasure in the work itself while disparaging the clients who provide it – is widespread among translators, and perhaps among self-employed professionals in general. It is worth noting, however, that a smaller number of respondents refer to their clients in more positive terms (cf. the comments quoted in section 6.1 of this thesis).

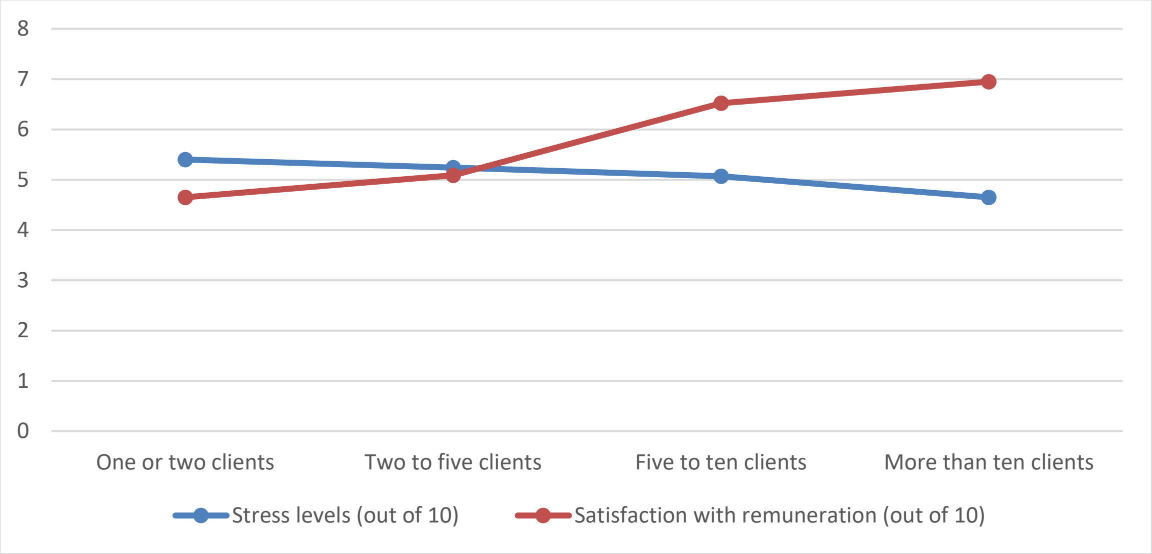
As the figures presented in table 4.07 below show, respondents who are satisfied with their current workloads were found slightly more likely than the overall survey population (by a margin of around 2 percentage points) to have worked for between two and five or five and ten regular clients in the past six months, less likely by a margin of 5.4 percentage points to have worked for one or two regular clients, and more likely by a margin of 4.9 percentage points to have worked for more than ten regular clients.

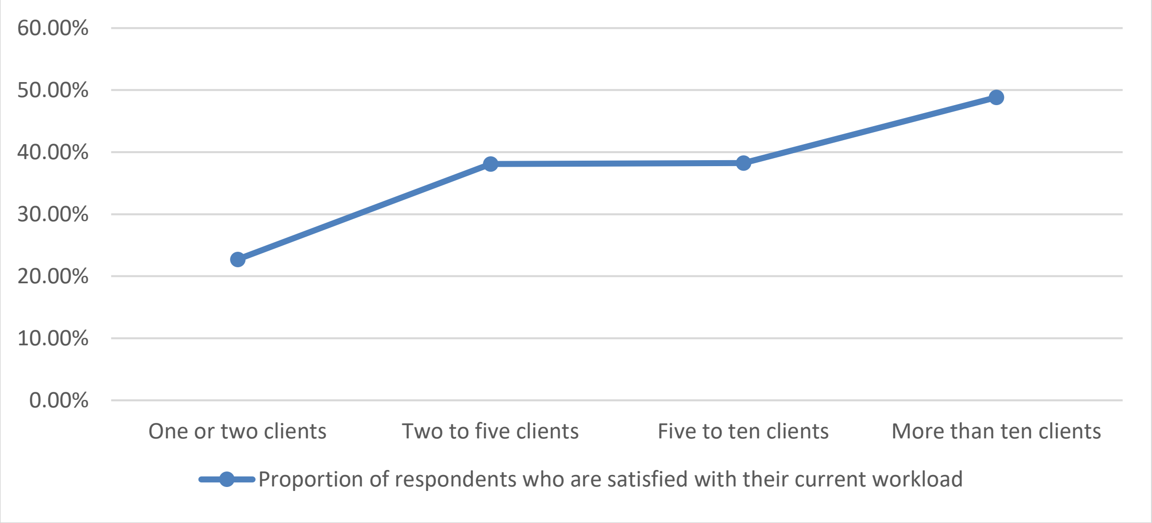
The statistical correlation between greater satisfaction with current working conditions and a higher number of regular clients is substantiated by the findings presented in figure 4.viii.a, which show a consistent drop in mean average reported stress levels accompanied by a consistent increase in mean average levels of satisfaction with current remuneration and a greater likelihood of satisfaction with current workload in correlation to higher numbers of regular clients.

Table 4.07. Correlation between responses to Q12. *[Looking back over the last 6 months, how many different clients have you regularly worked for?]* and respondents' satisfaction with current workload. Red highlighting denotes dissatisfaction with current workload; green highlighting denotes satisfaction with current workload; bold highlighting denotes variance of five or more percentage points compared to overall survey population.

	Number of clients respondents regularly work for			
	one or two	between two and five	between five and ten	more than ten
All respondents who answered Q14 (n=277)	15.16%	36.82%	28.88%	15.52%
Respondents who would like to work less, but can't afford to reduce their workload (n=33)	18.18%	30.30%	30.30%	18.18%
Respondents who would like to work less, but don't like to disappoint clients (n=36)	**8.33%**	33.33%	**44.44%**	11.11%
Respondents who would like to work more, but can't find the work (n=45)	**22.22%**	37.77%	22.22%	13.33%
Respondents who would like to work more, but can't due to external circumstances (n=42)	**26.19%**	40.47%	**19.04%**	4.76%
Respondents who have already reduced their workload (n=15)	13.33%	33.33%	26.66%	20%
Respondents who are satisfied with their current workload (n=103)	**9.70%**	38.83%	30.09%	20.38%

Figures 4.viii.a and b. Correlation between responses to Q12. *[Looking back over the last 6 months, how many different clients have you regularly worked for?]* and respondents' reported stress levels and satisfaction with current remuneration and workload.





Receiving regular work from multiple clients is likely to reduce the time and mental resources spent on marketing, networking, building new relationships, negotiating rates etc., while minimising the risk of exposure in the event of payment defaults or losing a client. At the same time, "[h]aving many clients means having many bosses!", as one respondent puts it. Working for multiple clients increases the likelihood of scheduling conflicts, as the responses collected in table 4.08 show.

Table 4.08. Selection of responses to Q22 about the *most stressful aspect(s) of*

working as a professional translator that highlight challenges associated with working for multiple clients.

> Regulars sending you jobs all at the same time and all with urgent deadlines, deciding which ones to accept/reject
>
> [Female respondent, Spain
> T&I-related MA, graduated before 2007
> Medical/pharmaceutical, chemistry, technical
> Regularly worked for five to ten clients in the past 6 months
> Reported weekly workload: 30 to 40 hours; *I would like to work more, but can't find the work*
> Reported stress level: 3 out of 10]
>
> […] having to fit in stuff for regular clients when I'd rather just concentrate on something I'm working on.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/design, literary and genre fiction
> Regularly worked for five to ten clients in the past 6 months
> Reported weekly workload: 30 to 40 hours; *I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests*
> Reported stress level: 7 out of 10]
>
> Meeting tight deadlines under high workload from different clients
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, marketing/advertising, tourism, IT
> Regularly worked for five to ten clients in the past 6 months
> Reported weekly workload: 30 to 40 hours; *I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests*
> Reported stress level: 2 out of 10]
>
> Juggling workflow, as it's quite common for three clients to want delivery on the same day.
>
> [Female respondent, UK

Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007

Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy

Regularly worked for two to five clients in the past 6 months

Reported weekly workload: 30 to 40 hours; *I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests*

Reported stress level: 7 out of 10]

Handling multiple clients at the same time.

[Female respondent, Indonesia

No T&I-related degree

Finance, business

Regularly worked for more than ten clients in the past 6 months

Reported weekly workload: over 40 hours; *I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests*

Reported stress level: 8 out of 10]

Most stressful is when I have to refuse orders from dear clients due to overload of work already booked with me for other (often even not so dear) clients.

[Female respondent, Austria

CERAPT [Czech Board for Translation and Interpreting] Exam, passed before 2007

Combines self-employment as a translator and interpreter with running a B&B

Legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, arts, hospitality

Regularly worked for five to ten clients in the past 6 months

Reported weekly workload: over 40 hours; *I would like to work more, but can't find the work*

Reported stress level: 2 out of 10]

Dealing with emails and knowing that many (potential) clients expect me to be available and to reply promptly all the time

[Female respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree

IT/User interfaces, marketing/advertising, website localisation, e-learning, e-commerce, tourism

Regularly worked for two to five clients in the past 6 months

Reported weekly workload: 20 to 30 hours; *I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests*
Reported stress level: 4 out of 10]

When all my clients want things at the same time.

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Business, marketing/advertising, arts
Regularly worked for five to ten clients in the past 6 months
Reported weekly workload: 30 to 40 hours; *My current workload suits me perfectly*
Reported stress level: 3 out of 10]

When several jobs come in at the same time, and it is hard to say no to regular clients

[Female respondent, Denmark
BSc in Information Science with German as a subsidiary subject and Postgraduate Special Language Diploma, graduated before 2007
Translates part-time while drawing a retirement pension
Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles
Regularly worked for more than ten clients in the past 6 months
Reported weekly workload: *Varies wildly from one week to the next*; *I have already reduced my workload*
Reported stress level: 6 out of 10]

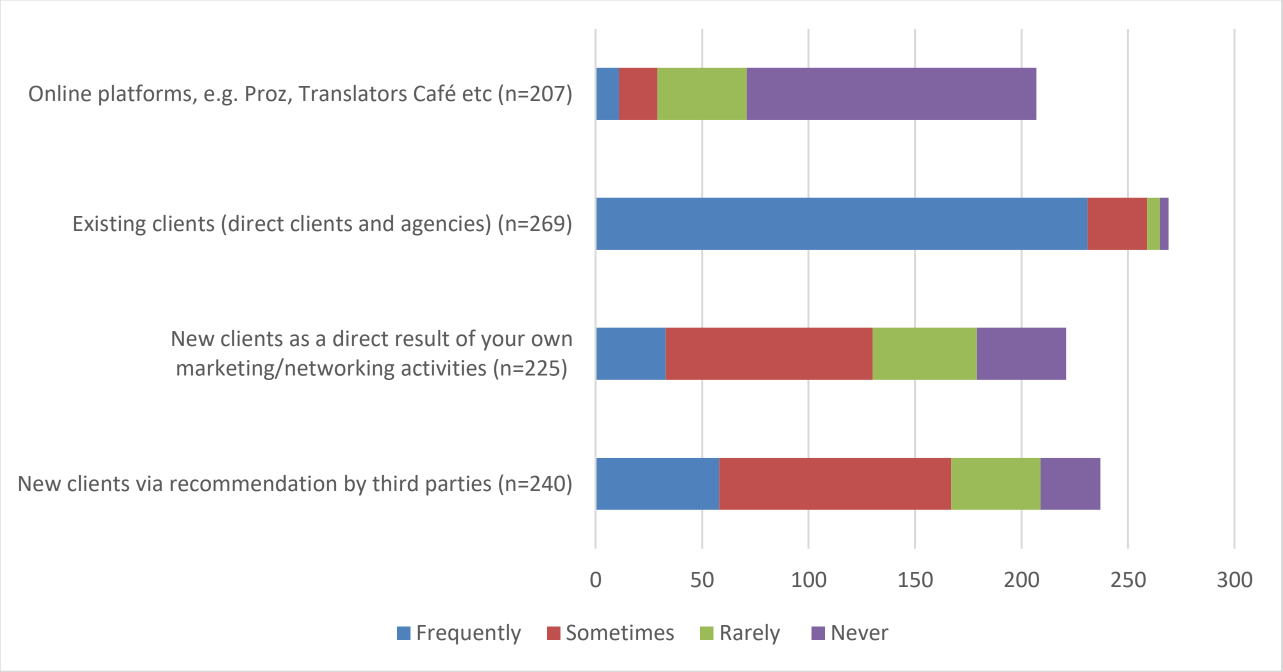
The problem is, that I have a number of regular clients [who] provide me with jobs on a regular basis. They usually have smaller projects with tight deadlines (same day/next day), but if 5 clients send me a smaller job, that still adds up. But I don't want to turn them down, because if I do, they might switch the whole workload to another translator.

[*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on time management, for which no background information was collected*]

While the risk of losing a client altogether is greater with direct than with agency clients, even project managers at large LSPs with thousands of freelance contractors on their databases tend to lose interest in translators who refuse too many jobs. There is also a common perception among self-employed professionals – shared by many survey respondents – that it is often harder to raise rates for existing clients than to find new ones. Finally, working regularly for the same clients – especially if the work is repetitive – is more likely to allow translators to stay in their comfort zones but less likely to produce a state of "arousal" in accordance with Robinson's (2012: 201-204) classification. As the correlations presented above show, the benefits of working for multiple clients outweighed the drawbacks for the survey population as a whole.

85.87 per cent (231 of 269 respondents who answered this part of Q12) said they frequently received work from existing clients, as shown in figure 4.ix below.

Figure 4.ix. Distribution of responses to Q12 *[Looking back over the last 6 months, where did you get your work from?]*.



While several respondents identify communication with clients ("client interactions like negotiating rates and or deadlines", "dealing with publishers and contracts", "talking to clients on the phone"…) as stressful in and of itself, others specifically refer to dealing with "inattentive" or "thoughtless" editors and "difficult", "unreasonable", "completely oblivious", "unprofessional" or "argumentative" clients with "unrealistic" expectations. One respondent's experience of "[b]eing subject to the whims of client/publisher/publisher's accountant!" describes a general lack of agency and control over his working conditions.

Many respondents single out specific aspects they find particularly stressful or unpleasant in their relationships with clients. In addition to issues relating to deadlines and time management, a number of these comments refer to the lack and/or quality of instructions and/or feedback:

- "dealing with feedback/amendments from agencies who e.g. haven't understood the subject matter"
- "Having to discuss the same basic things with clients all over again, e.g. how many words can be translated in one day, which reference materials should be provided, etc. Discussing prices."
- "[…] insufficient information/context when translating. No place to discuss issues with the client when working via an agency."
- "Conflicts with clients/fellow translators about terminology."
- "[…] lack of feedback […]"
- "Wasting my time with unprofessional and useless agency feedback. Professional feedback is great though."
- "getting 'urgent' emails that aren't actually urgent at all hours of the day from agencies in other time zones"
- "insufficient, or complicated and contradictory translation brief."
- "[…] not to be in contact with the client and not always be able to ask for explanations (when working for agencies), waiting for jobs/projects."
- "[…] non-existent support/help from clients, long waiting times for answers"

- "Deadlines being brought forward. Clients who keep changing their minds, or suddenly produce new versions. Trying to make a text publishable when there are inconsistencies and mistakes and/or the clients haven't read the journal's requirements, or are slow to answer queries."
- "Dealing directly with an author who really doesn't like me or whom I don't like."
- "[…] lack of clear instructions from the client or the corresponding PM."
- "Translating a tough text in time that is too short."
- "[…] Time-consuming negotiation process – emailing back and forth."
- "Justifying to the client that my choice is the best."
- "[…] juggling clients who are late delivering, […]"
- "Dealing with emails and knowing that many (potential) clients expect me to be available and to reply promptly all the time; […]"
- "When clients add scope but ask for it to be done within the earlier estimate and the time it takes to write an email educating them about the inappropriateness of that."
- "[…] misunderstandings about linguistic matters from clients' side"
- "deadline changes"

Responses to Q20. *If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?* include an extensive wish list of attributes that would characterise an ideal – as one respondent puts it, "adorable" – client (bold highlighting added to emphasise relevant wording):

- "Clients who are more organised and write better."
- "clients that **appreciate quality** and are **ready to pay for it** what it is worth"
- "A good, **reliable** client that I have a **good relationship** with."
- "I would like it if more of my clients **understood the work I do**."
- "That clients would **respect my knowledge**, I'm fed up with bad suggestions/corrections"
- "**Ongoing relationships** with regular clients"
- "Clients as passionate about quality as me"

- “Clients (especially non-native speakers) **simply accepting what I have done as correct** and not ignoring my solutions or requiring explanations for things that subsequently are proven to be correct.”
- “Finding clients that **pay my rates**”

4.7. Comparison between Subsets of Least and Most Content Respondents

The findings presented in figure 4.iii.a above show that the highest mean average stress levels are reported by respondents who report typical weekly workloads of over 40 hours and respondents who would like to work less but cannot afford to reduce their workload. Respondents in the latter subset also report the lowest levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration, while respondents who are satisfied with their current workloads report the lowest mean average stress levels combined with the highest levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration. Taken together, these figures indicate a statistical, potentially causal, nexus between stress and satisfaction with current workload and remuneration.

Based on these findings, a direct comparison between two clusters of outliers, namely the subsets of the *most content* and *least content* respondents, was undertaken with the objective of establishing whether it might be possible to isolate any factors – e.g. relating to specialist domains, language combinations, current location, academic training… – that differentiate the two groups from each other or from the overall survey population and could therefore reasonably be assumed to increase the likelihood of greater or lesser satisfaction with current working conditions. Secondly, the comparison was designed to explore any differences in respondents’ attitudes towards their working conditions and professional identities that might be informed by different – i.e. more negative or more positive – experiences of these working conditions.

The *most content* subset includes respondents who reported above-mean average levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration and below-mean average levels of stress and are satisfied with their current workload.

The *least content* subset includes respondents who reported below-mean average levels of satisfaction with their current remuneration and above-mean average levels of stress and would like to work less but feel they cannot afford to reduce their workload – who, in other words, experience the combined pressure of too much work and a precarious financial situation.

The observations in this section are not intended as a prescriptive formula for success, but rather as a descriptive attempt to identify factors that may improve the chances of greater sustainable satisfaction.

The **proportion of respondents who specialise in translating literary fiction** is greater among the subset of *least content* respondents than in the overall survey population by 17.4 percentage points, and almost two and a half times as high as among the subset of *most content* respondents. Similar patterns of variation apply to specialisation in genre fiction and poetry. **Legal, business, finance and medical/pharmaceutical translation** are all underrepresented in both subsets compared to the overall survey population, suggesting that most respondents specialising in these domains are neither extremely satisfied nor extremely dissatisfied with their working conditions. The proportion of respondents specialising in translations for the **engineering, architecture/design, marketing/advertising, IT/user interfaces and**

arts sectors is greater among the subset of *most content* respondents than in the overall survey population and in the subset of *least content* respondents.

The **proportion of respondents who are members of a professional translators' associations** is higher among the subset of *most content* respondents than in the overall survey population by 9.8 percentage points and greater than in the subset of *least content* respondents by 13.9 percentage points. While these figures may suggest a direct causal link between professional success and membership in a relevant professional association, they may also be indicative of an unfortunate cycle whereby some respondents who are struggling to earn a living from translation or interpreting potentially miss out on opportunities for networking, career advice and professional development because being in a precarious financial situation may make them reluctant to spend money on membership fees – and perhaps also reluctant to expose themselves to situations where they would be rubbing shoulders with more successful colleagues. Further research would be required to establish a more robust understanding of any causalities at work here.

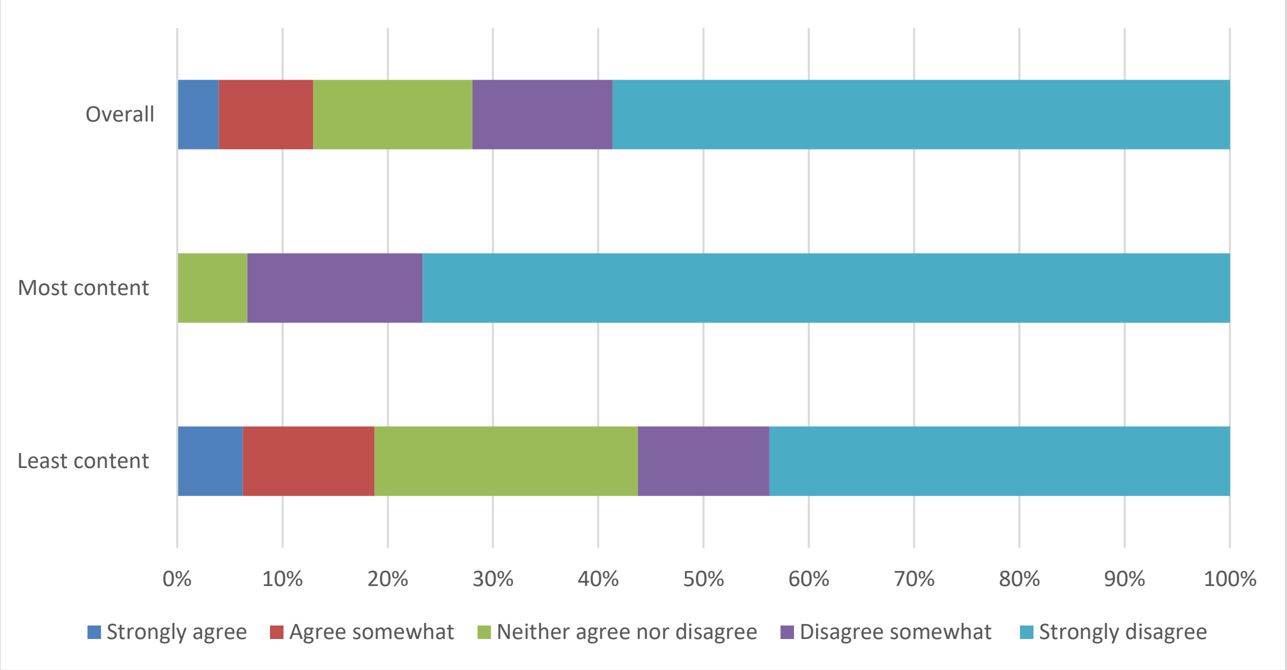
Conversely, the **proportion of respondents who have undertaken an internship or work experience placement** is lower among the subset of *most content* respondents than in the overall survey population by 6 percentage points and lower than in the subset of *least content* respondents by 11.4 percentage points.

Respondents who **identify as female** are overrepresented in both subsets compared to their proportion of the overall survey population, while respondents who **identify as male** are underrepresented in both subsets.

Whereas **respondents from the cohort of most recent graduates** (after 2012) are overrepresented in the *most content* subset and underrepresented in the *least content* subset relative to their proportion of the overall survey population, the opposite applies to their immediate predecessors, who graduated between 2007 and 2012. (See section 3.3 of this thesis for a discussion of the anomalies in the findings for this particular subset.)

Differences in respondents' outlook and attitudes – e.g. in relation to the *least* and *most stressful* and/or *enjoyable* aspects of professional translation – are more likely to be the result rather than the cause of varying levels of satisfaction and stress. The unanimous disagreement with the contention *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway* among respondents in the *most content* subset may be interpreted either as evidence of a lack of flexibility – a refusal to adapt to changing circumstances and consider alternative options – or as further confirmation of these respondents' satisfaction with their working conditions and career choices; I believe it is both.

Figure 4.x. Strength of (dis)agreement with the contention *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my life anyway* in the subsets of most and least content respondents, compared to overall survey population.



4.8. Statistical Impact of Gender Identification

Out of the various metrics I compared, a gender gap or imbalance was most visible with regard to respondents' workload management. Compared to respondents who identify as female, respondents identifying as male were found to be less likely (by a margin of 11.2 percentage points) to be satisfied with their current workload, and two and a half times as likely to report typical workloads of over 40 hours a week (see table 4.10 for more detail). They are also less likely, by a margin of almost ten percentage points, to work between 20 and 30 hours (which several respondents specify as an ideal workload to aim for, as the comments collected in table 4.09 below show). One male respondent acknowledges:

> I would like to strike a better balance than I currently manage in my work/life balance, but I often have a high capacity for working long hours so this is challenging.
>
> [Male respondent, UK

> T&I-related MSc from a UK university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> Finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, architecture/design, automotive, academic articles, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction]

(In answer to Q15 about satisfaction with current remuneration, the same respondent adds: "I make a decent living, but this is because I do a lot of work. Would like to shift to doing less work for a better rate.")

Table 4.09. Selection of free-text comments relating to respondents' (ideal or actual) work/life balance.

> […] I think I have a good balance at 25 hours a week in the daytime, plus the occasional evening, but there are times when I work every evening (more like 40 hours a week) and then it becomes unsustainable. […]
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007
>
> Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, children's books, magazine articles, news and current affairs]

> I generally work 25 hours/week including admin. Since I work on creative material, I find it's the maximum I can stay really focused for.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
>
> Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> I calculated my rates to work 25 hours/week, it seems to be pretty accurate as I just started.
>
> I had some "famine days", but I think 25 hs/week is perfect for me
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
>
> Master's degree equivalent, CI3M (professional qualification), graduated after 2012

Marketing/advertising, arts, academic articles, non-fiction books, personal development]

In general I try to keep it at 6 hours per day max, preferably five.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, games]

Because I work as a freelancer, I can take as much work (or as little) as I want, and organise my schedule as I want. For example, I choose to work 6 hours max a day because this way, I can easily find time for sports and grocery shopping at times when shops are deserted, for example. So in general, it allows a very good quality of life, I think.

[Female respondent, France
T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books]

While these findings may suggest that respondents identifying as female overall have a healthier work/life balance, it is worth bearing in mind that of over thirty references to the impact of childcare arrangements and other family commitments on respondents' professional practice in free-text responses and comments, all but one are from respondents who identify as female (see section 1.6.3). Combined with the observation that respondents who identify as female were found to be almost twice as likely as their male counterparts to select the option *I would like to work more, but external circumstances are stopping me*, it seems likely that respondents who identify as female more frequently take on other responsibilities in addition to their professional careers.

As indicated in section 1.6.3 above, the findings of the 2019 “Expectation and Concerns of the European Language Industry” survey show a “revenue gap between men and women” for respondents who identified as independent professionals. Specifically, male respondents in this category were slightly less likely than female respondents to report annual incomes below €50,000, but substantially more likely to report incomes between €50,000 and €100,000 and more than twice as likely to report incomes between €100,000 and €250,000.

It may be wishful thinking on the part of a female researcher and practitioner to wonder whether more realistic reporting and/or less (perceived) need for braggadocio among female respondents may be a contributing factor here. Less speculatively, it is worth noting that the greater likelihood among male respondents to my own survey to work more hours per week would result in a higher income if average rates were identical for both genders.

Whether the latter is in fact the case, or whether there is a correlation between gender and hourly or per-word rates charged for translation work, would be a question worth exploring in further research. The quantitative findings presented in section 4.4 above (see figure 4.iv.b) do suggest that female respondents are more likely than their male counterparts to subcontract work from LSPs, and three times as likely to list LSPs as their only primary work providers. Conversely, male respondents were found more likely to work for direct clients in the corporate and institutional sectors.

The 2019 “Expectation and Concerns of the European Language Industry” survey also found a correlation between higher reported annual revenues and lower levels of subcontracting activity (see section 0.3 above), which is in keeping with the experiences and expectations voiced by some participants in the debate quoted in section 2.2 regarding differences between rates paid by agencies and direct clients. (The discussion thread starts with one member asking: "[…] Let's suppose that your customer rate is 0.12 so let's say that the agency's one should be 50% of that rate. Am I right?")

Accordingly, the difference in subcontracting activity between male and female respondents to my survey may be cause for concern especially in the context of the arguments also discussed in section 4.4 about the respective benefits of subcontracting versus working for direct clients. These findings also lend credence to Katan's (2009: 149) unsubstantiated claim that "the cottage industry nature of mainly female translators" is to blame for the "easy exploitation and LAP ["lower autonomy professional"] status and conditions" of translators.

Table 4.10. Responses to questions 13 to 15 on transition into professional career, management of current workload and satisfaction with current remuneration and Q22 on current stress levels filtered by gender identification; substantial variation between genders highlighted in darkening shades of orange from just below 5 to above 10 percentage points.)

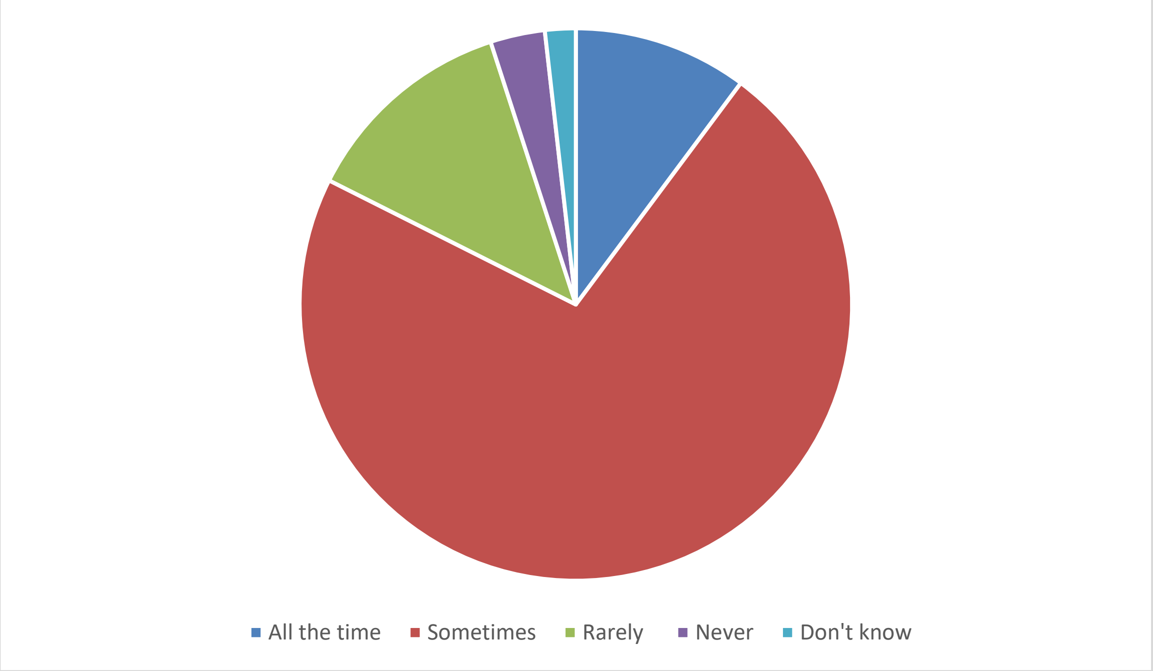
	All respondents who answered each question	Of these:	
		Respondents who identify as female	Respondents who identify as male
How long it took respondents to make a living from professional translation/interpreting			
	N=292	n=217	n=67
Less than a year	24.7%	22.58%	31.34%
1 to 2 years	25.7%	25.8%	23.88%
2 to 5 years	19.9%	18.89%	22.38%
More than five years	7.5%	9.21%	2.98% (2)
I still can't make a living	14%	13.82%	13.43%
Not applicable	7.2%	8.75%	4.47% (3)
Prefer not to say	1% (3)	0.92% (2)	1.49% (1)
Number of clients respondents have regularly worked for over the past 6 months			
	n=278	n=206	n=64
One or two	15.8%	16.5%	15.62%
Between two and five	37.8%	37.37%	37.5%
Between five and ten	29.1%	30.09%	28.12%

More than ten	15.5%	15.53%	14.06%
Don’t know	0.7% (2)	0.48% (1)	1.56% (1)
Prefer not to say	1.1% (3)	-	3.12% (2)
Hours per week spent on translation work (including proofreading/editing, transcreation etc.)			
	n=284	n=212	n=64
Over 40	13%	9.43%	23.43%
30 to 40	26.4%	27.35%	23.43%
20 to 30	28.5%	31.13%	21.87%
10 to 20	12.3%	12.26%	10.93%
Under 10	3.2% (9)	2.83% (6)	4.68% (3)
Varies wildly	15.5%	16.5%	12.5%
Don’t know	0.7% (2)	0.47% (1)	1.56% (1)
Prefer not to say	-	-	1.56% (1)
Hours per week spent on marketing, invoicing and other admin tasks			
	n=278	n=206	n=63
Over 20	0.4% (1)	0.48% (1)	-
15 to 20	1.8% (5)	1.94% (4)	1.58% (1)
10 to 15	4.7% (13)	3.39% (7)	7.93% (5)
5 to 10	20.5%	21.35%	19.04%
Under 5	56.8%	55.82%	60.31%
Varies wildly	13.3%	14.56%	9.52%
Don’t know	2.2% (6)	1.94% (4)	3.17% (2)
Prefer not to say	0.4% (1)	0.48% (1)	-
Satisfaction with current workload			
	n=277	n=206	n=63
I have already reduced my workload	5.4% (15)	5.33% (11)	6.34% (4)
My current workload suits me perfectly	37.2%	39.8%	28.57%
I would like to work more, but can’t find the work	16.2%	14.56%	19.04%
I would like to work more, but external circumstances are stopping me	15.2%	16.99%	9.52%
I would like to work less, but can’t afford to reduce my workload	11.9%	11.65%	12.69%
I would like to work less, but don’t like to disappoint clients	13%	11.16%	17.46%
Prefer not to say	1.1% (3)	0.48% (1)	3.17% (2)
Reported levels of stress and satisfaction with current remuneration (on a scale of 1 to 10)			
Satisfaction with current rates/ current salary as in-house translators	6.0 5.21	5.99 5.47	6.09 5.0
Stress levels	5.13	5.20	4.90

4.9. Optimal Experience: Translation at Its "Fastest, Most Reliable and Most Enjoyable"

Responses to Q19 about the frequency with which respondents experience the "flow" state (Robinson 2012: 203-204, see section 2.4 above) go some way towards clarifying why many feel so passionately attached to "translating itself", as opposed to other aspects of their professional practice. While free-text comments relating to Q19 registered a range of attitudes (from "Nice quote! I totally agree with it" and "I'm so happy now I know what it's called!" to "This is completely irrelevant to me"), a majority of respondents seemed intimately familiar with the experience.

Figure 4.xi. Distribution of responses to Q19 about the frequency of experiencing the flow state.



A number of respondents supplied their own descriptions of "get[ting] hypnotized by a translation", "totally engulfed in translation", "fully absorbed in my work" or feeling "in the zone":

- "like stepping out of time"
- "a state of absolute concentration"

- “a very focused trance-like state”
- “When you find yourself in the groove time just flies and it feels good”
- “When translating a book I love. I get up in the morning and can’t wait to get back into it.”
- “I would refer to it as inspiration because it enables a few translation jobs [to] become master pieces.”

Other respondents used comments to challenge different aspects of Robinson’s definition as quoted in the survey question:

> I doubt that this state is “most reliable”, but it certainly is enjoyable
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Non-fiction books, literary fiction, genre fiction]

> I’m not sure I would agree with creative, but I definitely find it enjoyable and agree that it can become addictive.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated before 2007
> Medical/pharmaceutical, agricultural, international development]

> I experience this much more often when translating literature than when translating art texts (the flip side of my practice)! Invariably, the “flow” then needs to be re-read and revised diligently before achieving the best possible draft
>
> [Respondent based in France
> Research-based MPhil in poetry translation
> Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary fiction and genre fiction]

A few also indicated that they would “need an option between *Sometimes* and *All the time* (as in Frequently)”, “very often”, “most of the time” or “at least once a day”. Only nine respondents reported that they *never* experienced flow, while five selected the option *Don’t know*.

The large number of additional free-text comments (99) also indicates that this was a topic that resonated with many respondents. Many respondents used comments to describe factors that facilitate or impede flow. As in the examples presented in table 4.11 below, these typically refer to the subject matter, type, style and quality of the source text – as one respondent points out: “Some subjects are more entrancing than others.” Some respondents also highlight the importance of an emotional connection to the source text. Other constraints, which can be classed as extrinsic to the translation process itself, include physical and/or mental fatigue, use of CAT tools and tight deadlines (although one respondent reports: “Strangely enough, I sometimes experience this when the deadline is approaching fast.”) A number of respondents talk about specific strategies they use to achieve this state, as shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.11. Selection of free-text comments relating to the subject, type, style and quality of the source text as factors that facilitate or impede flow.

If the text is really well-written, and I’m somehow emotionally and intellectually in sync with the author, then it happens, and it is indeed a joy.

[Female respondent, Switzerland
T&I-related diploma (“roughly equivalent to an M.A. in translation studies”) from a Swiss university, graduated before 2007
Literary fiction]

Definitely when it’s a text close to my heart – usually academic ones. An ex-partner once said she had “never seen me so happy” as when translating

[Female respondent, Finland
MA Polish and History, graduated before 2007
Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles in the humanities – “esp. history and theology”]

This depends largely on the source text, of course. A lot of the material I work on somewhat hinders this state, but I do experience it with nice, creative source texts, especially if I have a good day and feel creative. I also find that this depends largely on how well the source text is written. A well-written one tends to inspire me more.

[Male respondent, Luxembourg
T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts]

It happens when the topic is interesting and there is no serious pressure (tight deadlines, etc.), so not always.

[Female respondent, UK
BA in EN & ES, “1 out of 4 modules in translation and MA in EN, 1 out of 4 modules in translation”, graduated before 2007
Arts, psychology]

Depending on the topic, the author, and the difficulty (“just right”)

[Female respondent, Germany
T&I-related diploma from a German university, graduated before 2007
Medical/pharmaceutical, non-fiction books, literary fiction]

That’s how I feel when I’m translating material I love reading, like the non-fiction books I have translated, but also when I'm translating personal letters and diaries where I feel I am opening up a window into a past world for my client which they previously were unable to see.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and diploma, graduated before 2007
Non-fiction books, personal documents, memoirs, diaries, letters (incl Suetterlin transcription)]

It has to be a topic that I know and like. It occurs with texts that I can translate more freely without clinging too much to the original text.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/User interfaces, automotive, printing]

It's beautiful when you have an interesting text with a subject you know inside-out, you can be creative without having to write a text from scratch and you turn it into a great-sounding text in another language...

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Legal, Business, IT/User interfaces, Marketing/Advertising, Academic articles, Sports]

This is something that I experience when working on an interesting and challenging project, however, these rarely pay well. Document translation is hardly something to get excited over, however, the returns are significantly better.

[Female respondent, Australia
No T&I-related degree
Combines employment as an interpreter with self-employment as a translator, with "a fair bit of variation from year to year [as to] which brings in the greatest income within a year"
Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

When I translate books; not really commercial documents. To me, the difference is that with commercial documents, no matter how interesting they are to translate, I would never read them if I weren't getting paid to translate them. But I translate non-fiction books that I would actually read in [my source language] even if I weren't translating them.

[Female respondent, United States
No T&I-related degree
Marketing/advertising, international development, non-fiction books]

Maybe I would be able to experience this state if I was working on larger projects. The texts I work on are usually rather short and technical and don't leave much space for creativity.

[Female respondent, Germany
T&I-related MA from a German university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Employed as an in-house translator
Medical, clinical research, certificates, marketing, general texts]

Only possible with certain types of text – not with e.g. migration-related documents required here in Australia.

[Female respondent, Australia
T&I-related BA from a UK university, graduated before 2007
Legal, finance, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles, customs, international affairs/policymaking]

I don't think patentese lends itself to producing a "subliminal state."

[Female respondent, United States
No T&I-related degree
Patents, engineering]

[…] I do not experience flow very often because most of the texts I translate are uninspired and uninspiring.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, games]

Table 4.12. Selection of free-text comments relating to strategies respondents use to achieve the flow state.

This is within my own control but I'm often distracted or stressed by deadlines. It works when I am disciplined, listening to music instead of Radio 4, no checking of internet and emails, and just being able to focus. Interestingly it often happens when I'm out of the house, either travelling /waiting for a flight, or sitting in a cafe for a fixed amount of time. It's something I really want to have more often, as it makes me v happy.

[Female respondent, UK
Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007
Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy]

This is precisely the problem. I know what he is talking about and I think I often procrastinate in order to force myself into situations with time pressure to get closer to it. However, I very rarely find myself very deep into this kind of state.

[Male respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, architecture/design, visual arts, film]

I need to get there and I'm perfecting my ways to do that (music, concentration, etc.).

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
T&I-related MA from a Czech university
Legal, finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

When translating a book, I do need to give myself long days to work in order to get into this state ("getting into the zone" as I describe it) but it can take a long time before I clear the decks and make enough time to focus to this degree. When I do, I am much more productive than when I try to combine translation with admin and other projects.

[Female respondent, UK
Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007
Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction, genre fiction, children's books, magazine articles, news and current affairs]

> […] I'm in the lucky position to pick assignments according to the quality of the copy. I will (gently) ditch clients who are inept even in their first language precisely for this reason: It takes too much time to bring their texts to life, and the "flow" never kicks in, which can mean that you spend too much time on such an assignment and thus lose out on revenue. Conversely, I'll gladly accept any sort of assignment from an eloquent source (among my clients, specifically in the marketing/PR departments).
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design]

4. 10. Health Issues

In the 2016 UK Translator Survey conducted by the European Commission Representation in the UK, the Chartered Institute of Linguists and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting, a "significant number of respondents misread the question [about computer-related health-problems] to be about computer problems rather than health concerns" (ibid.: 43). Others reported a variety of conditions ranging from repetitive strain injury and carpal tunnel syndrome to migraines, back, neck, shoulder and joint pains, from eyestrain/deteriorating eyesight to collapsed veins.

In the quantitative study conducted by Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al. (2016) on the "ergonomics of professional translation", the researchers found that some of the work-related health conditions most frequently reported by the survey's 1,850 respondents

> would seem to be directly related to the cognitive effort involved in intensive screen work (e.g. headache, burning eyes, visual fatigue, pain in the neck or shoulder) and the physical

> consequences of sitting for extended periods at a computer workstation and inputting text (e.g. pain in arms or hands, back pain). Other health complaints (e.g. nervousness, difficulty concentrating, general weakness, sleeping difficulties) might be indications of stress and cognitive overload due to less-than-optimal working conditions, perhaps related to organizational ergonomics. This explanation is supported by the fact that over one-fifth (22%) of the respondents said that they mostly or always felt stressed because of their work, with little difference between the [subsets of freelance, institutional and commercial translators]. Almost the same proportion (21%) reported that they did not cope with stress very well or at all. (ibid.: 13)

These findings lead the authors to conclude "that information about workplace ergonomics should be incorporated into translator education and continuing professional development" (ibid.: 17).

Although my own survey did not include a question about work-related health issues, a number of respondents brought them up of their own accord in answer to Q 21 about the *most unpleasant aspect* of their professional practice. Many of these responses made general reference to "sitting in front of a computer all day" ("being seated for long times", "immobility"), while some respondents listed specific physical issues they had experienced in the past or were currently experiencing.

Greater awareness of relevant risk factors, as suggested by Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al., might help to alleviate the concerns expressed in these comments:

> There are obviously more stressful jobs, but my mental health definitely suffers from my work.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
>
> BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012

> Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"
> Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

> Health concerns: read the most recent CIOL survey on translators' working conditions to get a real (and shocking...) picture of how our work impacts on our health and how little we can do to prevent that if we want to maintain a reasonable income...
> [Female respondent, UK
> PGDipTrans from a UK university, graduated before 2007
> Legal, academic articles]

It is perhaps worth noting, though, that – despite the health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle (cf. Huysman et al. 2015) – "sitting at a computer all day", with full or partial control over ergonomic factors such as room temperature, airflow, access to windows, ambient noise and timing of breaks (Ehrensberger-Dow, Massey et al. 2016), is not a particularly uncomfortable position when compared to other working environments even in developed economies with high HSE standards (cf. Bloodworth 2018, Ehrenreich 2001).

4.11. Taking Charge

While the relentless time pressure that clearly dominates many respondents' experience of their professional practice can easily seem like a natural or inevitable part of working as a self-employed translator, it is worth remembering how relatively recent a phenomenon this is. Only thirty years ago, professional translators were working at a pace that "was leisurely by today's standards", as Király (2000: 10) reports:

> In 1988, when I began working part-time as a freelance translator in Germany, […] I often had days or even weeks of

> advance warning, days to search for terminology or background information in the library while I waited for the source texts to arrive, days allotted for translating and typing up the translations, days for the postal workers to get the translations back to the publisher […].

The "functionalist" theory developed in Translation Studies departments at Austrian and German universities during that time (cf. Nord 1997) placed translators on an equal footing with clients, or work providers, who trusted their professional expertise. As discussed above, professional translators today are increasingly likely to work in "complex production networks" (Abdallah 2011: 131), while "dyadic relations between the client and translator" (Abdallah 2012: 30; cf. section 0.3) are becoming less common.

It is obviously impossible to turn back the clock to 1988, nor would many translators want to give up the convenience of online research, let alone go back to working on a typewriter. While it may be equally impossible to reverse the acceleration of "instantaneous time" (Cronin, loc. cit.), my findings do suggest that there is an important point to be made about the psychological benefits of feeling in control of one's own time.

"*Hmm. Stress mach ich mir selber, den lass ich mir nicht aufbürden […],*" as one respondent asserts: "any stress is of my own making, not something I allow [others] to impose on me […]." McKay elaborates on this distinction in a blog post on "Work/life balance: 'I can't' versus 'I choose not to'":

> The "I can't…" mindset is harmful because it deflects responsibility away from the person who's really in charge: you! And when you start to be more accepting of your own choices, you're much less stressed and frustrated, because you realize

> that you're making a deliberate choice, not being backed into a corner by forces you can't control.
>
> For example: when my daughter was little, I definitely felt torn between my desire to spend a lot of time with her, and my desire to run a thriving business and have a fulfilling career.
>
> Things changed when I realized that rather than being a cork in the sea of working motherhood and work/life balance, I was making deliberate choices based on my priorities. […] Coincidentally, I think that making that mindset shift also frees you up to actually enjoy the time, rather than feeling pulled in a million directions.
>
> (http://www.thoughtsontranslation.com/2017/10/02/worklife-balance-cant-versus-choose-not/, last retrieved 27 September 2019)

Neidhardt's account of her early career trajectory (Neidhardt et al. 2016: 10-11) suggests that – beyond the initial transition into professional practice discussed in chapter 3 above – there is a further progression from economic survival to sustainable success in the sense discussed in section 2.2. From "twiddl[ing] my thumbs" as a recent graduate, with only the occasional "underpaid" agency job coming in, she has now got to a position where she can "comfortably earn a living as a translator" in the familiar entrepreneurial mould. (Her book contains much useful advice on setting up and running a small business under German tax law, and on the importance of projecting a professional attitude to existing and prospective clients.) Even better, she can "afford to turn down jobs because they are too badly paid, because the texts are boring or because the client is hard to get on with."

Several of my survey respondents report similar success stories:

> I guess I have already eliminated the unpleasant factors from my professional life.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
>
> T&I-related diploma, graduated between 2007 and 2012

> Legal, business, marketing/advertising, engineering]

> I have weeded out the clients I am not happy with, which is quite a luxury, but I have more offers of work than I can take on!
>
> [Female respondent, Denmark
> BSc in Information Science with German as a subsidiary subject and Postgraduate Special Language Diploma, graduated before 2007
> Translates part-time while drawing a retirement pension
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

> I've been working long enough and built up enough of a reputation/client base that I'm usually in the fortunate position of being able to reject all jobs that create too much stress. Or not care if I don't get them, which means I can set my own conditions. I don't think this applies to most translators
>
> [*Quoted from a response to the follow-up survey on time management, for which no background information was collected*]

Developing the mental and financial resilience to reject unsatisfactory working conditions – badly paid jobs, inconvenient or unrealistic deadlines, unappealing subject matter or all of the above – requires time, experience and confidence in a solid client base and/or good marketing skills that will compensate for any loss of income. For many professional translators in the early stages of their careers, this may be an aspiration rather than a reality, as suggested in this comment by a respondent who mentions "[t]ight deadlines and antisocial working hours" as the most unpleasant aspect of her professional practice:

> […] Though obviously it cuts both ways as theoretically freelancers have plenty of freedom to work (or not work!) whenever they please. But you have to be earning plenty to be in this position.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA, CIoL Diploma in Translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Business, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive]

While reported stress levels remain consistent between the cohorts of earliest and most recent graduates and satisfaction with current remuneration is actually highest for the post-2012 cohort, the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with their current workload is substantially higher for the cohort of respondents who graduated before 2007, as figures 4.xii.a and b below show.

Figure 4.xii.a. Reported stress levels and satisfaction with current remuneration for different cohorts.

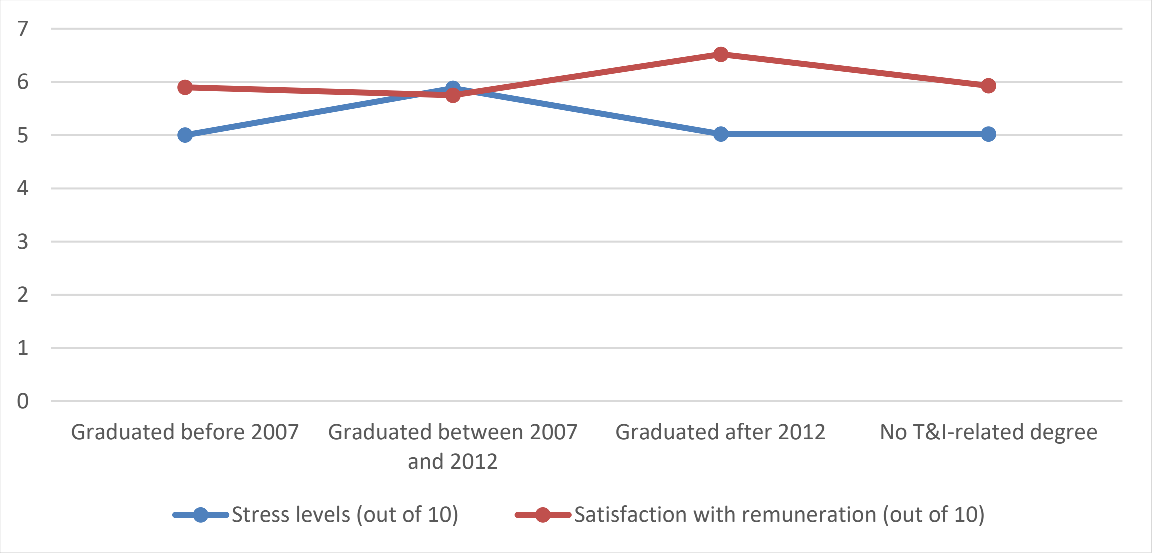
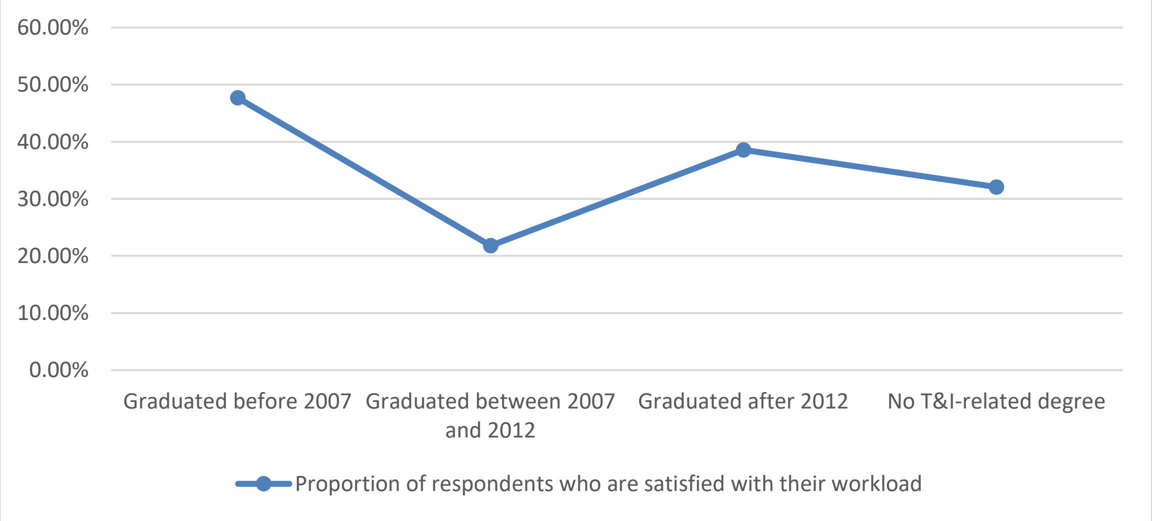


Figure 4.xii.b. Satisfaction with current workload for different cohorts.



For translators to thrive, and keep thriving, on their individual terms – as prosperous entrepreneurs (cf. Durban and Seidel 2010, Jenner and

Jenner 2010), passionate craftspeople, proud service providers... – is a lifelong work-in-progress, as Robinson (2012) argues. As such, it requires:

- regular reappraisal of personal and professional priorities
- awareness of and adaptation to changing market conditions
- engagement with emerging and evolving technologies.

The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that – despite available support in the form of physical and virtual networks, CPD offerings etc. – all of this is becoming harder to achieve under increasingly pressurised working conditions. The findings discussed in the following chapter indicate that the extent to which engagement with the external perspectives of academic scholarship can support this type of critical reflection on professional practice is a highly subjective and divisive issue that elicits strong feelings in the survey population.

Chapter 5

Relevance of Academic Theory to Professional Practice

5.1. Key Findings

Survey question 23 was designed to elicit information on respondents' opinions about the relevance of academic translation theory to their professional practice:

Q23. *Would you agree with Emma Wagner's claim that most professional translators "had a brief brush with theory in our student days, when we absorbed whatever was needed to get us through our exams... and then proceeded to forget it, as we got to grips with the realities of learning how to do the job"?*

Responses to this question, which are discussed in detail in the following sections, show that

- the relevance of translation theory to professional practitioners is a divisive issue that splits survey respondents into two subsets of roughly the same size (89 and 97 out of a total of 273 respondents who answered Q23) with opposing attitudes (*I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice* v. *I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators*). There is another smaller subset of respondents (47 of 273) who selected the third predefined multiple-choice option *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection*.
- Survey respondents with a translation- or interpreting-related degree are more likely to take a positive view of the relevance of translation theory to professional practice than those with no translation- or

interpreting-related degree. Respondents who completed their academic training after 2012 are more likely to take a positive view of the relevance of translation theory than respondents in any other subset tested here.

- Survey respondents who identify as male are more likely than respondents who identify as female to express a decisive opinion (either agreement or disagreement with Wagner's contention) on the relevance of translation theory to their professional practice. Respondents who identify as female are more likely than respondents who identify as male to select the predefined option *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection,* and also more likely to provide their own free-text answers under the multiple-choice option *Other*.
- Survey respondents who consider translation theory useful for their professional practice report slightly lower levels of stress than respondents in the other two subsets. Respondents in the time-poor subset report the highest levels of stress.
- Survey respondents in the time-poor segment are least satisfied with their current remuneration. Respondents who find translation theory irrelevant are most satisfied with their current remuneration.
- Survey respondents in the time-poor subset are more likely than respondents in the other two subsets to express agreement or strong agreement with the proposition *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my life anyway*.
- Survey respondents who consider translation theory useful are more likely than respondents in the other two subsets to single out "translating itself" as the *least stressful* aspect of their professional

practice, and less likely than respondents in the other two subsets to identify the freedom and flexibility of self-employment as the *least stressful* aspect of their professional practice.

- Assumptions suggested by some survey respondents themselves regarding the potential influence of differences between generations, locations and specialist domains on attitudes towards translation theory are partly borne out by the evidence, although given the size of some of the subsets tested above, these findings are probably more indicative than conclusive and would require more robust substantiation. Contrary to these assumptions, survey respondents specialising in legal translation are more likely than the subset of literary translators to find theory useful for their professional practice. Among the subsets tested here, survey respondents who specialise in literary translation are most likely to consider translation theory irrelevant, and least likely to say they do not usually have time for theoretical reflection.
- Survey respondents who consider translation theory useful for their professional practice are more likely to define themselves in empowering terms than respondents in the other two subsets. (These findings are discussed in section 6.4 of the next chapter in the context of respondents' perceptions of their professional identities as translators.)

Taken together, these findings support the assumption that professional practitioners' attitudes to academic theory are likely to be influenced by various factors including academic background, specialist domains, location and gender identification. However, the distribution of responses across all three predefined options (*disagree/agree/don't usually have time*) does not suggest that any one of these factors is dominant enough on its own to determine respondents' attitudes. Rather – with the possible exception of respondents in the time-poor subsets, as discussed above – they appear to be a matter of individual preference and experience, shaped but not determined by external factors. These attitudes, in turn, correlate with other preferences and experiences (e.g. definitions of professional identity, stress levels, satisfaction with current workload/remuneration) to form a fuller picture of how respondents perceive their working conditions in the current – and future – translation market, and what strategies they have developed to cope with the challenges inherent in these conditions.

5.2. Unavoidable Hazard, Added Value, Missed Opportunity or Academic Luxury?

"Messages from the ivory tower tend not to penetrate as far as the wordface."[38] (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 1) The challenge with which Emma

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[38] Chesterman questions Wagner's use of the latter term – though not the accusations of detached elitism implicit in the former, which in a sense form the basis for the exchanges between them – finding it "fascinating, but depressing". It suggests, Chesterman argues, that translation is grubby and "poorly paid" menial toil (ibid.: 14) rather than a noble intellectual pursuit. In response, Wagner points out that "translation is production-line writing under constraints". Like miners, she implies, translators are "getting valuable coal out of a difficult and inaccessible place and loading it (day in, day out) onto a conveyor belt that takes it up to the surface, where the people who need it can make use of it". Although Wagner is well aware that "miners work under much more difficult, noisy and dangerous conditions than we do" (ibid.), the metaphor strikes me as sufficiently evocative to serve as a useful shorthand for professional translation as an economic activity. At the same time, it

Wagner, who was at the time employed as a translator and translation manager at the European Commission in Luxembourg, opens her dialogue with Andrew Chesterman, then a professor of translation theory at the University of Helsinki, echoes an attitude shared by many practitioners, according to Katan's (2009) findings. In my own survey, the relevance of theory proved a controversial issue that elicited a larger number of additional comments than almost any other question and served as a useful barometer by which to gauge respondents' experiences and perceptions of other aspects of their professional practice.

Quoting two damning verdicts from the 1990s by established translators, both of whom comment on the irrelevance of Translation Studies beyond the academic community of scholars, Wagner herself observes that

> [m]ost of us had a brief brush with theory in our student days, when we absorbed whatever was needed to get us through our exams... and then proceeded to forget it, as we got to grips with the realities of learning how to do the job.

She goes on to ask Chesterman whether "anything [has] changed" since then:

> Have translation theorists produced anything of relevance for practising translators or their clients? [...] Can [translation theory] help us to become better translators and give us a feeling of self-esteem? (ibid.)

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is sufficiently provocative to serve as a useful reminder that professional translation *is* an economic as much as an intellectual activity: that it is, in fact, the economic demand for translation which, in a capitalist system, sustains the translator's – and perhaps, to some extent, the Translation Studies scholar's – intellectual indulgence in his or her craft. Neither Wagner nor Chesterman mentions that the term also raises the spectre of the miners' doomed fight against the economic obsolescence of their professional skills in 1980's Britain.

To a large extent, any answer to these questions will depend on how *theory* is defined within the broad church that is the discipline of Translation Studies – and how *practice* is defined within the even broader church that is professional translation. For the purpose of my present inquiry, and following on from the arguments developed in chapter 2 on *Theorising Professional Practice*, I will argue that (academic) *theor*y as referred to in the title of my thesis may relate to professional practice in a number of different ways, including but not limited to any of the following, in isolation or in combination:

- theory as instruction modelled on a desirable ideal of best practice;
- theory as analysis of existing practices, with or without reference to their situatedness in a cultural, historic and socio-economic context;
- theory as empowerment to bring about conditions that would support best practices:
    - a theoretical awareness of and reflection on ideal or desirable conditions under which professional practitioners thrive (the *best practice* referred to in the title of this thesis);
    - a theoretical awareness of and reflection on the gap between that ideal and the actual conditions shaping professional practice in the current market (the *market realities* referred to in the title of this thesis);
    - a theoretical awareness of and reflection on the factors causing the perceived gap between best practice and current market realities;

    - a theoretical awareness of and reflection on the conditions that would have to be in place to narrow that gap and/or create resistance to current market realities;
    - a theoretical awareness of and reflection on potential solutions that would contribute to the creation of such conditions;
- theory as external, or externalised, knowledge of practice;
- theory as resistance to a purely instrumental model of practice.

(That these are all, in a sense, instrumental models of theory is a reflection of the terms in which this present enquiry engages with the question of the relationship between theory and practice, rather than an intentional move to make theory subservient or secondary to practice.)

When Wagner and Chesterman posed the question "Can Theory Help Translators?" in 2002, their immediate focus was on establishing shared interests and points of reference that might bridge the "yawning gap between theory and practice" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 1). In the course of their dialogue, they never quite get as far as advancing a theory of their own that would satisfy both Wagner's requirements for relevance and Chesterman's insistence that translation theory must remain above the fray, unsullied by commercial interests and partisan allegiances, and resist any form of instrumentalisation, complicity or exploitation[39] – that the academic's task is to describe rather than prescribe, to observe rather than to engage or intervene (ibid.: 2).

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[39] Chesterman does not explicitly raise the issue of commercial exploitation, perhaps because his interlocutor is a representative of the profession who is herself largely immune to these concerns (except insofar as the long-term survival of the European Union depends on its economic success). But in a political climate that increasingly seeks to place a monetary value on learning and turn education into a commodity, even scholars have their own financial interests to defend.

Writing at a relatively early stage of the "unfriendly revolution" that seeks "to get rid of as much of the human component as possible in the translation process" (Gouadec 2007: 295), and from a sheltered and financially secure vantage point within the translation department of an institution expressly committed to multilingualism, Wagner is nevertheless worried about the low professional status accorded to translators. What she wants from theory is a "comprehensible metalanguage that we [translators] can use to talk about our work and justify our strategies – to each other and to our clients" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 60), and prescriptive guidance for practical problem-solving, especially around the issue of translation quality: "Can [theory] help us become better translators and give us a feeling of professional self-esteem?" (ibid.: 1) As I have argued in chapter 2, there is an unspoken corollary to Wagner's question, which this thesis seeks to address by capturing the opinions, concerns and experiences of respondents working at the "wordface" of professional translation: (to what extent) do messages from the wordface penetrate to the ivory tower?

In my survey questionnaire, I chose not to specify any precise definitions of translation theory. Instead, Q23 merely asks respondents to indicate whether or not they agree with

> Emma Wagner's claim that most professional translators "had a brief brush with theory in our student days, when we absorbed whatever was needed to get us through our exams... and then proceeded to forget it, as we got to grips with the realities of learning how to do the job"[.]

Respondents were offered a choice between three predefined answers and a free-text option to phrase their own responses. A number of respondents used either this free-text option or the additional comment field to provide their own definitions of which particular aspects of theory they found relevant or useful. Others rightly pointed out that the terms *theoretical reflection* and *theory* are not in fact synonymous or interchangeable:

> I have never read much – or any – translation theory. It seems to me to be a **totally separate field from practical translation**. **But I theorise about practical translation quite a lot** – in online discussions, for example, or with my partner if he has a translation job on, as he sometimes does.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Combines teaching with translating marketing/advertising texts, academic articles, texts relating to the arts, non-fiction books and literary fiction]

> Like in any other job, it's important to try and stay reflective about one's practice, **either by reading even some small amount of theory or by doing one's one reflecting**.
>
> [Male respondent, France
> T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated before 2007
> Non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

> My experience is [the] reverse: through practice I came to examine theory because I felt I needed to teach it to my students. But actually it's through practice, projects, real-life issues that you ask yourself the questions that matter. So **reflection is super important but having read any theory book isn't**, in my opinion.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, non-fiction books and audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

The relevance of theory proved a divisive issue that split the population of respondents into two camps of roughly equal size and a smaller subset who selected the third predefined multiple-choice answer *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection.* As one of the last questions in the survey, it also elicited a larger number of free-text responses and additional comments than almost any other question. As such, it may serve as a useful barometer by which to gauge respondents' attitudes to various aspects of their professional practice, as discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4 below.

Of the 273 survey respondents who answered Q23,

- 35.5 per cent (97) selected the option *I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators*;
- 32.6 per cent (89) selected the option *I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice*;
- 17.2 per cent (47) selected the option *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection*.

Over a third (114 respondents) added comments to elaborate on their answers, suggesting a high level of interest in and engagement with this question. The opinions expressed in these comments span a wide gamut from "I often refer back to my uni books on translation theory" to "[…] theory has been completely useless for my practice"; from "I have a scientific background and love translation theory" to "Translation theory is mind-numbingly dull to read about".

The first two predefined multiple-choice answers indicate an empirically grounded value judgment ([*In my experience as a professional practitioner*]*, translation theory is largely irrelevant to professional* *practice/can provide useful guidance to professional translators*) and an element of personal preference or choice ([*I take the view that*] *translation theory is largely irrelevant to professional practice/can provide useful guidance to professional translators*). In contrast, the wording of the third answer *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection* implies a lack – or loss – of agency, suggesting both that theoretical reflection may be considered a waste of time, and that respondents who choose this option may not feel fully in control of their own time, in the terms discussed in section 4.11 above. Both these implications are present in comments by respondents who selected this answer:

> […] **theory is of no use to me**. It's like reading books about how to sail a sailboat and never going out on the water. When you're sailing **you don't have time to think about "what if the wind..."** you have to deal with the situation as it is.
>
> [Female respondent, Switzerland
> T&I-related diploma ("roughly equivalent to an M.A. in translation studies") from a Swiss university, graduated before 2007
> Literary fiction]

> I'm hoping to build in regular revision of translation theory, as well as language basics. Even an hour a week would be a worthwhile exercise. Another reason why it **would be a great luxury to have higher rates to allow me more time for this**.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> BA in German and English, CIoL Diploma in Translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Business, marketing/advertising, engineering automotive]

> I did not study translation per se, so I have had very little exposure to theory, but I am sure it would be beneficial if I had studied it **or could find the time to study it now**.
>
> [Female respondent, Japan
> No T&I-related degree

> Marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/design, food and beverage]

> I think theory is important but it doesn’t seem to be important
> to agencies/clients
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA from a UK university
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

It is worth noting that agreement with the opinion that *a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators* is considerably higher (40.5%) among respondents who have a translation- or interpreting-related degree than among those without a translation- or interpreting-related degree (26.9%) – and higher still (47.6%) among respondents who finished their translation- or interpreting-related degree after 2012. In response to Wagner’s question “Has anything changed?” (Chesterman/Wagner 2001: 1), this does suggest that more recent graduates take a more positive view of translation theory. As discussed above (see section 0.3), more recent graduates also gave slightly more positive responses to Q8*. Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?* than earlier cohorts.

Table 5.01. Responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory filtered by respondents' academic qualifications and gender identification

	I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators	I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice	I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection	Other
All respondents who answered Q23 (n=273)	35.5%	32.6%	17.2%	14.7%
Of these:				
Respondents with no T&I-related degree (n=115)	26.95%	32.17%	18.26%	22.60%
Respondents with T&I-related degree (n=158)	40.5%	34.17%	17.08%	8.22%
Graduated before 2007 (n=85)	37.64%	29.41%	16.47%	16.47%
Graduated between 2007 and 2012 (n=35)	34.28%	45.71%	14.28%	5.71%
Graduated after 2012 (n=42)	47.61%	30.95%	19.04%	2.38%
Respondents who identify as female (n=201)	33.83%	32.83%	17.91%	15.42%
Respondents who identify as male (n=64)	37.5%	35.93%	15.62%	10.93%

The proportion of respondents who in the multiple-choice question chose the *Other* option to provide free-text answers was higher among the 115 respondents without a translation- or interpreting-related degree who answered this question (22.6%) than the overall percentage of 14.7. A number of respondents in the first category used the free-text option to explain that they had no personal experience of or opinion on the subject, while others did voice opinions, some of them quite strong, as shown in the comments collected in table 5.02 below.

Table 5.02. Selection of free-text responses and comments relating to the relevance of academic translation theory to professional practice voiced by survey respondents with no translation- or interpreting-related degree

> I never paid any attention to translation theory. It’s not how I got into it.
>
> [additional comment by the same respondent:]
>
> When people start spouting it in a way that is not based on experience I usually check out mentally.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
> “[U]sed to translate medical/pharma and patents but gave that up some years ago” and now specialises in translating academic articles and non-fiction books (“mostly intellectual and cultural history”)]
>
> Somewhere in between agree and disagree. 90% of translation theory is useless fluff. The trick is finding the 10% that’s relevant.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> Patents, engineering]
>
> This dichotomy between theory and practice is artificial (and boring!) and was resolved by Immanuel Kant almost three centuries ago.
>
> [additional comment by the same respondent:]
>
> I don’t have a specifically translation studies-related qualification so there was no brush with translation theory in my student days. That said, I find this constant sneering at and dismissal of theory in favour of practice (we all know “practice makes perfect”, right?) a mostly Anglo-Saxon attitude and a rather naive and childish one at that.
>
> Besides, in my experience, people who say that were just not very good at theory (or grammar/linguistics) and once you start looking at their actual translation output (if you share

languages), you come to think that they could use a healthy dose of theory before practice can hope to make them good.

[Female respondent, UK
Marketing/advertising, arts, tourism, food & drink, fashion and beauty, theology and video games]

You must have the gift – but nothing goes without a strong theoretical background and superb teachers.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, automotive]

I learned my job on the go, then it became a career and I had to get food on the table, a roof over my head, clothes over my naked body. Did not have time to "learn translation theory." It is very possible that it become part of my work through osmosis, but I am not aware of it.

[Female respondent, United States
Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, real estate translations and translating personal documents (identification, school, police reports, etc.)
Combines full-time translation and interpreting]

I don't think it is necessary to have studied translation theory to be a good professional translator and I doubt that "most" professionals have done so.

[Female respondent, UK
Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary fiction, exhibition catalogues, arts and crafts, history and current affairs etc. ("I have not so far translated very much fiction, but would like the opportunity to do so")]

Happy to do short courses on translation techniques and improving my writing, but don't like over-academic articles etc
Theory is a good foundation but only practice will teach you how to apply it.

[Female respondent, Australia

> Arts, international development, education, wine
>
> Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income]

A number of respondents across both categories (with and without translation- or interpreting-related degrees) also added comments to emphasise their disagreement with the contention that *translation theory is largely irrelevant* to professional practice, as shown in table 5.03 below.

Table 5.03. Selection of free-text responses and comments expressing disagreement with the contention that *translation theory is largely irrelevant* to professional practice

> A stupid claim. The vast, vast majority of the translators I know who are exceptional in their art are also exceptionally well-versed in the theory and history of their art. While there are certainly a few rare exceptions, when I have encountered fumbling and incompetent translations, I was not surprised to discover later that the translator was illiterate in the theory of his/her own practice.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Poetry, literary fiction, philosophy, literary essays and critical theory]
>
> I strongly disagree. […] Knowledge of translation theory is very helpful as it gives one confidence to make and explain translation choices.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
>
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
>
> Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]
>
> I have a scientific background and love translation theory.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
>
> Master's degree equivalent, CI3M (professional qualification), graduated after 2012

Academic articles, non-fiction books, marketing/advertising, arts, personal development]

I often refer back to my uni books on translation theory.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and diploma, graduated before 2007
Non-fiction books, personal documents, memoirs, diaries, letters (incl Suetterlin transcription)]

Since I did not study translation, I find it quite useful to learn more about theory now and think it would be a shame to put it aside when actually doing the job. It sounds alarming that professionals would forget to reflect on their practice as they move forward in their career.

[Male respondent, France
No T&I-related degree
Literary fiction]

I find the reverse to be true: With every passing year in this very hands-on business, the urge intensifies to put pen to paper and theorize on the psychology of translating in my specific field, or to share my Best Practice nuggets.

[Male respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design]

I wish I knew more theory and how it practically applies to translation

[Female respondent, United States
Certificate in Translation and Intercultural Communication from a US university, graduated after 2012
Combines a full-time non-translation job with part-time freelance translation
Literary and genre fiction]

On the whole, those respondents who do consider it useful for professional practitioners appear to turn to translation theory mainly for guidance on how to translate and/or rationales to justify and communicate why a particular translation choice or strategy may be most suitable in a given context, and/or as a marker of professionalism. In this respect, their responses correspond to Wagner's demand for a "comprehensible metalanguage that we [translators] can use to talk about our work and justify our strategies – to each other and to our clients" (Chesterman/Wagner 2002: 60), as well as to the attitude towards theory advocated by the "functionalist" school of Translation Studies:

> Theories may help practitioners observe and reflect on what they are doing and on the consequences that one or another decision may have for the communicative effect of the target text they are producing. [...] Moreover, if translators do not just follow the "instinctual pleasure of sheer play", they should be able to justify their translations by rational arguments. This ability gives them not only self-awareness but also self-confidence, and self-confidence enables them to become equal partners in their negotiations with clients. (Nord 1997: 118)

Similar wording is used in one of two references to translation theory in the 2017 Competence Framework for the European Master's in Translation, where "Analyse and justify their translation solutions and choices, using the appropriate metalanguage and applying appropriate theoretical approaches" is defined as learning outcome 10 (loc. cit.: 8). (The other reference to theory is contained in a disclaimer concerning the scope of the Framework, which

> does not claim to provide a comprehensive description or model of all the competences, skills and knowledge that translation graduates should acquire. It does not, for instance, include the

> theoretical knowledge or the generic research skills that are an integral and important part of many advanced translation studies programmes. […] Individual programmes may, of course, deliver a much wider range of competences, skills and knowledge in areas that are not included in this framework. (ibid.: 4)

This suggests that, beyond the ability to use "the appropriate metalanguage and [apply] appropriate theoretical approaches", knowledge of translation theory is not considered an essential competence for professional translators.)

None of the survey respondents mentions seeking guidance from translation theory on matters relating to the commercial aspects of their professional practice, e.g. relationships with clients, motivational strategies, dealing with stress… Many – including some respondents who selected the multiple-choice option *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection* – express a belief that the translation theory they absorbed at university continues to form a foundation for some aspects of their professional practice, a marker of professional status and/or a source of confidence in their translation choices or strategies, as the free-text responses and comments collected in table 5.04 below attest. For Robinson (2012: 199), who believes that "experienced professional translators will gradually move 'beyond' analysis in much of their work, precisely by internalizing or sublimating it", this is a deliberate effect, even a

> desideratum of professional training: to help students first to learn the analytical procedures, then to sublimate them, make them so unconscious, so automatic, so fast, that translation at professional speeds becomes possible.

Table 5.04. Selection of free-text responses and comments discussing the role of translation theory in respondents' professional practice (all bold highlighting added to emphasise recurring themes or phrases).

I don't feel that working had me forget theory, but that I **absorbed it so deeply that I no longer think about theory when working on my projects**. I don't have a lot of time for theory in my daily workload, but I don't want to forget it altogether, as it can be useful to reflect on my translation practice.

[Female respondent, France
T&I-related degree from a French university, graduated before 2007
Business, academic articles, engineering, arts, non-fiction books, industry, science]

I still find the concepts of translation theory very useful to reflect on and they can **be helpful in deciding which approach to take with a text**. However, you'll frequently find yourself working with people who've never studied translation theory and **your justifications and approaches become irrelevant**.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MSc from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Business, marketing/advertising, corporate and PR, video game localisation]

I suppose the only time I ever really need it is if asked to produce a translator's note, or **explain a choice that I have made**. However, I certainly think it is **in the back of my mind in many decisions**.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA, graduated before 2007
Academic articles, institutional/political texts, business, engineering, automotive]

[…] I do think the theory is a key and **a very important grounding**. In everyday life, it accounts for about 20%, but it is an essential 20%, i.e. the foundation.

[Female respondent, Ireland
T&I-related degree, graduated before 2007
Medical/pharmaceutical, business, marketing/advertising, website localisation]

It is true that this is how many translators including myself became acquainted with translation theory, but a) I think that underlying theoretical awareness influences and guides translators at a later, practising stage even if they're not regularly aware of it or reflecting on it, and b) I regularly consider translation theory as part of my working life, whether it's reading others' articles or blog posts, pieces in *In Other Words* journal, events at International Translation Day, or whether it's my own internal deliberations during the various stages of translating a book or story, or indeed whether it's when marking translation exams or giving feedback on another's work that I'm editing. I feel much more qualified to **justify my decisions and to explain my rationale to others** because of the theory (and linguistics) I have studied in the past, and also because of my experience as a language teacher.

[Female respondent, UK
Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007
Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, children's books, magazine articles, news and current affairs]

It is useful when a client asks you to **justify your choices**.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MSc, graduated after 2012
Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

The knowledge of translation and language theory proves very valuable when I have to **justify my translation choices to a proofreader/quality assessor/agency/end client**.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA from a university in Estonia, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Legal, medical/pharmaceutical]

Not everything, much is just practice, but a lot we covered in the degree is still helpful now. The terminology slips but **what you actually do is founded on the formal training**.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA (literary pathway) from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Literary fiction, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive sectors, "anything under the term 'technical' – The literature is what I studied in my degree, the rest is what I do in my job [as an in-house translator] now"]

I can't remember who said what, but some of what they have said has **clarified problems and helped me to take decisions**.

[Female respondent, Spain
Several T&I-related degrees from UK and Spanish universities, graduated before 2007
Academic articles and translations for the medical/pharmaceutical, agri-food, food science and applied economics sectors]

When I read about it, I am reminded that it's relevant

[Female respondent, UK
BA in Modern Languages, graduated before 2007
Marketing/advertising, engineering]

Respondents who agree with Wagner's dismissal of academic theory as largely irrelevant to professional practice are similarly vocal, and similarly unequivocal, in their comments:

> Translation theory is **mind-numbingly dull to read about** – perhaps a lively discussion among professionals might be interesting.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Business, marketing/advertising, arts, architecture/design, academic articles]

> I only took one course on translation but didn't feel like it particularly aided me in my work. I think I have a pretty good innate grasp on translation.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Video games]

> Practice and theory are, as usual**, very different** in translation.
>
> [Female respondent, Austria
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles, sports, tourism, social sciences, environment and ecology]

> I find translation theory is **an attempt at turning the action of translating into a science**, an action is not a science and therefore any theory of translation is largely irrelevant.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Supplements teaching salary with translation
> Finance, marketing/advertising, sports, engineering, natural sciences]

Some respondents **single out specific aspects of translation theory** that they have found particularly useful for their practice:

Some theory can help you get clear about how to approach specific texts.

I greatly enjoyed **Stolze's *Übersetzungstheorien* and have read Honig and Kussmaul and Reiß and Vermeer**. I never got through anything else big (incl. an attempt at Lederer in French, which I believe has since been translated into English), but when I started out I also read a number of **more down-to-earth articles about things like the relative prevalence of the passive voice in different languages, etc**. and enjoyed it. I would certainly be interested in a reading group, but am not motivated enough to take a course and no longer disciplined enough to read regularly.

[Male respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, architecture/design, visual arts, film]

I always enjoy reading what thinking people have written about something I have thought a lot about. **Descriptive translation studies - case studies - appeal to me the most**.

[Female respondent, United States
Ph.D. in Philology, graduated before 2007
Legal, academic articles, literary fiction]

Depends on how abstract the theory is. I have a **great appetite for reading what translators have to say about the details of their own practice**. I suppose I'd call it **"Non-academic theory"**? (Kate Briggs, Tim Parks, Daniel Hahn's diary of a translator blog)

[Male respondent, France
No T&I-related degree
Non-fiction books, literary fiction, historical documents, testimonies, personal correspondence]

I believe that when taking some decisions during the translation process I often justify them to myself thinking that this would suit **e.g. the skopos theory**.

> [Female respondent, Germany
> T&I-related MA from a German university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Employed as an in-house translator
> Medical, clinical research, certificates, marketing, general texts]

> I went to several meetings about translation theory, **the only useful one was about localizing translations**, the rest is just intellectual boring matter, with no link with the translator's daily reality.
>
> [Male respondent, Switzerland
> No T&I-related degree
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising materials, non-fiction books, articles for a Sunday newspaper]

Others speculate that translation theory may be **particularly relevant to translators working with literary texts**.

> I found most theoretical subjects useless when I had to study them and totally irrelevant for translation practice. Maybe they **apply to literary translation only**?
>
> [Female respondent, Poland
> B.A. in Translation and Interpreting and B.A. in English Studies, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Legal, finance, marketing/advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, tourism, gastronomy]

> I think theory *could* be relevant, but it **tends to focus on literary translation**, or to be developed by people who've never worked as professional translators and don't really "get it".
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical texts]

> **especially for fiction/poetry** is the theory of language/literature/translation needed
>
> [Male respondent, Czech Republic

> No T&I-related degree
> Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income
> Legal, arts, poetry, literary fiction]

> Any **serious literary translator** has to reflect on what they are doing, also in theoretical terms.
>
> [Female respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Poetry, literary and genre fiction]

Some respondents also suggest that different views on the relevance of translation theory may reflect **generational or cultural differences**.

> Like **most translators in the US**, I didn't go to school for translation. I have a Master's in French Literature and took a few (2?) translation courses, but those did not involve theory at all.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, non-fiction books, international development]

> I don't have a specifically translation studies-related qualification so there was no brush with translation theory in my student days. That said, I find this constant sneering at and dismissal of theory in favour of practice (we all know "practice makes perfect", right?) a **mostly Anglo-Saxon attitude** and a rather naive and childish one at that. […]
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, arts, tourism, food & drink, fashion and beauty, video games, theological texts]

> I was not taught translation theory. Emma W seems to be talking about (relatively) young translators.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Semi-retired
> Legal, finance, business]

> **My generation didn't study translation theory**, but I'm interested in it. I learnt by doing.
>
> [Male respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, arts, non-fiction books]

> **Given that there was no course, I encountered translation theory some 15 years into my working life.** I found that much of it I had come to understand intuitively much of what translation theories had to say. It helped me find confidence in what I was doing and better argue my viewpoint, when required. It helped crystallise my own thoughts and feelings.
>
> [Female respondent, Australia
> No T&I-related degree
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles]

> Most of the translators I know are older than me (hence 45+) and **like most of their generation/s, did not train to be translators**. So I think many, like me, encountered theory only once they already had quite a bit of practical experience, which makes the interesting stuff much, much more interesting and the (subjectively) silly stuff easier to shrug off. Of course one tends to attribute more value to one's own strengths, but I think you can be quite good without much theory, whereas there's no way to be good without much practice. I do wish I had more time for it, though.
>
> [Female respondent, Italy
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction]

These assumptions are partly borne out by the data:

- **Differences between generations**

As discussed above, more recent graduates were more likely to find translation theory useful to their professional practice than earlier cohorts of respondents with translation- or interpreting related degrees, indicating that generational differences may have an influence on attitudes towards theory.

- **Differences between specialist domains**

Ninety of the 98 survey respondents who listed translation of literary texts (literary fiction, genre fiction, poetry, comics, children's books) among their specialist domains answered Q23. As the findings presented in table 5.05 below show, translators of literary texts were in fact more likely than the overall percentage to find theory useful for their practice, but also more likely to find it irrelevant. Of the larger subsets filtered by specialist domain, they were least likely to say they did not usually have time for theoretical reflection. However, contrary to the assumption about a particular relevance of translation theory to literary translation, respondents working in other, less creative domains were almost as likely – in the case of legal translators, even more likely – to find theory useful for their professional practice. In fact, literary translators were more likely to consider translation theory irrelevant than translators working in any other specialism for which the findings have been filtered here. Among the specialist domains tested, literary translators were least likely to say they did not usually have time for theoretical reflection.

Table 5.05. Correlation between responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory and specialist domains. (Highest and lowest percentages highlighted in green and orange respectively.)

	I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators	I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice	I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection	Other
All respondents who answered Q23 (n=273)	35.5%	32.6%	17.2%	14.7%
Of these:				

Respondents who translate fiction and/or poetry (n=90)	40.23%	35.63%	11.49%	12.64%
Respondents who exclusively translate fiction and/or poetry (n=29)	41.38%	31.03%	20.69%	6.89%
Respondents who specialise in marketing/advertising (n=99)	34.34%	35.35%	13.13%	17.17%
Respondents who specialise in business translations (n=76)	39.47%	34.21%	15.79%	10.52%
Respondents who specialise in translating academic articles (n=71)	33.8%	32.39%	12.67%	22.53%
Respondents who specialise in legal translations (n=63)	49.20%	31.74%	14.28%	4.76%
Respondents who specialise in medical/pharmaceutical translations (n=50)	40.0%	28.0%	18.0%	14.0%
Respondents who specialise in automotive and engineering translations (n=47)	36.17%	27.65%	27.65%	8.51%
Most frequent specialist domains	Fiction (43) Marketing/ Advertising (35) Business (30) Arts (30)	Fiction (57) Marketing/ Advertising (34) Business (26)	Fiction (16) Marketing/ Advertising (13) Business (12)	

These findings strike me as somewhat unexpected and may well merit further exploration. Why, for example, the above-average propensity of respondents specialising in legal and medical translation to consider theory useful? Are there aspects of translation theory that are in fact especially relevant for these domains that, while demanding great subject-specific expertise and attention to detail, narrowly restrict translatorial agency and interpretive action in relation to the source text? Is there perhaps something in the mind- and/or skillsets of professionals drawn to legal and medical translation that predisposes them towards favouring a solid theoretical foundation on which to base their practice?

- **Differences between locations**

Of the 24 survey respondents who currently live and work in the US, six hold translation- or interpreting-related degrees from various institutions in the US and Europe – less than half of the overall proportion of 56.2 per cent (164 of all 292 survey respondents). (Among the two largest subsets by location – respondents currently based in the UK (71) and Germany (49) – the proportion of graduates of translation- or interpreting-related degree programmes was 63.4 and 44.9 per cent respectively. The proportion of respondents with translation- or interpreting degrees was highest among those currently based in France (81% of 16 respondents) and Spain (75% of 24 respondents).) In answer to Q23, US-based respondents were more likely than respondents in any other subset to consider translation theory irrelevant to their professional practice, and less likely to find it useful, whereas UK-based respondents were more likely than respondents in any other subset to say they did not usually have time for theoretical reflection.

Respondents based in the Czech Republic stood out for being more likely than respondents in any other subset to find translation theory useful, and also less likely to select either of the other two predefined options. Of the 14 respondents from the Czech Republic who selected the option *I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators*, half obtained translation-related degrees from either Charles University in Prague or Masaryk University in Brno. Further research would be required to determine whether this small sample is representative of a larger trend. If so, it might be worth investigating specific features of these degree programmes that may support students in developing a positive attitude towards theory, as indicated in comments by respondents from this subset:

> In the programme's plan, there's enough of both theoretical and practical courses, there are helpful professionals around, the teachers are scholars as well as practitioners at the same time.
>
> [Female respondent, graduated after 2012
> Literary fiction, genre fiction
> Lists self-employment as a translator and academic research/teaching as main sources of income]

> The English department was perfect, our teachers were experienced translators and taught us everything from theory to dealing with clients. […]
>
> [Female respondent, graduated after 2012
> Literary and genre fiction, legal, finance, business, marketing/advertising, subtitles]

> The course was rather theoretical, I would have definitely appreciated more hands-on training. However, I think that the theoretical part really facilitated my subsequent learning of actual translation work.)
>
> [Female respondent, graduated between 2007 and 2012
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, literary fiction]

In response to *Q8. Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?*, two respondents from this subset are among the 21 survey respondents who selected the highest score (5 out of 5) and one of them added a comment to emphasise that "It is the best degree one can get for my language combination". It is worth noting, however, that another member of the same cohort completely disagrees:

> Absolutely – theory has been **completely useless** for my practice.
>
> [Female respondent, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Legal, finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, academic articles]

Table 5.06. Responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory filtered by respondents' current location. (Highest and lowest percentages highlighted in green and orange respectively.)

	I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators	I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice	I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection	Other
All respondents who answered Q23 (n=273)	35.5%	32.6%	17.2%	14.7%
Of these:				
Respondents based in the US (n=22)	31.81%	40.90%	13.63%	13.63%
Respondents based in the UK (n=66)	34.84%	33.33%	21.21%	10.60%
Respondents based in Germany (n=45)	33.33%	28.88%	13.33%	24.40%
Respondents based in Czech Republic (n=39)	41.02%	25.64%	12.82%	20.51%
Respondents based in France (n=22)	31.81%	36.36%	18.18%	18.18%

A number of comments explicitly address the importance of **striking the right balance between theory and practice in translator education**:

> Theory can help us think more deeply about the practical aspects of our work. That said, I think that **the education of future translators should primarily focus on translating texts**.
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
>
> T&I-related MA from a Czech university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
>
> IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, literary fiction]

> Universities shouldn't put aside theory, but include more courses related to the realities of the job.
>
> [Female respondent, Canada

T&I-related PhD from a French university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income
Academic articles, literary fiction]

At [my university] we were taught **the basics of the craft, no theory. This has been most helpful to me, theory is of no use to me**. It's like reading books about how to sail a sailboat and never going out on the water. […]

[Female respondent, Switzerland
T&I-related diploma ("roughly equivalent to an M.A. in translation studies") from a Swiss university, graduated before 2007
Literary fiction]

I agree that university is too theoretical, but theory is important to understand practice.

[Female respondent, Germany
T&I-related diploma from a German university, graduated before 2007
Legal, marketing/advertising, engineering]

My MA […] was 50% theory 50% practice, **no skill teaching nor how theory applies to real translating work**. Since then I never use theory because I have no idea how it could be applied to real world translation and most of it's irrelevant.

[Female respondent, United States
T&I-related diploma MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Literary and genre fiction, cartoons, comics, games]

I think translation theory is important, but **many translation graduates lack practical knowledge** and don't know any seasoned translators yet.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/User interfaces, marketing/advertising, website localisation, e-learning, e-commerce, tourism]

5.3. Correlation with Respondents' Stress and Satisfaction Levels

The survey findings also indicate a correlation between respondents' opinions on the relevance of translation theory to their professional practice and their stress and satisfaction levels, as shown in table 5.07.

Table 5.07. Correlation between responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory and respondents' reported average stress levels and satisfaction with current remuneration and workload.

	All survey respondents	Respondents who find translation theory useful	Respondents who find translation theory largely irrelevant	Respondents who don't usually have time for theoretical reflection
Average stress level (on a scale of 0 to 10)	5.13	4.92	5.20	5.70
Average level of satisfaction with current rates (self-employed)	5.98	5.91	5.95	5.52
Average level of satisfaction with current salary (in-house)	5.22	4.55	6.10	4.66
Proportion of respondents who are satisfied with their current workload	37.2%	37.89%	34.52%	44.44%

While it may not come as much of a surprise to find that translators who say they *don't usually have time for theoretical reflection* are more likely to report higher stress levels, it does strike me as worth noting that, overall, respondents who do find theory useful feel less stressed than those who dismiss translation theory as *largely irrelevant* or something they *don't usually have time for*. This suggests that – inasmuch as there is any point in promoting specific models of sustainable professional success for new translators to aspire to – the potential impact of (a willingness to engage in) theoretical reflection on stress levels should perhaps be considered for further empirical investigation. If a connection can be shown to exist, this would surely strengthen the case for encouraging habits of theoretical reflection in students and trainee translators.

In part two of Q22 about stress levels, respondents were asked to specify which aspects of their professional practice they find *most* and *least stressful*. While a majority of respondents across all three subsets singled out deadlines/time pressure as the *most stressful* aspect of working as a professional translator (cf. chapter 4), answers to the question about the *least stressful* aspect showed substantial variation between respondents with different attitudes to theoretical reflection:

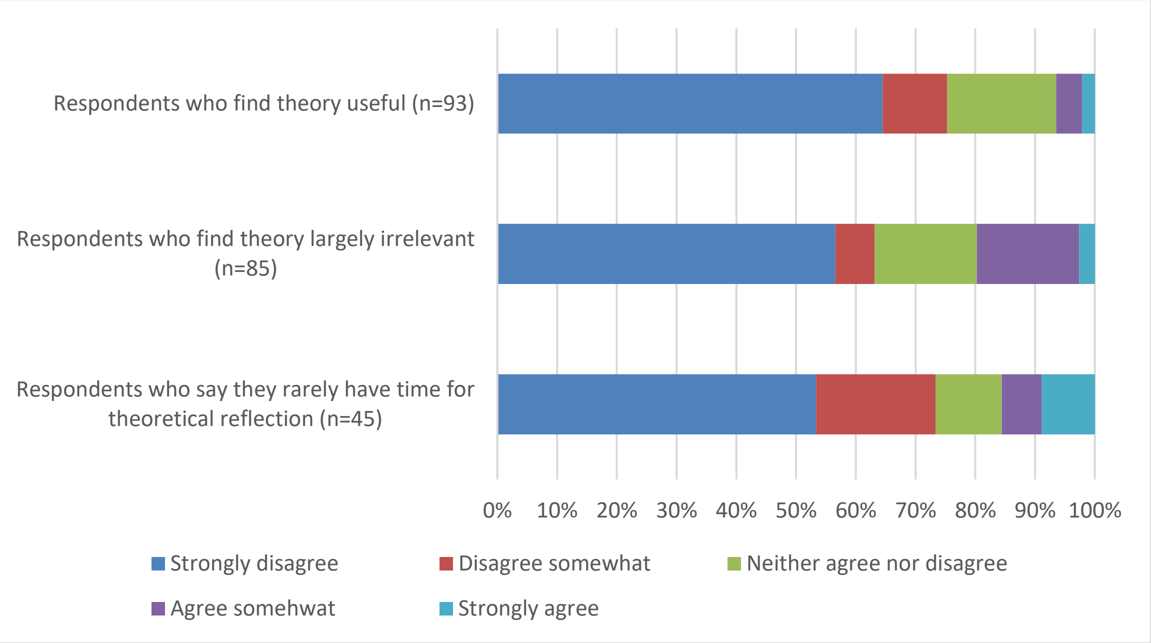
- Of the 97 respondents who find theory *useful*, 33 (34.02%) specified variations of "translating itself/the actual translation/the work itself" as the *least stressful* aspect of their professional practice, followed by 23 answers (23.71%) relating to the freedom and flexibility of self-employment. (Answers in the latter category included variations of "working from home", "lack of commute", "being your own boss", "being in charge of your own time".)
- Of the 89 respondents who find theory *largely irrelevant*, 25 (28.08%) specified the freedom and flexibility of self-employment as the *least stressful* aspect of their professional practice, followed by 22 answers (24.72%) relating to variations of "translating itself/the actual translation/the work itself". One respondent in this subset, who rated her stress level as 4 out of 10, answered the question about the *least stressful* aspect of working as a professional translator with a question mark, presumably to indicate that none came to mind. The same respondent identified "time pressure" as the aspect she found most

unpleasant and most stressful, and "less time pressure" as the factor that would make her work more enjoyable.

- Of the 47 respondents who *don't usually have time for theoretical reflection*, 13 (27.65%) specified the freedom and flexibility of self-employment as the *least stressful* aspect of their professional practice, followed by 11 answers (23.40%) relating to variations of "translating itself/the actual translation/the work itself". The only two negative responses to this question ("None" and "Would not know") also came from respondents in this subset, who rate their stress levels as 9 and 6 respectively. In answer to Q21, another respondent in this subset, who rates his stress level as 7, specified "Terrible work/life balance" as the most unpleasant aspect of working as a professional translator.

Finally, the correlation with responses to Q26 about future prospects for the profession shows that respondents who find theory useful are least likely to express agreement with the proposition *I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my life anyway* (see figure 5.i below; responses to Q26 are discussed in more detail in the Conclusion). In conjunction with the findings presented above, this suggests that respondents in this subset tend to be more satisfied with their chosen career than those who find theory largely irrelevant or say they have no time for reflection.

Figure 5.i. Distribution of responses to Q26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future? [I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway]* correlated with respondents' attitudes to academic translation theory.



While the observations presented in this chapter do not amount to conclusive evidence to prove that a grounding and/or interest in academic theory makes professional translators more sustainably successful in the sense discussed in section 2.2 above, it seems reasonable to question the sustainability of any practice – let alone one as heavily reliant on cognitive resources as professional translation – that leaves no time for theoretical reflection. This is the "subsistence model" described by the two Proz.com members quoted in section 2.2 in reference to translators who "are so proud of 'being constantly busy' but in the end really have nothing to show for it other than keeping their heads above water". One of them adds:

> As a short-term strategy, this is no problem, but if one doesn't use it as a bridge to create a satisfying career for oneself, then it can constitute nothing more than a treadmill that sabotages longer-term professional and personal goals.

In my own professional practice, I have found that the engagement with the external perspectives of academic scholarship from various fields during this PhD project has afforded me a more nuanced understanding of the causes of stress and sources of satisfaction discussed in chapter 2, without providing easily applicable solutions or strategies for resolving the conflicts between them. It also strikes me that making time for regular reflection cannot be an afterthought. Rather, it requires forethought, since time cannot actually be *made* but can only be *taken* – *out of* a schedule dominated by the relentless pressure of deadlines, *away from* other, more immediately urgent tasks (cf. Blyth 2017).

Educators at academic institutions can support this by guiding future translators towards a view of theoretical reflection as a habitual, integral part of translatorial practice, rather than something extrinsic or external to that practice that has to be got over or got through in order to get on with the real work – another factor added to the cognitive load of props professional translators must juggle or balance. Professional associations can also support it by offering relevant opportunities for continued professional development alongside – and, ideally, in conjunction with – technical and business skills training.

Chapter 6

Definitions of Professional Identity

6.1. Key Findings

Survey questions 24 and 25 were designed to elicit information on respondents' definitions of their professional identities as translators:

Q24. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.*

Q25. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you think your clients see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.*

Responses to these questions, which are discussed in detail in the following sections, indicate that there is a gap between respondents' internal views of their professional identities and their perception of other stakeholders' external views, as shown in figures 6.i.a to 6.i.c below. Specifically, respondents were consistently found more likely to ascribe reductive views of translators as *service providers*, *suppliers* or *resources* to their clients, and more likely to ascribe empowering and/or creative roles as *language experts*, *knowledge workers*, *word artists* or *intercultural mediators* to themselves.

Figure 6.i.a. Responses to question 24 (all respondents) ranked in order of frequency.

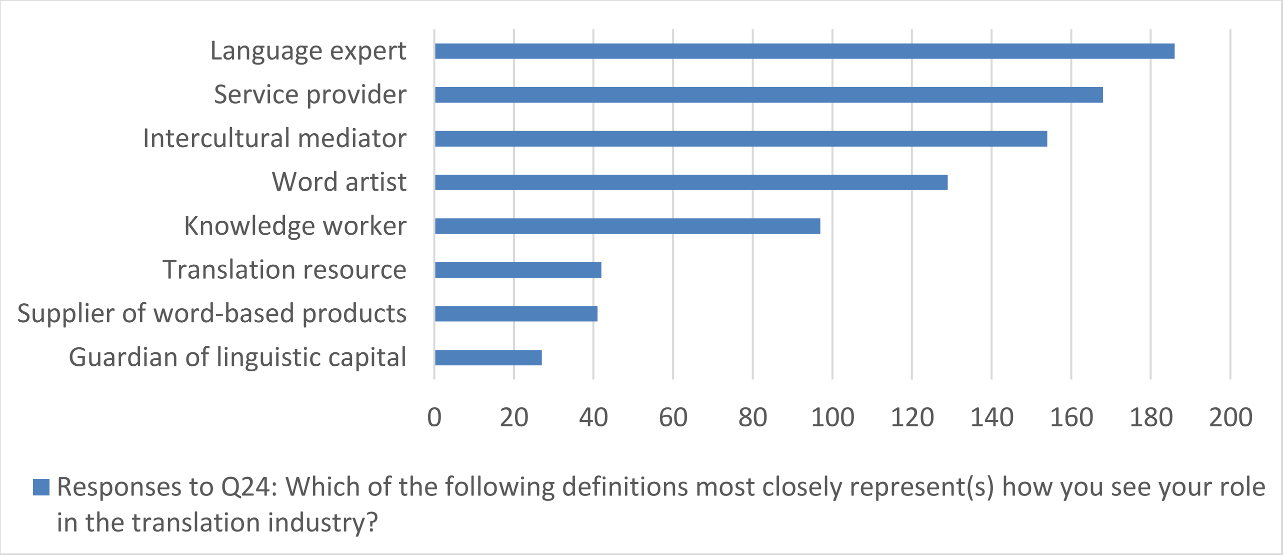


Figure 6.i.b. Responses to question 25 (all respondents) ranked in order of frequency.

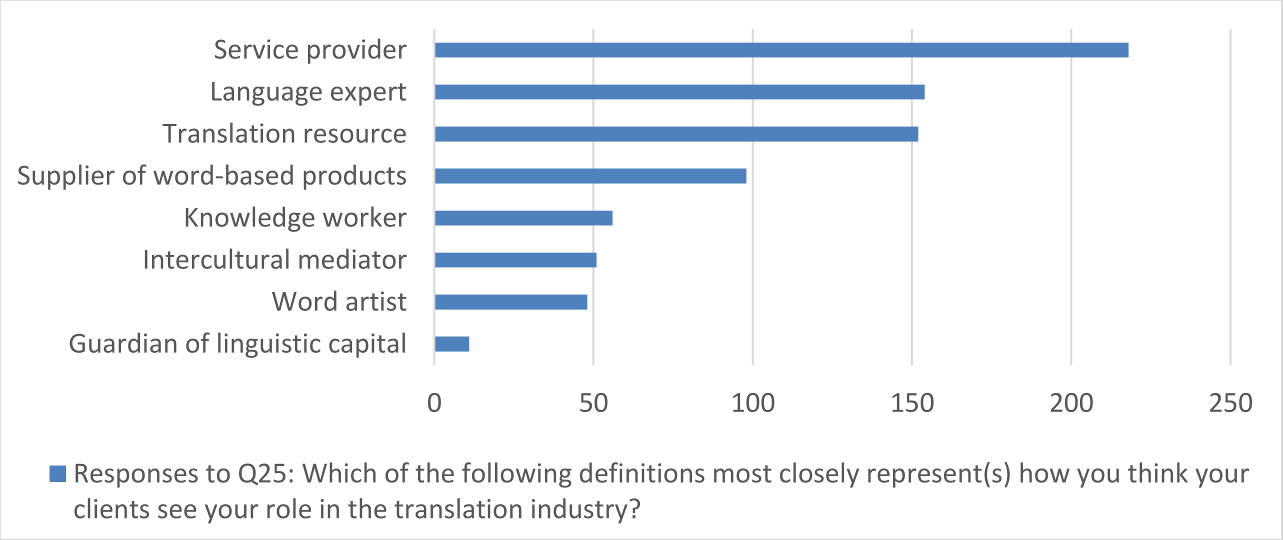
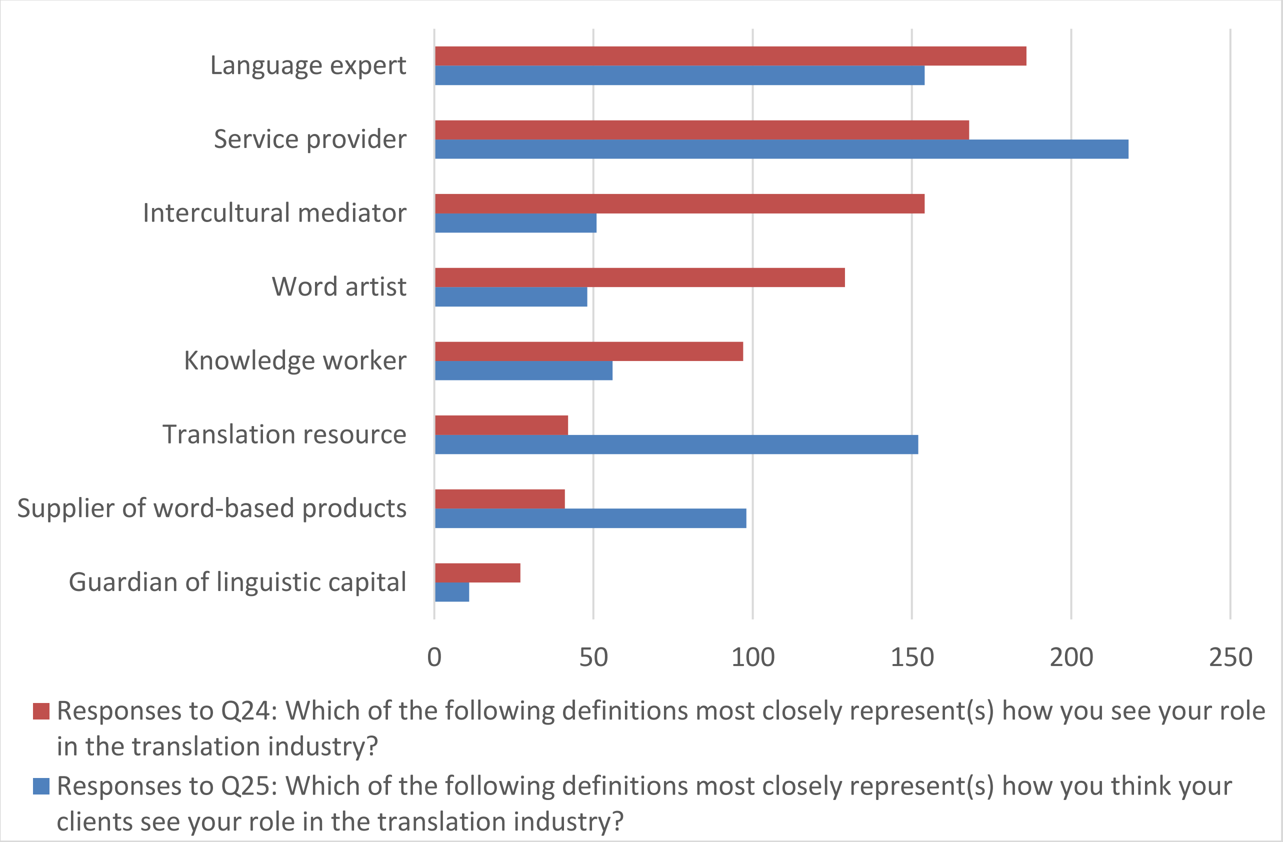


Figure 6.i.c. Divergence between responses to questions 24 and 25 (all respondents).



With the exception of one respondent, who adds "[a]n honest, dedicated professional" in reply to both questions (and elsewhere in the questionnaire describes the "peace of mind" she draws from "[h]aving a pool of a few loyal, regular clients who keep me (almost) constantly busy"), free-text responses provided in addition to or instead of the predefined multiple-choice options listed above reflect a similar gap between translators' and clients' (presumed) perspectives.

In answer to Q24, respondents offer the following additional definitions of their professional identities:

- The word "profession" suits me fine.
- Supplier of professional language services
- An honest, dedicated professional
- Intellectual assembly-line worker

In answer to Q25, respondents speculate that their clients see them as:

- “dear vendor” (some agencies)
- Translator
- Pain in the ass
- A necessary evil and a great expense
- secretary!
- I feel strongly underestimated – skills are not welcome, rather suppressed. The client dictates how they want the translation to be, not letting the professional decide.
- Language “not so much” expert
- An honest, dedicated professional
- Questioner

I also included an additional multiple-choice option to capture any concerns respondents might have about the description of professional translation as an industry. *I object to the term “translation industry” – translation is an art or a craft* was selected by 17.2 per cent of respondents and sparked some debate, as the comments quoted in section 5.2 below show. Resistance against calling translation an industry was almost twice as high among respondents who identify as female than among their male counterparts, and – less surprisingly – highest among the subsets of respondents who did not identify as *service providers* and those who specialise in translating literature (although respondents who exclusively translate literature appeared to have less of a problem with the term).

A few respondents also took issue with the definitions of professional identity proposed in the survey questionnaire, which one found “either demeaning or mere jargon... Couldn’t I just be a ‘professional translator’, without needing to be an artist or craftsperson?” Another respondent agreed that “[n]one of these definitions quite hits the spot – some are rather pretentious, others too utilitarian", while a third commented that "[t]his question feels a bit too abstract for me, I must admit".

Comments also suggest the existence of another (related) gap between privately held aspirations and public self-presentation, and perhaps also between ideal self-images and actual self-perceptions. (This, in turn, raises the question to what extent answers to an anonymous survey questionnaire are likely to reflect respondents' public self-presentation as opposed to their – actual or ideal – self-perception.)

In free-text responses and comments relating to these and other survey questions, a number of respondents describe the gap between their own internal and their clients' external perception as a lack of appreciation, although several others express satisfaction with their clients' regard for their skills and expertise:

> So far I've usually been in a situation where I'm on the same page as my client about the value of the work.
>
> [Male respondent, France
> No T&I-related degree
> Non-fiction books, literary fiction, historical documents, testimonies, personal correspondence
> Q24: *Supplier of word-based products, Language expert*
> Q25: *Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Language expert*]

> The ones I really love see me as a trusted collaborator and the closest reader they will ever have.
>
> [Female respondent, Italy
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction
> Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*

Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Language expert, Translation resource*]

Clients are generally very appreciative.

[Female respondent, Germany

No T&I-related degree who "also edit[s] English written by non-native (mainly academic) speakers"

Academic articles, non-fiction books, arts, architecture/design

Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker*

Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker*]

I've been very lucky with my clients.

[Female respondent, UK

T&I-related BA and MA, graduated before 2007

Derives her income primarily from a pension

Literary fiction

Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*

Q25: *Word artist, Knowledge worker*]

My clients trust me to know what I'm talking about. I think they have more faith in me as a language expert than I do myself, because even if I'm asking a question or providing suggestions rather than definitive versions, I try to sound confident – no point worrying them! They also see me as a translation resource, which is okay by me most of the time.

[Female respondent, UK

No T&I-related degree

Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction

Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Intercultural mediator*

Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Translation resource*]

6.2. Empowering v. Reductive Definitions of Translators' Identities

In behavioural science, a sense of professional identity has been linked to performance, job satisfaction, self-esteem and mental well-being (Caza and Creary 2016: 3). Given the extent to which translators draw on their own "knowledge of the world" (Farwell and Helmreich 2014: 172, as quoted in the Introduction) in their everyday professional practice, and the observation that many survey respondents relish working from home, the boundaries between their personal and professional selves are likely to be blurred. "Good translators", as Kronenberg (2011:2) points out,

> bring their entire persons to the task. Our innate genetic predispositions, our experiences, the work habits we develop over a lifetime – everything in us goes into our interpretations, as does the sensitivity to language that we train and refine by practice and study.

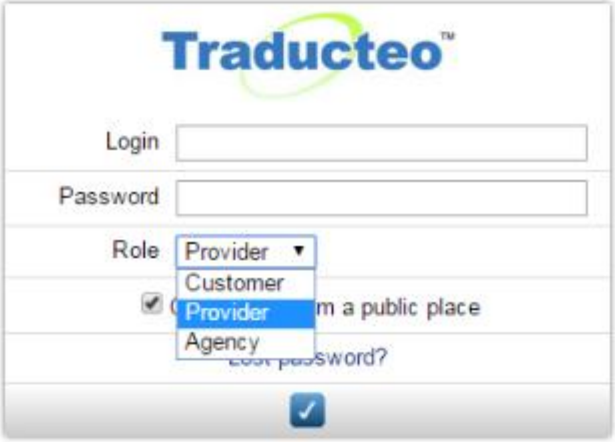
Beyond the identification with a specific profession as a community of practice, professional identity is constituted, defined and filled with meaning in direct response to the (perceived) "role expectations of others" (Caza and Creary 2016: 5), including other members of the profession (who may act as role models or mentors) as well as stakeholders outside the profession, e.g. work providers or clients. As such, it is shaped, articulated and negotiated at the intersection between translators' internal knowledge and experience of their professional practice and the external knowledge of other stakeholders.

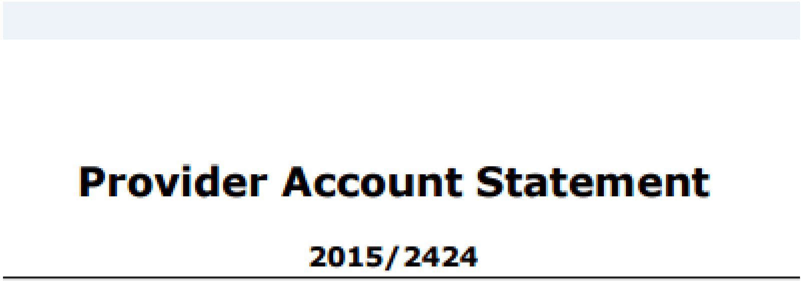
Following Venuti's (2010) distinction between "instrumental" and "interpretive" models of translation, the multiple-choice options offered for both questions in my survey were based on the premise that designations commonly used in the translation industry reduce translation to a purely instrumental function as "mechanical substitution" (ibid.) and human translators to interchangeable – and ultimately expendable, as machine translation engines increasingly take over much of their work – anonymous providers, resources, suppliers or vendors. (Figure 6.ii below shows user interfaces of different project management applications where these designations are used.) As Scott (2019: 12, footnote 21) points out,

> a cline going from "asset", "resource", "vendor", "freelancer", "supplier" and "provider" to "translation professional" or "translation practitioner" transmits very different signals. To describe translators as "assets" or "resources" links them, linguistically, with being "used". At the other end of the scale, "practitioner" invites verbs such as "consult" […] and transmits higher status signals.

In the multiple-choice options for survey question 24, these reductive designations were juxtaposed with definitions of professional identity that highlight the interpretive and creative dimensions of human translation: *language expert*, *knowledge worker*, *intercultural mediator, word artist, guardian of linguistic capital*, all of which are broadly based on models explored in and supported by Translation Studies scholarship (cf. Katan 2009: 112-113; also see the discussion in section 2.2 above).

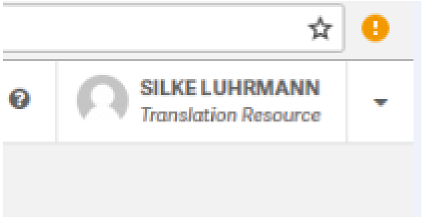
Figure 6.ii. Screenshots showing user interfaces of different project management applications.

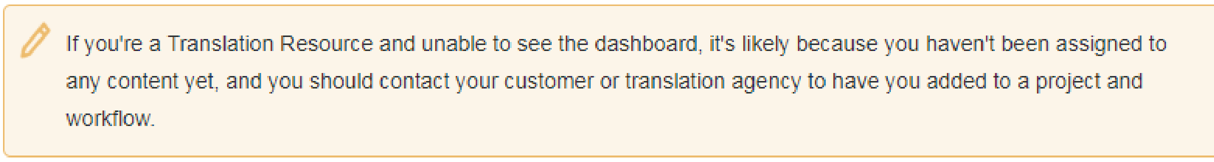

Traducteo™
Login
Password
Role
Provider
Customer
Provider
Agency
m a public place
Lost password?
✓



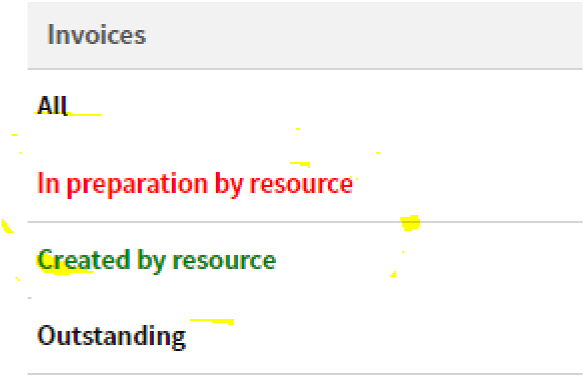
Provider Account Statement

2015/2424


SILKE LUHRMANN
Translation Resource



If you're a Translation Resource and unable to see the dashboard, it's likely because you haven't been assigned to any content yet, and you should contact your customer or translation agency to have you added to a project and workflow.



Respondents were invited to *select as many answers as applicable* and add their own definitions. 51/34 of the 284/282 respondents who answered the two questions also provided comments to elaborate on their answers. The findings presented in this chapter suggest that respondents' sense of professional identity is frequently constructed, not in alignment with or on the basis of, but in opposition to their perception of the roles ascribed to them by other agents in the translation industry's production networks, specifically by their clients.

Additional free-text comments also indicate that respondents have different strategies for dealing with these conflicting perceptions. Some emphasise the importance of controlling their working conditions by educating clients to recognise the complexity of translators' roles and refusing work from those who do not, as the comments collected in table 6.01 below show.

Table 6.01. Selection of free-text comments relating to the importance of client education and/or selection.

When the client doesn't see my role as I myself see it, I either get us on the same page or I drop the commission. It's that simple. [Male respondent, United States No T&I-related degree

Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income
Poetry, literary fiction, philosophy, literary essays and critical theory
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*
Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

Most of my clients appreciate my skills, I don't work for treadmill agencies

[Female respondent, Spain
T&I-related MA, graduated before 2007
Medical/pharmaceutical, chemistry, technical
Q24: *Service provider, Knowledge worker, Language expert*
Q25: *Service provider, Knowledge worker, Language expert*]

Depends on the client, but it's constant education of clients who often see translation as a commodity and fail to appreciate the difference between good and bad translation. It's one of the biggest issues.

[Female respondent, Ireland
T&I-related degree, graduated before 2007
Combines self-employment as a translator with self-employment as an IT/business consultant
medical/pharmaceutical, business, marketing/advertising, website localisation
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is a craft, not an industry*
Q25: *Service provider*]

this varies a bit from client to client but most have come to value me as a professional and I am now more than some anonymous "translation resource" to them, but this takes time

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, engineering sectors, also works as a self-employed interpreter

Q24: *Service provider, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*

Q25: *Service provider, Language expert, Translation resource*]

I do dislike the term "translation industry", but not because I see it as an art or craft. It is a professional service, and the term "industry" implies that we are interchangeable worker ants with basic training. I am keen to make clients and others understand that this is my sole source of income, I work sometimes very long hours, and it is my choice what rate I charge, not theirs.

[Female respondent, UK

Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007

Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy

Q24: *Language expert*

Q25: *Service provider, Language expert, Translation resource*]

Other comments indicate varying degrees of resignation to a cognitive gap between respondents' own and their clients' perception. In the context of some of the issues related to translators' interactions with their clients discussed in section 4.6 above, it also strikes me as worth noting that a number of respondents express a sophisticated awareness and understanding of their different clients' needs and expectations, as evident from the comments collected in table 6.02 below. (For further research, it would be interesting to test the accuracy of these assumptions by surveying translation buyers and commissioners themselves.)

Table 6.02. Selection of free-text comments demonstrating nuanced awareness of clients' needs and expectations.

This varies largely from client to client. While some appreciate (and know first-hand) the fact that translation is more than a mere service, other (big) agencies tend to see translators as expendable resources – there will always be someone to take care of a job at a lower price, and quality is not always a main concern.

[Male respondent, Luxembourg
T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert*
Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Translation resource*]

I often feel – especially with agencies which have automated PM software, and just send through an impersonal automated email whenever they want you to take on a project – that I'm not particularly valued as a human colleague, but more as an email address that can spew out translations when needed! (Another reason I find the idea of never really meeting PMs face-to-face a bit unsavoury)

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty
Q24: *Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator*
Q25: *Translation resource*]

First and foremost translation is an industry to make money. A single piece of translation can of course be a work of art but 99% of the time that's not what clients require and not what brings food on the table. For most clients translation isn't even the most important part of producing a product or selling a service, it is a necessity. Some appreciate good "language work", others don't.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, games translation
Q24: *Service provider, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Language expert*

Q25: *Service provider, Supplier of word-based products, Language expert, Translation resource*]

I think that depends a little on the client. My direct clients are more likely to see me as a language expert, in the same way that they see their copywriting or marketing experts. My higher-quality agency clients see me as a translation resource, and the lower-quality agency clients that I occasionally work for see me as a service provider. I would be highly amused if they saw me as guardian of linguistic capital!

[Female respondent, UK

Diploma Interpreting & Translation, BA Modern Languages, graduated before 2007

Legal, finance, business, German & international energy policy

Q24: *Language expert*

Q25: *Service provider, Language expert, Translation resource*]

This depends a great deal on the client and their needs. To the business owner, relying on me to transcreate their marketing material into a good advertisement in English, I am a word artist. To the person who needs their birth certificate translated I am probably a mere service provider. Curiously, I note that artistry, of a kind, is important to many clients. Many set a high value on a beautiful presentation.

[Female respondent, Australia

No T&I-related degree

Combines employment as an interpreter with self-employment as a translator, with “a fair bit of variation from year to year [as to] which brings in the greatest income within a year”

Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles

Q24: *Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*

Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

Apart from considering translating pretty much an off-the-shelf service like any other, some clients do appreciate the translator’s “knowledge” in the subject area because it helps to eliminate errors in a stage when the in-house staff is already through with a given text. That is, they appreciate the third-party angle before the finished product is released to the audience.

[Male respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design
Q24: *Service provider, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*
Q25: *Service provider, Language expert, Translation resource*]

My client base clearly values the "service" element as well as the "language" element (i.e. getting the job done well and quickly is important – it's a business).

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Business, marketing/advertising, arts
Q24: *Service provider, Language expert*
Q25: *Service provider, Language expert*]

I don't mind how people describe what I do, as long as they acknowledge my level of expertise!

[Female respondent, France
No T&I-related degree
Supplements her income from academic research/teaching with freelance translation
Academic articles, non-fiction books, arts, architecture/design, fashion
Q24: *Service provider, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*
Q25: *Service provider, Language expert*]

I'm under no illusion about the fact that, at the end of the day, I provide a service – otherwise, none of the translations I work on would come my way. This is reflected by certain projects not requiring much reflection, but rather time and manual effort, if that makes sense. At the same time, a good, creative translation requires a certain degree of "word artistry".

> [Male respondent, Luxembourg
> T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts
> Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert*
> Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Translation resource*]
>
> Especially when working on shorter translations, I see myself more as an assembly-line worker. I'm not paid to organize or manage, I merely take an unfinished product and turn it into a finished product.
>
> [Male respondent, Czech Republic
> No T&I-related degree
> Arts
> Q24: *Word artist, Intellectual assembly-line worker*
> Q25: *Translation resource*]

Prompted by the multiple-choice option *I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*, a number of respondents added comments to discuss their views. While only the first of the additional comments quoted below refutes the assertion that professional translation under current market conditions is an industry, a number of respondents insist on a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics within that industry and the relationships between the various stakeholders involved, as the comments collected in table 6.03 below show.

Table 6.03. Selection of free-text comments expressing opinions on the definition of translation as an industry.

> It sounds pompous but I feel like an author of some kind. A very humble, artisan kind. Industry sounds really bad to my ears because I feel we can choose to make our work / activities an industry (part of the system) or not. Accordingly, I try to suggest to prospective clients who cannot pay me to exchange

services instead. And I still do some volunteer translation work, although I carefully choose for whom.

[Female respondent, Belgium
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, non-fiction books and audiovisual translation (subtitling)
Q24: Intercultural mediator, I object to the term “translation industry” – professional translation is an art or a craft
Q25: Service provider]

I agree that professional translation is at its core an art, but I’m not necessarily opposed to the idea of there being a practical industry built around that. The problems of the industry seem to become prominent as it grows too centralized, into an overly complex machine whose primary exertion becomes supporting its own existence.

[Male respondent, Japan
BA in Japanese, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Business, medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*
Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

I differentiate between “translation industry” and “the profession of translator”. I see agencies and those who make a business by selling our services without actually practising translation itself as being an industry, whilst the profession is the group of people actually engaging in translation on a professional level.

[Female respondent, Australia
No T&I-related degree

Combines employment as an interpreter with self-employment as a translator, with "a fair bit of variation from year to year [as to] which brings in the greatest income within a year"

Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles

Q24: *Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator*

Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

Sadly in the bulk market it is very much an industry and for the most part there is no time or respect for the art of translation.

[Female respondent, UK

BA in German and English, CIoL Diploma in Translation, graduated between 2007 and 2012

Business, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive

Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*

Q25: *Service provider, Supplier of word-based products, Translation resource*]

Translation industry applies to LSPs, software developers and others like support services providers. What professional translators do is intellectual work. The relationship can be likened to that of a painter and the paint industry: one is a professional, the other feeds the professional's needs.

[Female respondent, United States

No T&I-related degree

Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, personal documents

Combines full-time translation and interpreting

Q24: *I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*

Q25: *Service provider*]

Well, no, I don't object to the term translation industry, because there certainly is one, but translation is also a craft and also sometimes an art. I usually think of myself as a skilled artisan.

[Female respondent, Italy
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary fiction
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*
Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Language expert, Translation resource*]

> Translation is, like any art, also a business. To claim otherwise is to divorce oneself from reality.

[Male respondent, United States
No T&I-related degree
Lists academic research/teaching as primary source of income
Poetry, literary fiction, philosophy, literary essays and critical theory
Q24: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*
Q25: *Service provider, Word artist, Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

Across all metrics tested (academic background/period of graduation, gender identification, domain specialisation, current location), domain specialisation was found to have a stronger statistical impact on the distribution of responses to questions 24 and 25 than any other factor. Most strikingly, respondents who specialise in literary translation were found considerably more likely than the overall survey population to define themselves as *word artists*. This is perhaps not surprising – as one respondent points out:

> Literary translation is obviously an art, this is why it is protected by authors' rights (or "copyright" in the Anglo-Saxon world, which is different from the continental European "droit d'auteur" or "Urheberrecht")

> [Male respondent, Germany
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction
>
> Q24: *Word artist, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource, I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft*
>
> Q25: *Word artist, Knowledge worker, Language expert, Intercultural mediator, Translation resource*]

Another respondent, who admits to "sometimes feel[ing] rather like an anonymous machine churning things out", speculates that she might "feel differently if I were translating literature".

The variation between respondents based in different locations (see figure 6.iii.e below) is interesting but inconclusive; there is scope here for a targeted investigation with larger subsets of respondents – including professionals from non-European/non-Western countries – which would also take account of different semantic connotations of terms such as *service provider*, *knowledge worker* or *human resource* in different languages and cultural-economic contexts.

Figure 6.iii.a. Correlation between respondents' specialist domains and responses to Q24. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment* (respondents who specialise in literary translation).

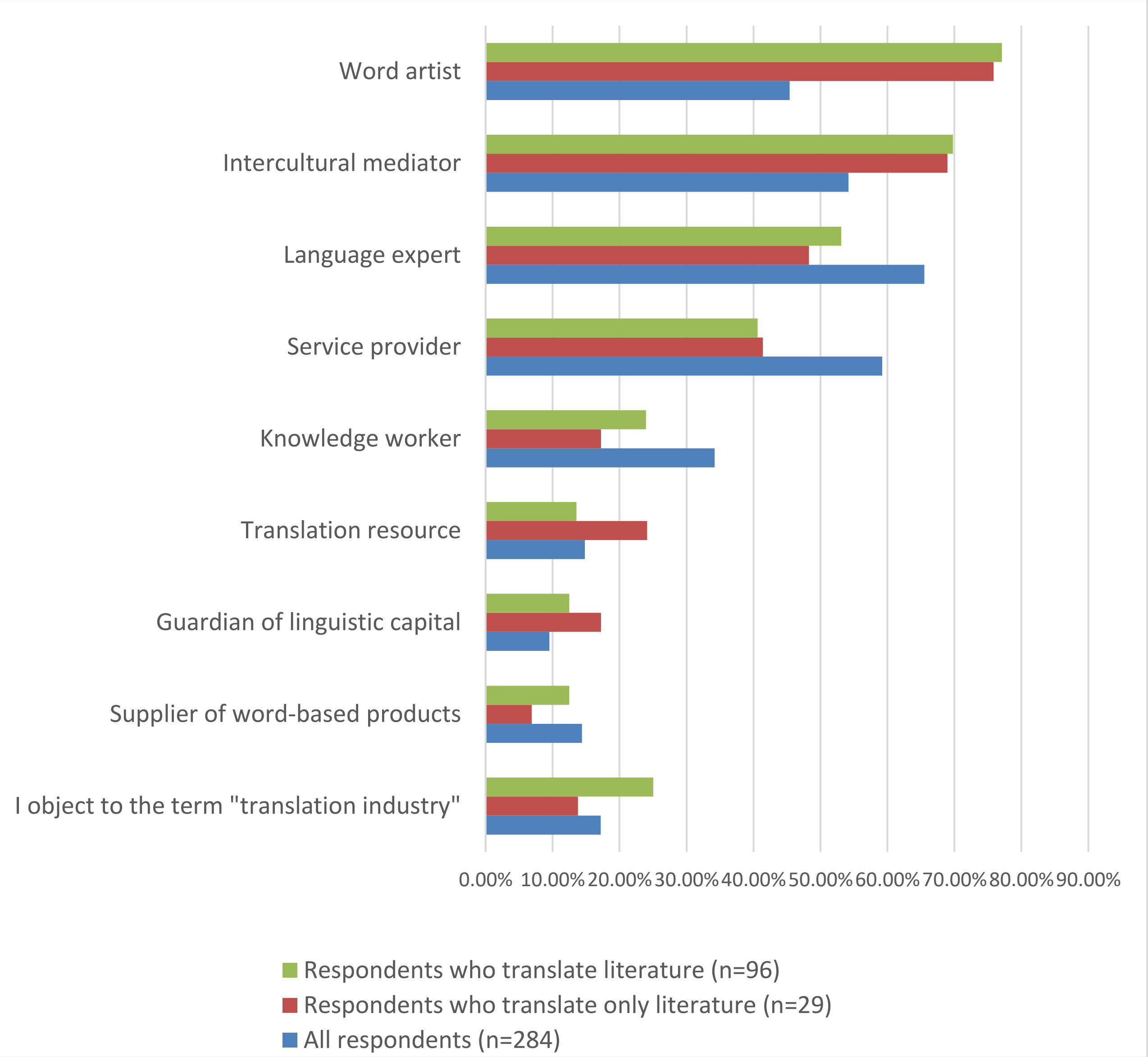


Figure 6.iii.b. Correlation between respondents' specialist domains and responses to Q24 (respondents who specialise in legal translation).

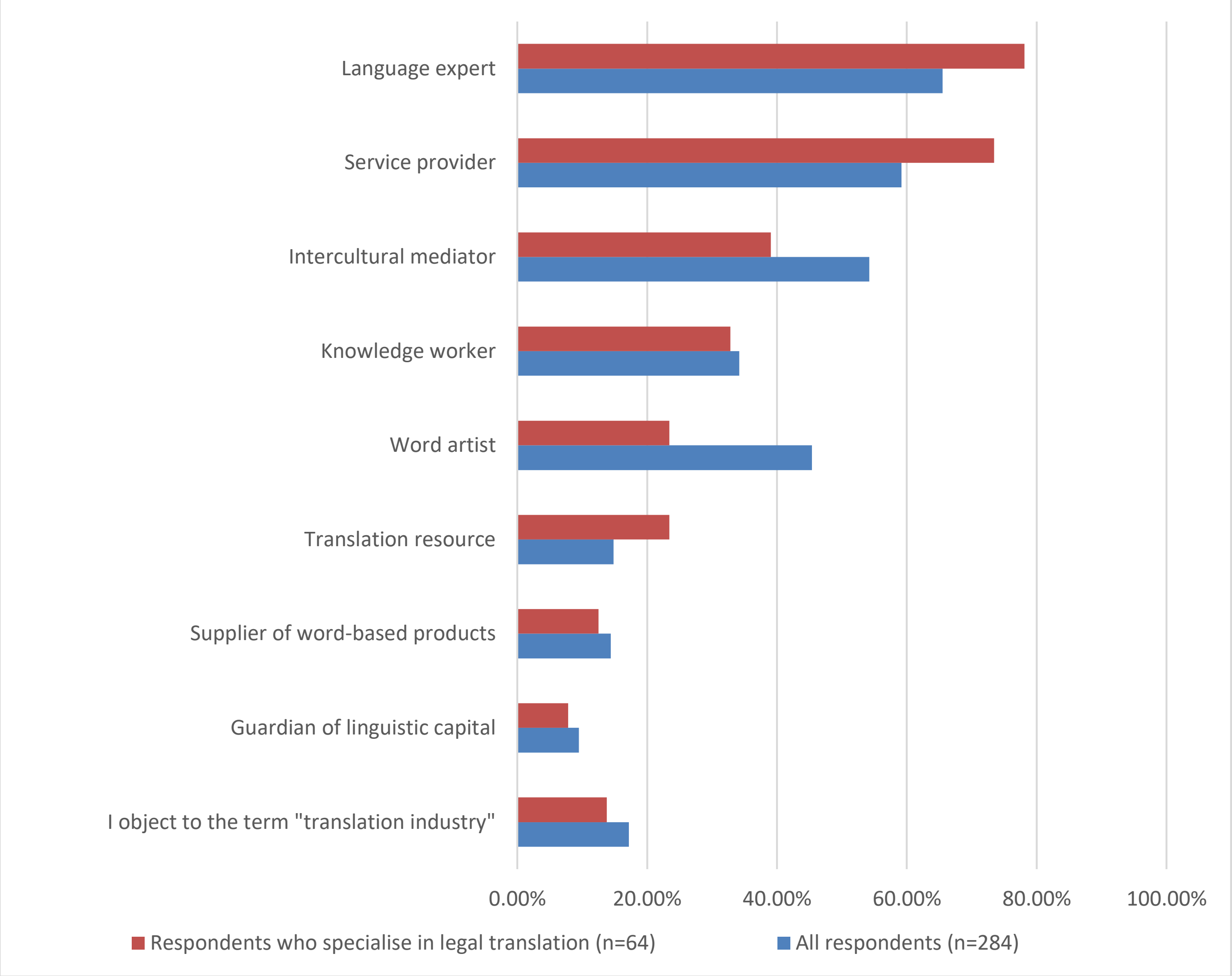


Figure 6.iii.c. Correlation between respondents' academic backgrounds and responses to Q24.

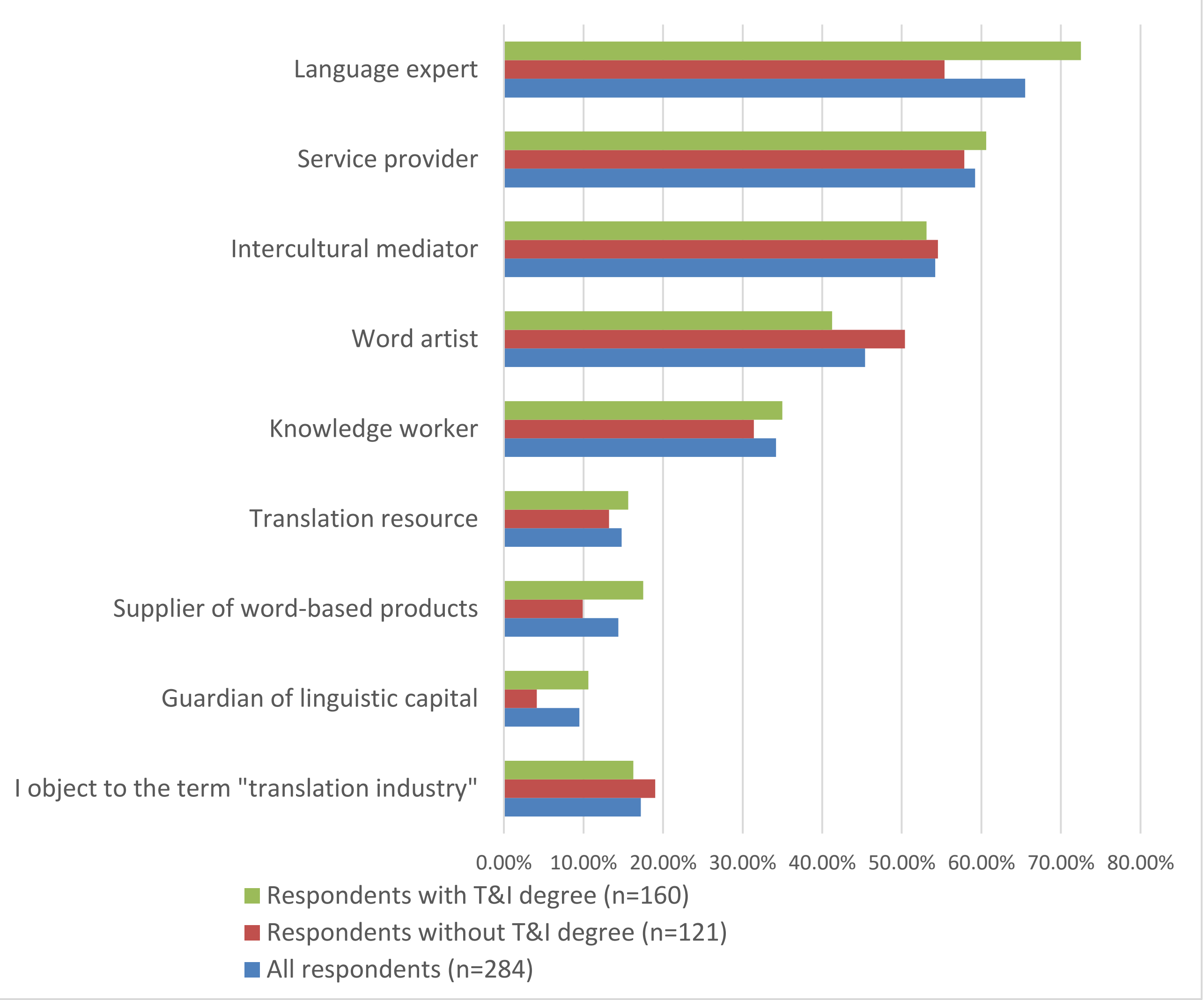


Figure 6.iii.d. Correlation between respondents’ gender identification and responses to Q24.

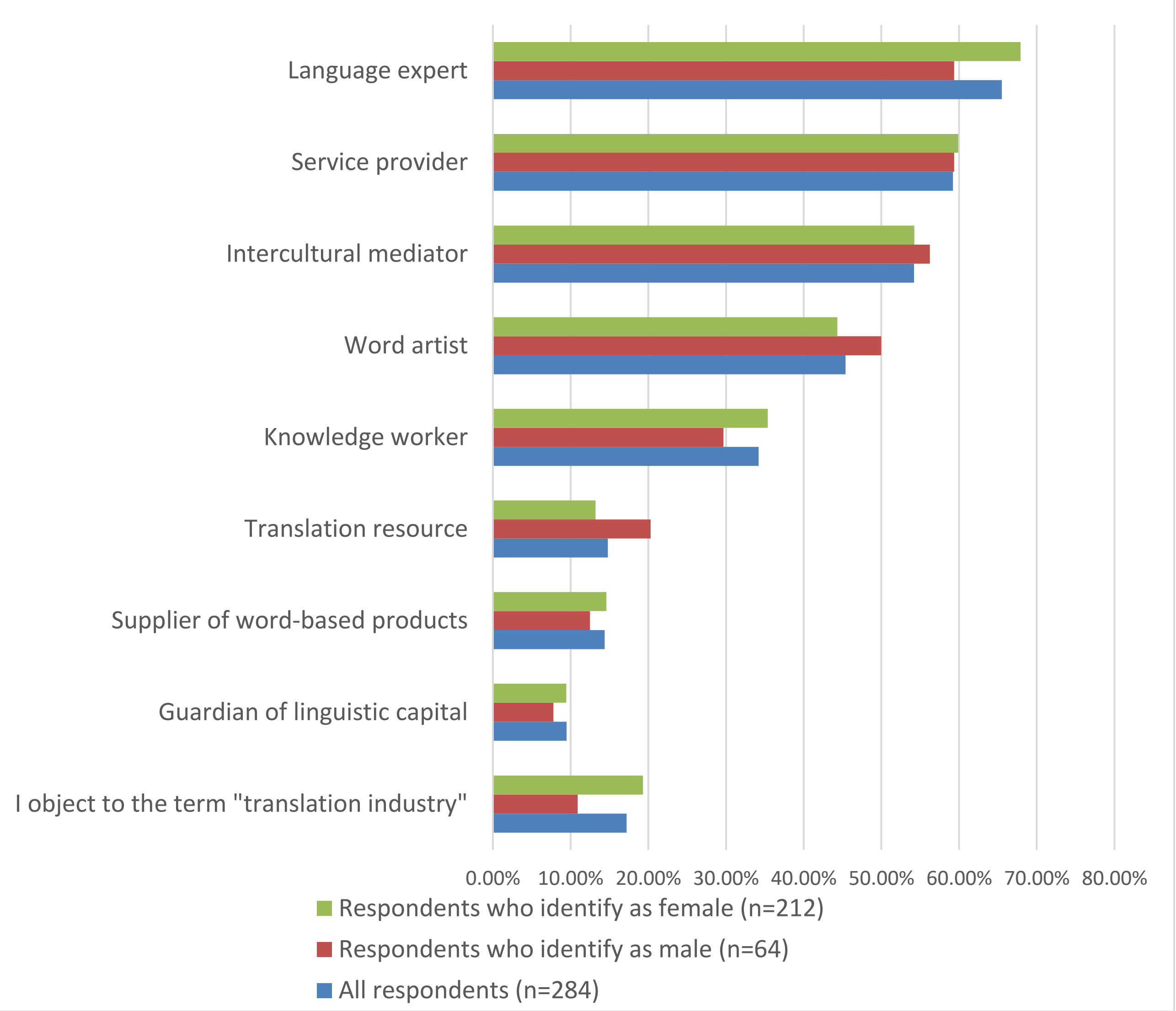
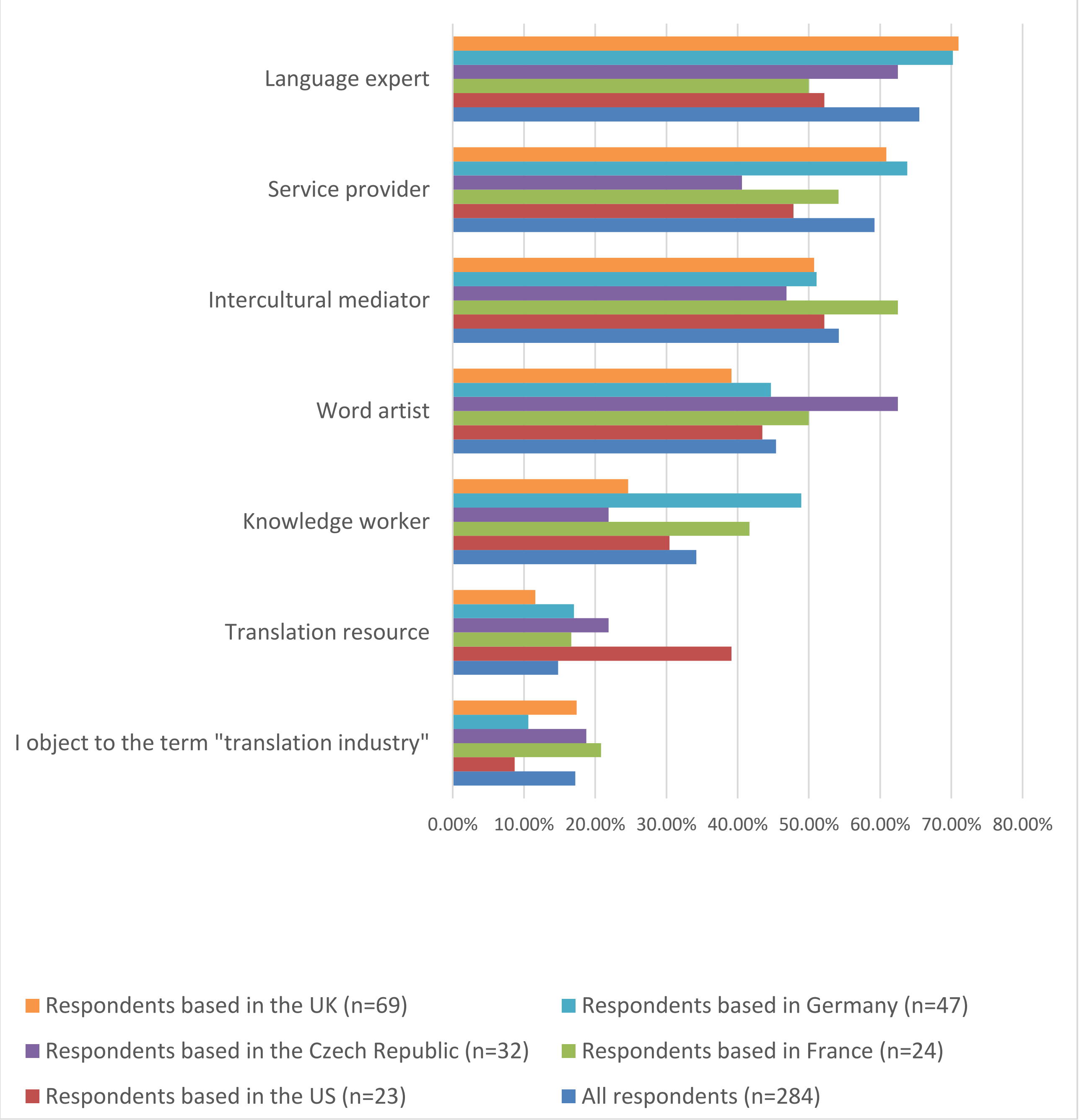


Figure 6.iii.e. Correlation between respondents' current location and responses to Q24.



Professional pride is closely linked to, but goes beyond, the identification with a community of practice to incorporate the craftsperson's "desire to do something well for its own sake" (Sennett 2006: 194). I will argue here that survey respondents who define themselves as *knowledge workers*, *experts*, *artists* and/or *mediators* assert a sense of professional pride by insisting on a surplus value of their work that exceeds the expectations they ascribe to their clients, specifically the perception of professional translation as service provision. This is not at all to devalue or belittle the sense of professional pride that can be derived from self-identifying as a reliable provider of high-quality services. As one survey respondent, who in answer to question 24 defines himself exclusively as a service provider, points out in additional comments for questions 24 and 25:

> I certainly wouldn't say "word artist," because that sounds like a difficult person. "Language expert" misses the point. "Intercultural mediator" sounds fully overblown. "Supplier of word-based products" sounds a little prosaic. I certainly do not object to the term "translation industry," but I certainly do think that translation is a craft. I just call myself a translator: My clients know exactly what they want that to be.
>
> I dependably answer my e-mails and telephone and am almost always available to deliver accurate, knowledgeable and well-formulated translations in a reasonably prompt manner. I am easy to work with, reasonably dependable (although I consistently struggle with deadlines and now take a substantial amount of time off every year) and translate very well: Translator seems like the most fitting term.
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Academic articles, architecture/design, visual arts, film]

In the current market, this is a sensible business model advocated by established professionals (cf. Durban 2010, Jenner and Jenner 2010, Guillemin 2019). However – unless the work is very predictable (e.g. regular newsletters, blog posts, product updates etc. of roughly the same length and technical/linguistic complexity) – by making themselves indispensable as reliable providers of quality services to direct clients, translators risk putting themselves at the beck and call of those clients inasmuch as their long-term success depends on a promise of constant availability and responsiveness to requests. Although theoretically the higher rates achievable from direct clients should allow translators to cut down their working hours, in practice their workload remains likely to be dictated by their clients' needs in any given week. Accordingly, many survey respondents mention finding it hard to switch off mentally and physically, let alone take any real time off. Some also report frequent clashes between urgent requests from different clients (see section 4.6).

In contrast, occupying a marginal position as expendable and anonymous *translation resources* for corporate LSPs can give self-employed translators more freedom and flexibility, an arguably greater autonomy and control over their working conditions. To put it bluntly, resources are by definition exploitable – but *translation resources* are to some extent free to control the terms of their exploitation.

Individuals working in other disciplines have been observed to "structure their professional identity around multiple professional bases" (Caza and Creary 2016: 3) by adopting multiple or pluralistic professional identities, either as "multiple work roles" within the same job, or as distinct roles in different professions (ibid.: 31). These identities can be enacted in different ways in relation to each other, defined by Caza and Creary as "intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, holism, augmentation (co-activation)".

In the case of my survey population, the pluralistic identities indicated by responses to question 24 are further complicated by the divergence between respondents' self-perceptions and their assumptions about their clients' perceptions. 240 of the 284 survey respondents who answered Q24 selected or added more than one definition to describe their own perception of their professional identity; on average, each respondent selected 3.1 options. The 44 respondents who selected a single option answered as follows:

- Service provider (19)
- Language expert (10)
- Word artist (4)
- Intercultural mediator (2)
- Knowledge worker (2)
- I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft (7)

(In this context, it is also worth noting that, while none of the 42 respondents who defined themselves as *translation resources* in answer to Q24 selected this option exclusively, 11 of the 152 respondents who selected this option in answer to Q25 indicated that their clients see them exclusively as *translation resources*.)

Within the production networks of the translation industry, these are distinctly different roles, which entail potentially conflicting loyalties, e.g. that of the *service provider* to the client's specifications, of the *word artist* to the qualities of the source text and/or the intentions of its author(s), of the *intercultural mediator* to the interests and needs of the target audience. Ideally, these priorities would be in alignment with each other; in practice, they frequently are not. For example, tight deadlines may not leave enough time to conduct in-depth background research, do justice to the stylistic nuances of the source text and/or discuss – or even ask – any open questions. Mandatory use of CAT tools, which dictates a segment-by-segment approach, can make it difficult to present information effectively and in the order that is most relevant to the target audience.

The comments quoted above indicate a belief that clients see translators' multiple identities as compartmentalised and defined by their own needs and requirements rather than, for example, by the strategies professional translators might use to position themselves in the market. Respondents evidently assume that in their dealings with clients they are expected to switch between a variety of discrete roles that are frequently not in alignment with their own sense of their professional identities.

The following comment suggests that this respondent, who identifies exclusively as a *service provider* in answer to both questions, sees this as their dominant role in the context they currently operate in:

> As someone working in a commercial context, this is the answer I'd give. Behind that, all the other boxes should be checked :)
>
> [UK-based respondent
> T&I-related MA, graduated before 2007
> Legal, finance, business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, engineering, automotive
> Q24: *Service provider*
> Q25: *Service provider*]

Otherwise, there is little evidence of how respondents structure their multiple identities and negotiate the ethical dilemmas inherent in them. Two comments by respondents from the cohort of most recent graduates suggest – in near-identical wording – an element of progression towards more desirable roles as new translators develop their skills and competencies:

> I would love to be a "word artist", but I don't think I'm quite there yet!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA and MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
> Marketing/advertising, automotive, food & beverages, health & beauty

> Q24: *Supplier of word-based products, Knowledge worker, Intercultural mediator*
> Q25: *Translation resource*]

> I'd like to be a word artist, but I don't think I am yet
> [Female respondent, France
> T&I-related MA from a French university, graduated after 2012
> Medical/pharmaceutical, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising
> Q24: *Service provider, Intercultural mediator*
> Q25: *Service provider, Guardian of linguistic capital, Translation resource*]

(In this context, it is worth noting that the reluctance to claim more aspirational identities might also be a sign of impostor syndrome leading respondents to underestimate their existing skills and abilities.)

The comments quoted in section 4.3 above also suggest that at least some respondents see themselves as "juggling" different roles, identities and responsibilities.

Crucially, choosing specific definitions of professional identity over others is not just an exercise in abstract semantics. As Dam and Zethsen (2016: 182) found, the

> huge gap between […] translators' image of themselves as experts and the way they feel clients and society at large recognise and value their expertise […] creates high levels of frustration.

Based on the findings of their CTP research project, Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2016: 77) suggest that "technological and systemic-organizational factors [may] have a direct impact on translators' role-perception, self-concept, and professional identity".

By defining themselves as *language experts* or *intercultural mediators*, professional translators defy the reductive role expectations they are confronted with every time they log into one of the user interfaces shown in figure 6.ii above. This defiance is reflected in a comment by a respondent who selected the options *Service provider*, *Supplier of word-based products*, *Translation resource* and *Language expert* in answer to Q25 but added: "I am not a resource though. No human being is." (More laconically, another respondent who also selected the first three options commented on these by adding: "Quite unfortunately".)

The extent to which this experience is actually empowering, rather than stressful and frustrating – even potentially damaging to translators' self-esteem and professional pride – is a different matter that would merit further investigation. However, as I will argue in the concluding chapter of this thesis, beyond purely "instrumental" roles as post-editors of machine translation output, the most promising future for human translators is as proponents and practitioners of "interpretive", transcreative or creative models of translation. Arguably, this will require them, individually and collectively, not only to position themselves in roles that are central to the translation process – as highly skilled *knowledge workers*, *language experts*, *intercultural mediators*… – but also to challenge reductive and marginalising perceptions of their professional competencies.

In his blog (http://mox.ingenierotraductor.com/) and four spin-off guides to freelance translation (Moreno-Ramos et al. 2011, 2012, 2017 and 2018), the Spanish translator Alejandro Moreno-Ramos uses the comic-strip form to great effect to explore a (fictional) translator's struggle to define his role and identity against conflicting expectations. Moreno-Ramos is careful to draw clear distinctions between his own and his characters' professional practice:

> Mox’s rates are very low, typically start from 0.02 per source word, though in some special cases he will accept less than 0.02. Mox’s friend and colleague Calvo’s rates start from 0.48 per word.
>
> Alejandro’s (the author of this blog) rates vary from project to project. He typically charges € 0.08-0.14 per source word. He started translating in 1997 and he charged € 0.042 per word for his first translation.
>
> […]
>
> This is a comic strip about the fictional misadventures of a fictional translator called Mox, although many of the events are freely based on my personal experience.
>
> (http://mox.ingenierotraductor.com/p/faq.html)

> [Alejandro] does only boring technical translations and happily works for not-so-evil translation agencies. […] When Crados crashes (not so often) and he gets too angry to continue translating, he takes a break and works on his dissertation in order to get a PhD in Electrical Engineering.
>
> (http://mox.ingenierotraductor.com/p/author.html)

Mox’s working life is a constant struggle with a catastrophically malfunctioning software called Crados, impossible deadlines and humiliatingly low rates imposed on him by a “Project Manager at a big translation agency” who enjoys “torturing freelance translators just for fun” and a direct client who “believes that a translator is ‘someone who speaks languages’.” At the other extreme, the cartoons also feature Calvo, “a senior translator who went to the dark side [and] is believed to be an excellent linguist who prefers to use Gurgle Translate” – which “is to translation what a plastic flower in a WC is to art” – and “enjoys charging abusive fees”, and who goes on to become “the richest translator on earth” in the most recent volume of the series.

By defining his own professional identity in contrast to these two extremes – the victimised translation resource completely at the mercy of market forces beyond his control, and the unscrupulous entrepreneur who uses his expertise to exploit those market forces – their creator is able to present himself as a reasonably successful and content freelance translator who “quit a very good job as an engineer when I realized that I could earn more as a technical translator and be able to manage my work time”.

6.3. Personal Aspiration v. Public Perception

The gap between internal and external perceptions is reframed as a conflict between personal aspiration and public presentation in this comment by a survey respondent:

> I think internally I see my whole career at the moment as something along the lines of “language and literature expert and consultant” although I don’t describe myself as such publicly!
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> Several T&I-related degrees from UK universities, graduated before 2007
> Arts, non-fiction books, poetry, literary and genre fiction, children’s books, magazine articles, news and current affairs]

This awareness – and, to some degree, acceptance – of the gap between internal and external views of professional practice is also reflected in popular internet memes like those depicted in figures 6.iv.a and 6.iv.b below. (These are not unique to translation; figures 6.iv.c and 6.iv.d show two examples relating to other disciplines.) With regards to translators’ internal knowledge, they also indicate a gap between “what I think I do” and “what I actually do”. This can be read – variously and simultaneously – as a humorous reference to the differences between

- aspiration and actual experience,

- the projection of prosperous professionalism and the knowledge that every translation is a “process of discovery [...], with no clear idea of what will happen when I start to try” (Briggs 2017: 69) and, as such, carries a risk of failure,
- or, less salubriously, between self-deception and self-perception.

Figure 6.iv.a. External v. internal knowledge of professional practice. (Source: https://www.scoop.it/topic/wit-for-and-by-translators)

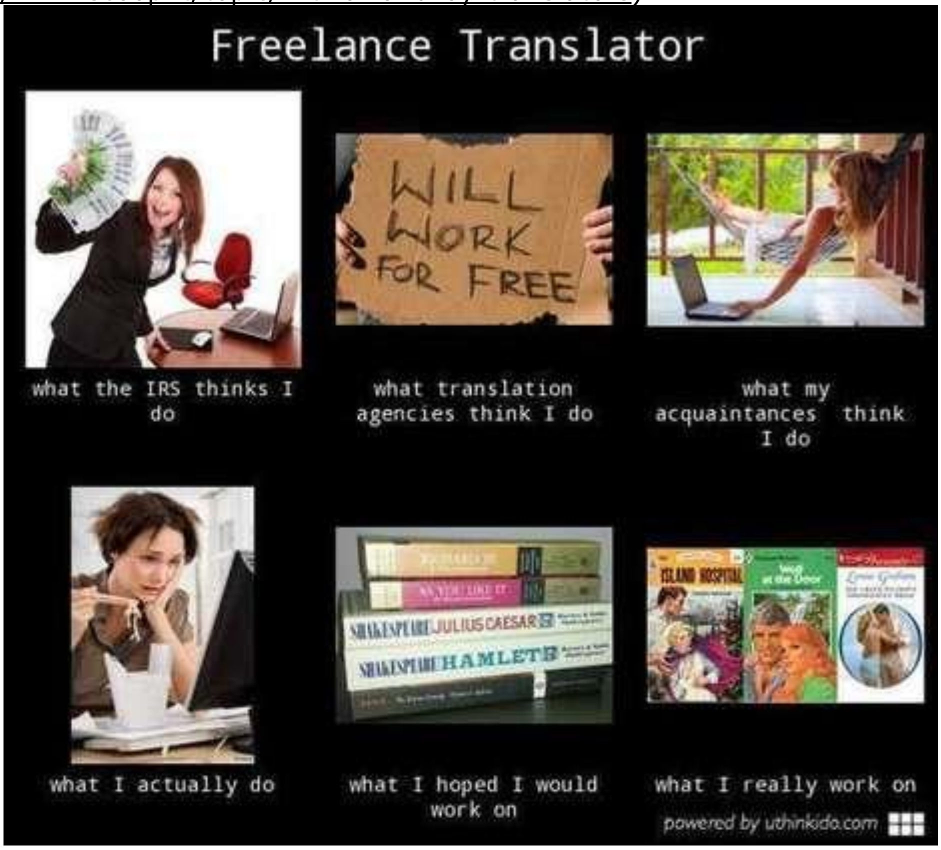

Freelance Translator
WILL WORK FOR FREE
what the IRS thinks I do
what translation agencies think I do
what my acquaintances think I do
what I actually do
what I hoped I would work on
what I really work on
SHAKESPEARE JULIUS CAESAR
SHAKESPEARE HAMLET
ISLAND HOSPITAL
powered by uthinkido.com

Figure 6.iv.b. External v. internal knowledge of professional practice. (Source: https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/251281-what-people-think-i-do-what-i-really-do)

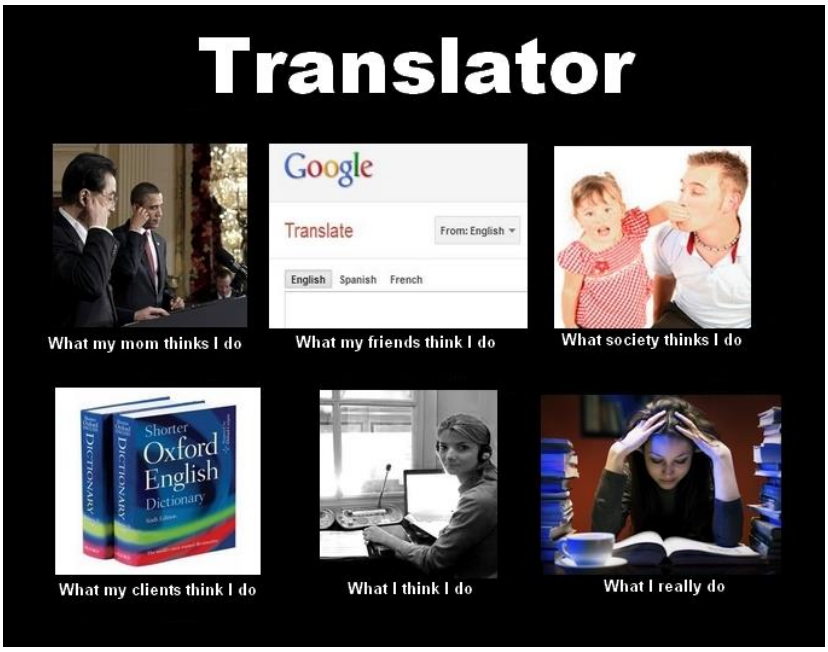

Translator
Google
Translate
From: English
English Spanish French
What my mom thinks I do
What my friends think I do
What society thinks I do
Shorter Oxford English Dictionary
What my clients think I do
What I think I do
What I really do

Figure 6.iv.c. External v. internal knowledge of professional practice. (Source: http://iam.dannyfoo.com/tag/what-i-really-do/)

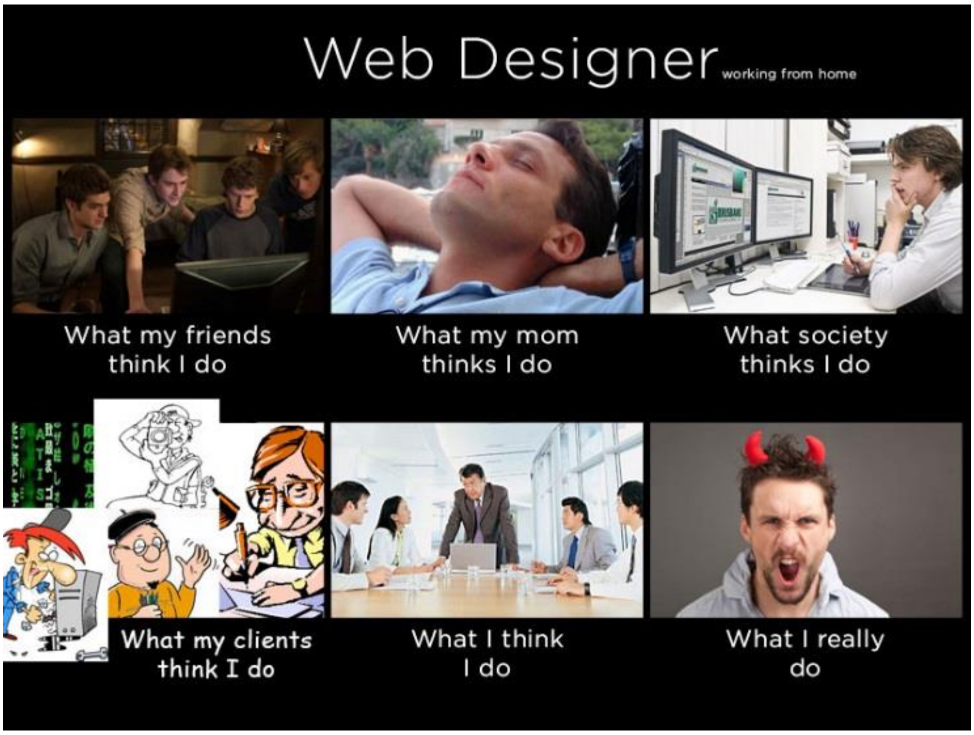
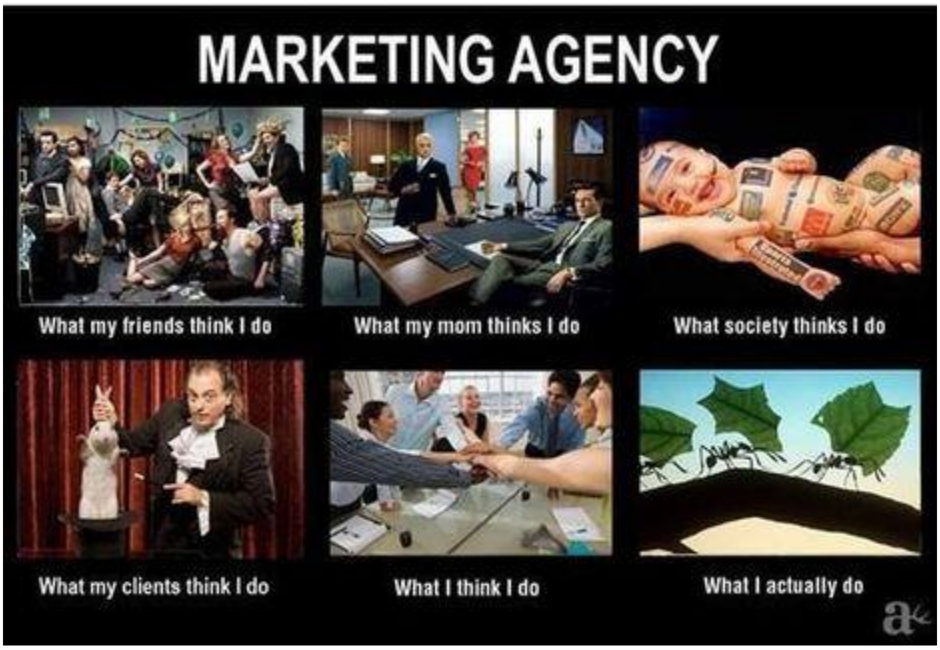

Web Designer working from home
What my friends think I do
What my mom thinks I do
What society thinks I do
What my clients think I do
What I think I do
What I really do

Figure 6.iv.d. External v. internal knowledge of professional practice. (Source: https://www.scoop.it/t/marketing-by-2fm/?tag=What+my+clients+think+I+do)


MARKETING AGENCY
What my friends think I do
What my mom thinks I do
What society thinks I do
What my clients think I do
What I think I do
What I actually do

The perspective of academic theory is conspicuously absent from these examples; I have yet to come across one that includes a depiction of "What Translation Studies scholars think I do". However, it is worth noting that the correlation between more empowering definitions of professional identity and positive attitudes towards the relevance of academic theory (see section 6.4 below) supports arguments about the value of Translation Studies scholarship as one source from which more empowering perspectives can be derived to counterbalance reductive views of translators' roles and competencies within the translation industry. Along similar lines, Katan (2009: 149-150) argues that "translation scholars have not really taken their own target audience or clients into consideration"; in his view, it is up to academics "to provide a solid theory which can help transform translation from an indifferently paid practical activity […] into a dignified profession".

In the short run, the self-deprecating humour displayed in the memes pictured above may be an effective way of coping with the frustration caused by feeling misrepresented and underappreciated. However, I will argue in the concluding chapter that further advances in automation are likely to render any purely instrumental model of professional human translation as service provision obsolete. The medium- to long-term survival of human translation as an attractive and sustainable career choice, then, may depend on the extent to which practitioners are prepared to publicly claim the empowering roles many of them privately inhabit, and reject reductive definitions of their professional identity as *suppliers*, *vendors* or *translation resources*. Further research would also be needed to explore the link between translators' definitions of professional identity and their sense of ethical responsibility – arguably, *language experts* can reasonably be expected to take on responsibility for potential risks associated with their work to a fuller extent than *translation resources*.

The observation that respondents in the cohort of most recent graduates (after 2012) were considerably less likely than the cohort who graduated before 2007 to define themselves as *service providers*, slightly less likely to define themselves as *translation resources* and twice as likely to define themselves as *knowledge workers* would seem to bode well for the progressive empowerment of a new generation of professional translators (see figure 6.v.a).

Figure 6.v.a. Correlation between respondents' year of graduation and responses to Q24. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment*.

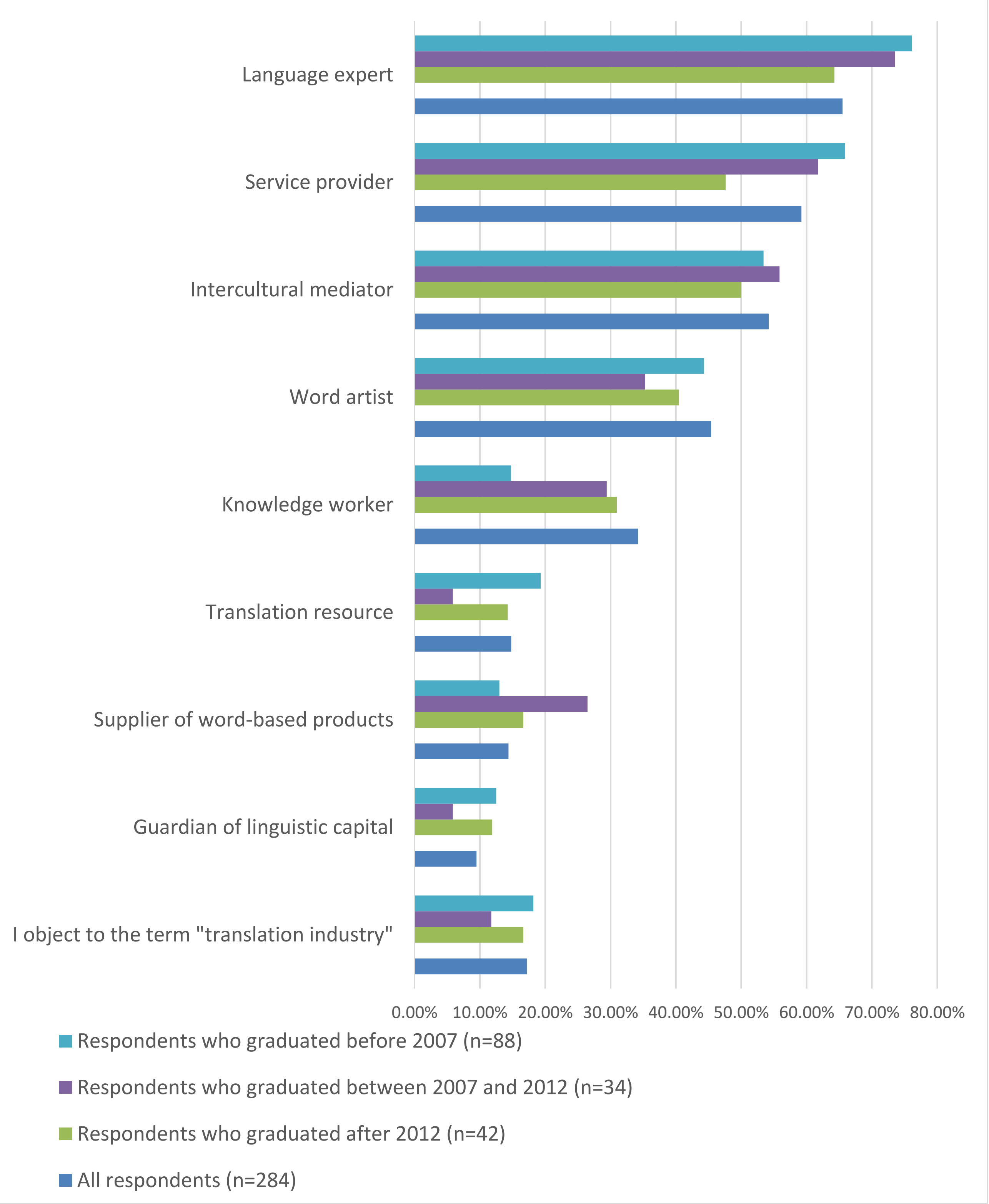
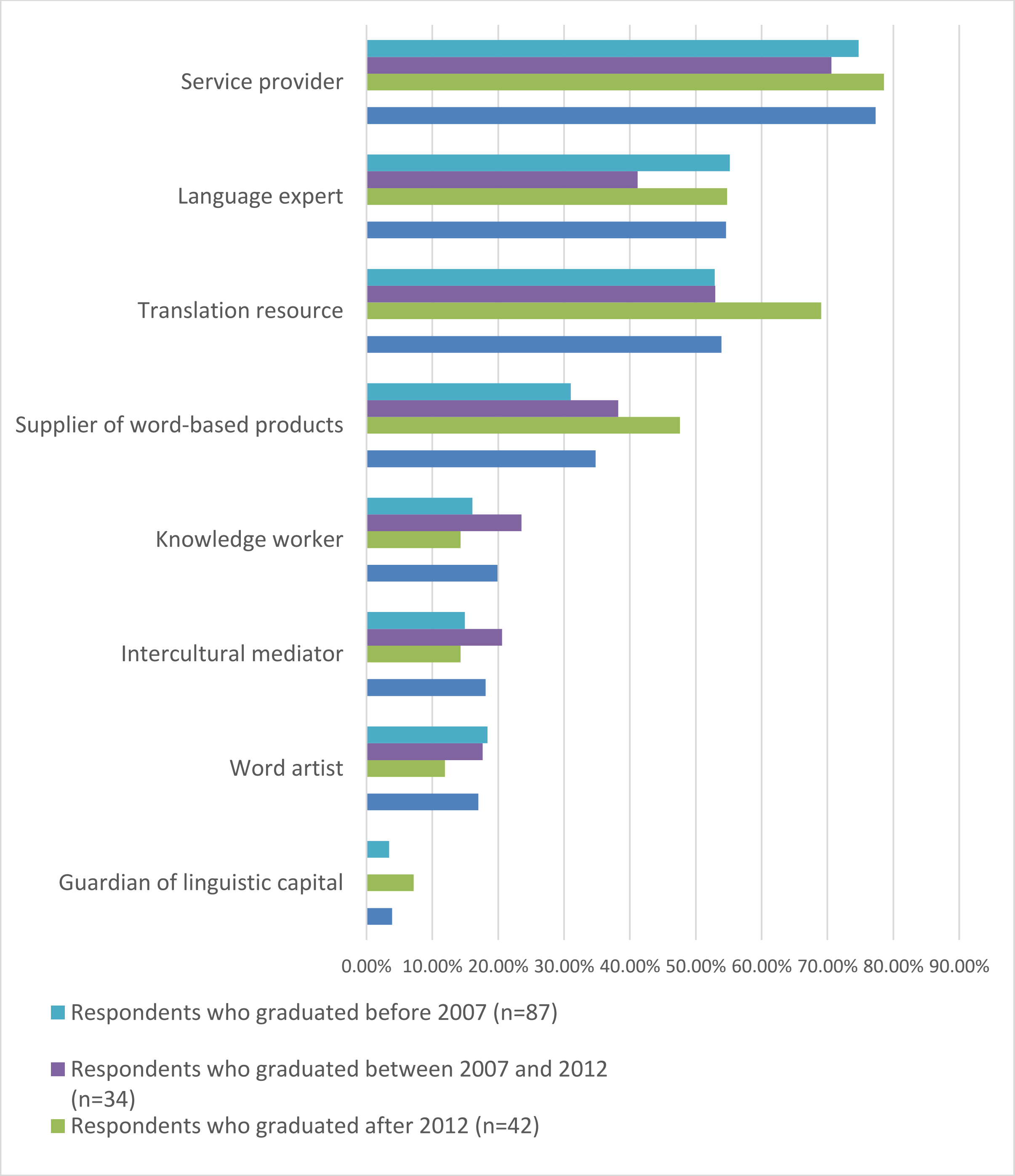


Figure 6.v.b. Correlation between respondents' year of graduation and responses to Q25. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you think your clients see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.*



However, this optimistic assessment is counterbalanced by a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who defined themselves as *suppliers of word-based products* and decreasing percentages who defined themselves as *language experts* and *intercultural mediators*. More alarmingly, the findings presented in figure 6.v.b above show that respondents in this cohort are more likely than both cohorts of earlier graduates to believe that their clients see them in instrumental roles as *service providers, suppliers of word-based products* or *translation resources*. Although the subsets of between 34 and 88 respondents are too small to render conclusive evidence, these figures suggest that the gap between the roles translators assign to themselves and their beliefs about the roles assigned to them by others is widening.

As briefly mentioned in section 4.7 above, responses to Q24 and Q25 also show that instrumental interpretations of translators' roles are underrepresented in the subset of *least content* respondents compared to the overall survey population and to the subset of *most content* respondents. Conversely, creative and interpretive roles are underrepresented in the subset of *most content* respondents compared to the overall survey population and to the subset of *least content* respondents.

The data obtained from the comparison between responses to questions 24 (internal perspective) and 25 (external perspective) does not conclusively support the assumption that the greater satisfaction with current working conditions in the subset of *most content* respondents might stem from a closer alignment of their professional self-identification with their clients' expectations. Figure 6.vi.b shows no evidence of a consistently greater divergence between internal and external perspectives in the *least content* subset. It is worth noting, though, that the greatest differences between internal and external perspectives are recorded for roles that are under- or overrepresented by a substantial margin in the subset of *least content* respondents, i.e. those of *word artist*, *intercultural mediator* (creative or interpretive roles), *supplier of word-based products* and *translation resource* (instrumental roles).

Figure 6.vi.a. Perceptions of professional identity in the subsets of *most* and *least content* respondents, compared to overall survey population.

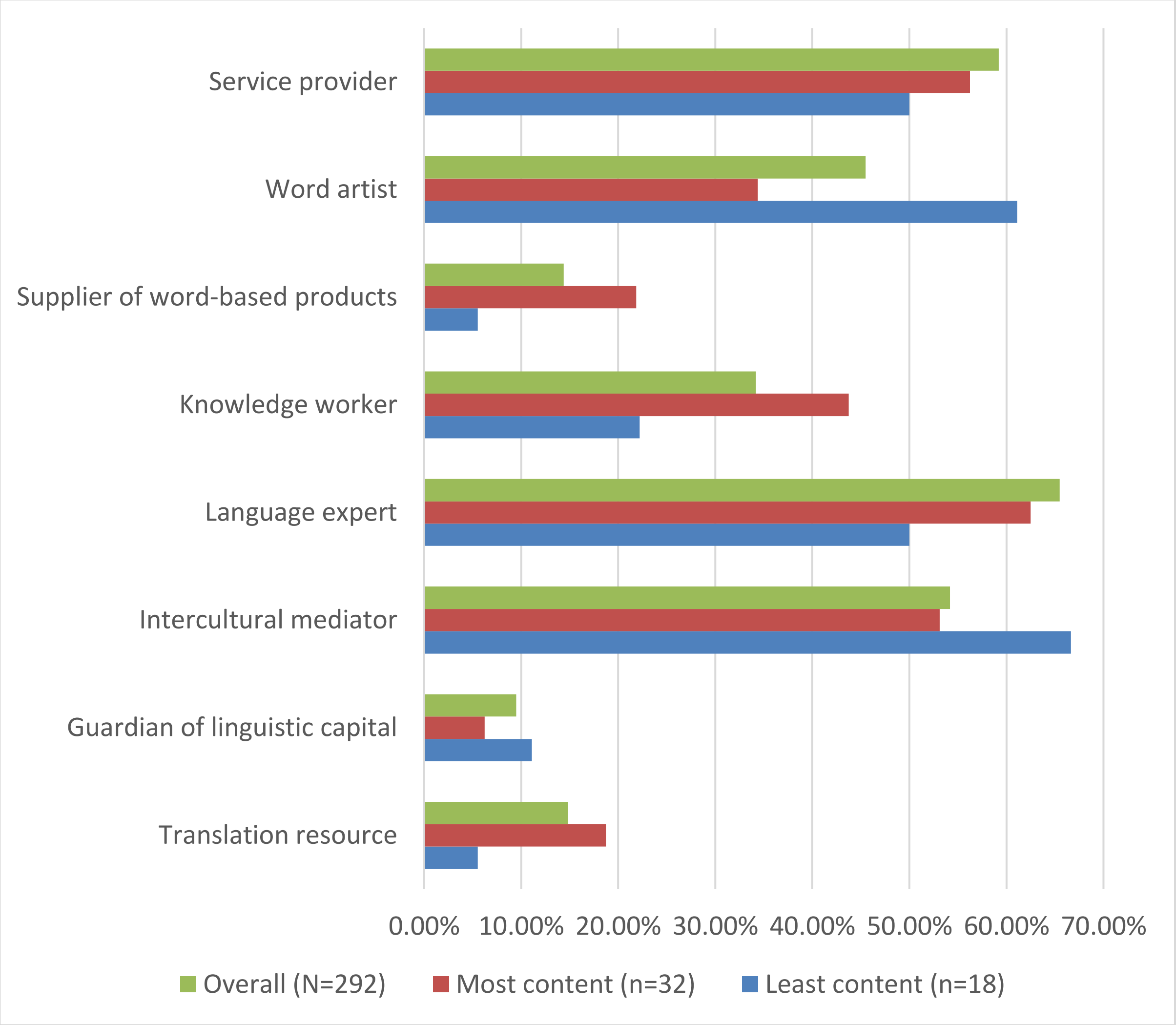
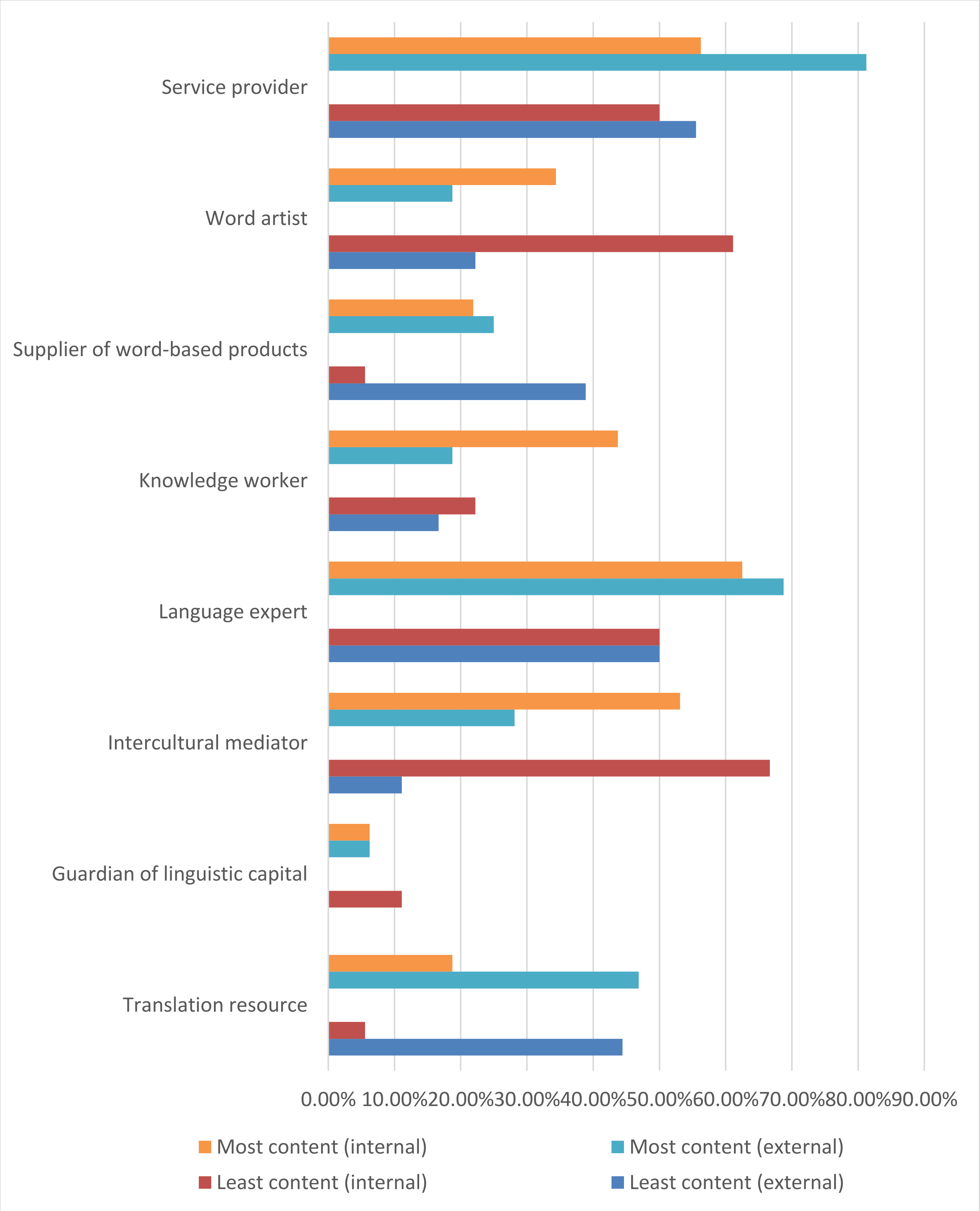


Figure 6.vi.b. Divergence between *most* and *least content* respondents' own (internal) definitions of professional identity and the (external) views they ascribe to their clients.



6.4. Correlation with Respondents' Attitudes to Translation Theory

As shown in figure 6.vii.a, the survey findings indicate a statistical correlation between the relevance respondents ascribe to translation theory and their self-image as professional translators. Respondents who in answer to Q23 about the relevance of translation theory selected *A knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators* were more likely than those who selected either of the two other answers to define themselves as *language experts*, *intercultural mediators*, *knowledge workers* or *guardians of linguistic capital* in their answers to Q24, and less likely to define themselves as *service providers*. They were also more likely to agree with the contention *I object to the term "translation industry" – translation is an art or a craft*. Respondents who in answer to Q23 selected *I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection* were more likely than respondents in either of the two other groups to define themselves as *translation resources*, and less likely to define themselves as *intercultural mediators*, *knowledge workers*, *guardians of linguistic capital*, *word artists* or *suppliers of word-based products*. Out of the three groups, these respondents were also least likely to define themselves as *language experts* and least likely to agree with the contention *I object to the term "translation industry" – translation is an art or a craft*.

While it does not necessarily follow that theory itself is a source of empowerment, it does seem significant to me that a greater propensity for theoretical reflection correlates with a less reductive perception of translators' roles. This propensity also makes a difference to respondents' perceptions of how their clients see translators' roles, as shown in figure 6.vii.b. In line with the findings presented in this and the preceding chapter, it seems worth considering the opportunity for academic institutions that make the teaching of translation theory relevant to professional practice, to guide students towards a more empowering sense of professional identity.

Figure 6.vii.a. Correlation between responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory and responses to Q24*. Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.*

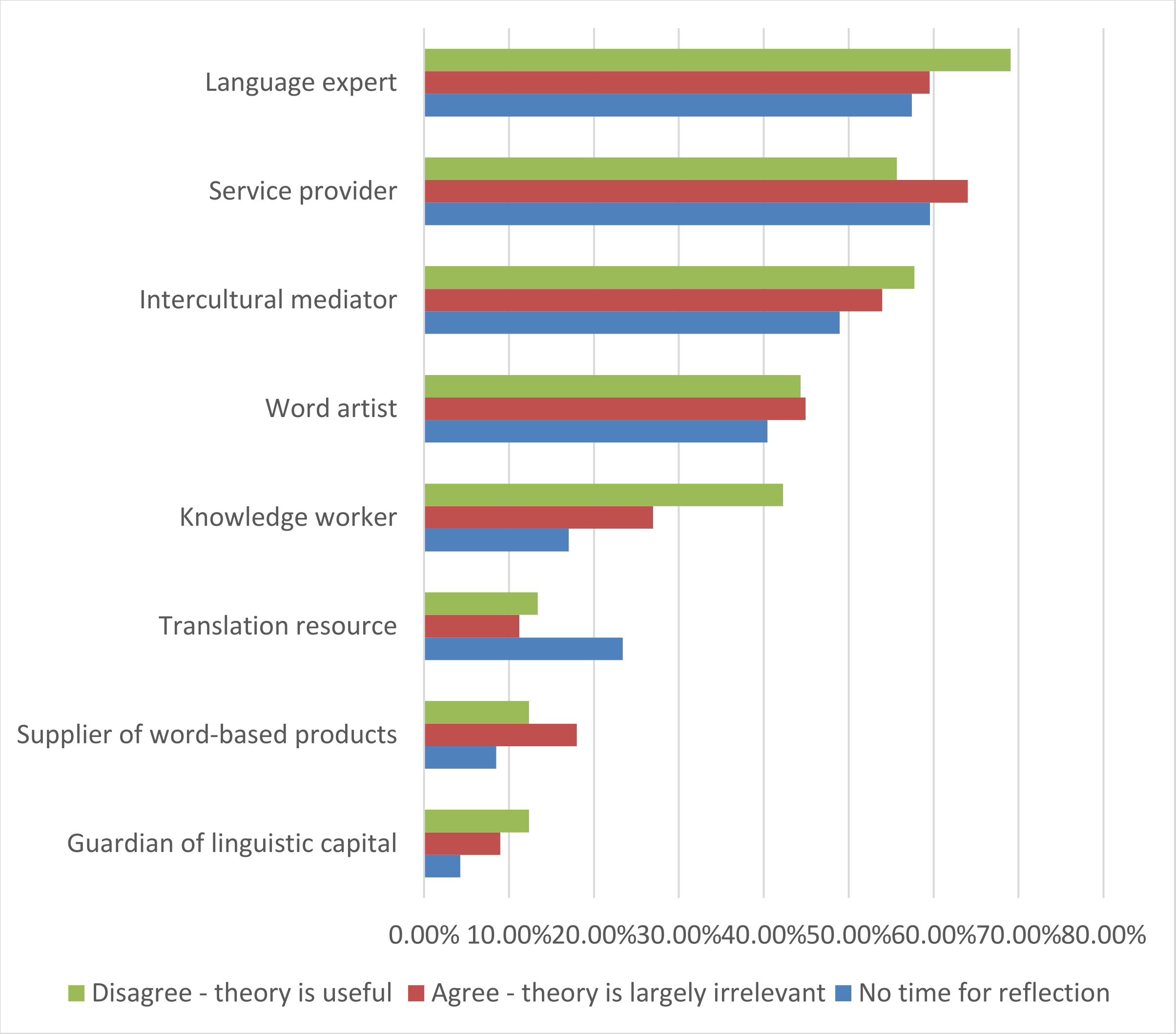
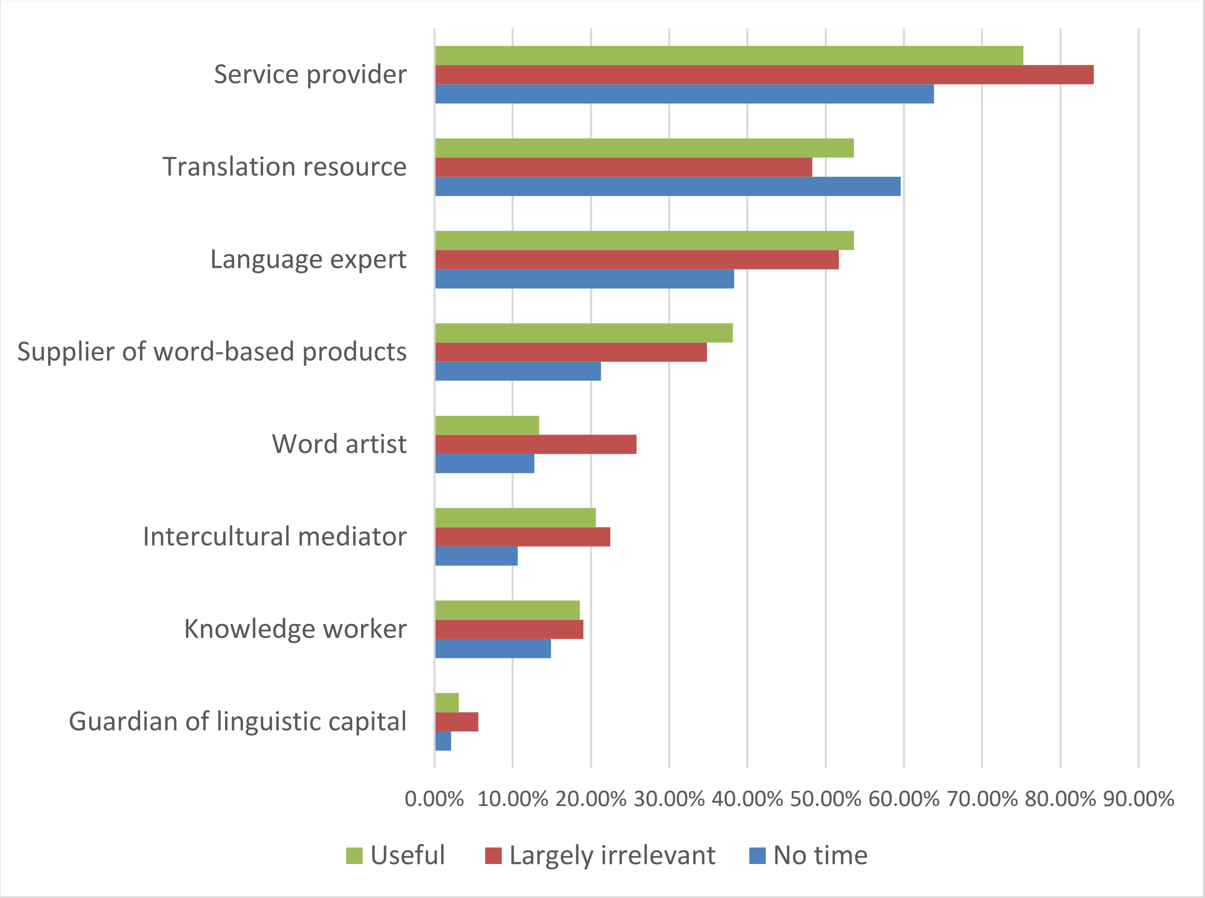


Table 6.vii.b. Correlation between responses to Q23 on the relevance of theory and responses to Q25. *Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you think your clients see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.*



Conclusion: "The Future is What We Make of It"

7.1. The Added Value of Human Translation: Competitive Edge or Cliff Edge?

Gouadec (2007: 369) offers a satirical vision that finds "the translator of the (not so) distant future" supine "on a reclining chair" and "taking sips out of what looks like a cocktail glass", a perfect picture of professional hedonism. Supported by a dazzling array of gadgets and widgets,

> the translator translates. That is, he accepts or refuses the system's suggestion. All he has to do is move his forefinger, as recommended by the Health and Safety at Work Authority [...]
>
> Ah! And as sometimes happens, when there is no suggestion, the translator happily dictates his translation, which is then automatically synchronised with the source sound track and the visual display. [...] What the translator does not know, of course, is that there is no real deadline. There is no "client" at all, either. And no one is going to read or listen to his translation ever...

Gouadec's "Last of the Mohicans" turns out to be an "unwitting guinea pig" in

> a test designed by the pluridisciplinary research team to pit their latest pet algorithms [...] against a good old human translator. [...] And here is the man, blissfully unaware that the WTE [World Translation Engine] has done it all in a few hundred-millionths of a second [...] It is doing far better than the certified human translator: not only does it invariably make the right choices, but it is incredibly faster.

In response to the challenge posed by "the ability or potential of new technology to perform more routine translation tasks", Cronin (2003: 66-67) proposes a more proactive and ambitious vision of "the role of translation in the culture, economy and body politic of the modern world" that

> concentrate[s] on translation's higher-level, value-added components. Translators like any other group of professionals in the social and human sciences are distinguished among each other not by what they must do but by what they can do.

Cronin's project would empower translators to step out of the shadows of Wagner's wordface and take their place alongside "historians, sociologists and economists" to bring their specialist knowledge to bear on current affairs in "a legitimate bid to make more central interventions in culture, society and politics" as public intellectuals and "(double) agents who can self-reflexively mediate information flows between languages and cultures". After all, Cronin argues, translators are experts in negotiating the tension between the two conflicting forces of globalisation: "the generalizing drive of *technē* and the particularizing drive of culture" (ibid.: 32). Since "[w]hat translators can do or think or say is partly determined by the theoretical concepts at their disposal", theory has a key role to play in preparing the ground for such interventions, which would require

> changing purely restrictive and instrumental views of translation practice and educating wider society as to what translators both know and can do. There is little chance of this happening, however, if translators and their educators do not also embrace a broader conception of the task of the translator. (ibid.: 67)

I can see little indication – either in the data collected in the course of my research or in the anecdotal and experiential evidence collected through my own professional practice – that Cronin's recommendations have been acted on in the fifteen years since these proposals were made. As argued in the introduction to this thesis, they certainly are not reflected in the vision of translator competencies set out in the EMT Competence Framework, which seeks to provide

> one of the leading reference standards for translator training and translation competence throughout the European Union and beyond, both in academic circles and in the language industry. (loc. cit.: 2)

When Katan (2009) investigated the gap between theories of translatorial empowerment and evidence of marginalisation and low agency, he came to the conclusion that

> [t]o a large extent a translator's work and interest starts and finishes with the word, and there is little interest in investigating the context(s), and nor for that matter becoming social agents for action. Clearly, the fact that they [...] work on a "time/pay-per-word" basis can only foster this LAP ["lower autonomy professional"] habitus. Yet, though they are extremely aware of their relatively low professional autonomy this does not stop them from being pretty to extremely satisfied. (ibid.: 149)

In their exploration of the "paradox" between "a profession that is held in low esteem and that offers sub-standard working conditions, on the one hand, and many happy professionals, on the other", Dam and Zethsen (2016) draw similar conclusions. Based on the qualitative analysis of fifteen personal "narratives" produced by experienced (eight years or more in the profession) in-house translators employed by LSPs in Denmark, the researchers found their subjects to be "exceedingly pleased with, and proud of, the intellectual and creative challenge of translating and the insights the subject variation provides". Although "[t]he narratives quickly confirmed the negative side of being a translator", they also showed

> a rather widespread enthusiasm about being a translator and a wealth of comments to that effect: in long passages of the narratives, the translators dwelled on the positive side of being a translator.
>
> [...]
>
> Even if society at large does not recognise the complexity of translating and thus the cultural capital required, the translators themselves are highly aware of the competences needed, and they work in an environment where their cultural capital is appreciated. The translators furthermore value the importance

> of translation, i.e. again, even if society in general does not appreciate this importance, the translators are aware of it and it provides them with satisfaction. Quite surprisingly, most of the narratives also describe translation as “exciting”, to our minds not normally the most common adjective associated with translation.

My own survey findings show that – while remaining above 50 per cent across all subsets tested – the proportion of respondents who strongly disagree with the proposition *I don’t want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway* drops from 69 per cent in the cohort of respondents who graduated before 2007 to just above 52 per cent in the cohort who graduated after 2012. As a number of respondents from the earliest cohort point out, the stronger disinclination to consider other options may well reflect the acknowledgement that their working lives are coming to an end. Further research would be required to determine the extent to which these figures are indicative of a growing sense of uncertainty about the future of human translation or a greater openness to alternative career choices, or perhaps both. In any case, it strikes me as worth noting that attachment to the profession remains strong even among the cohort of most recent graduates, who are starting their careers under the increasingly pressurised and precarious conditions discussed in this thesis.

In principle, a majority of survey respondents agree that *Human translators will need to adapt to changes in economic demand and technological development [and] take on a more proactive role to raise their public profile if they want their profession to survive*, as the distribution of responses to Q26(d) and (e) shows (see figure 7.i below). However, responses and free-text comments to other survey questions suggest that – for many, though by no means all, respondents across different cohorts –

the attachment discussed above is primarily to the craft of “translating itself”, rather than to a more holistic or integrated concept of professional translatorial practice that would include interactions with clients, and might even incorporate more ambitious visions of public advocacy and intercultural consultancy in Cronin’s sense. To some extent, this may well be a matter of (and for) education, as Cronin himself suggests. A stronger focus on the socio-economic and cultural contexts that frame translators’ working conditions during (academic) training might help aspiring translators to develop the confidence and competencies required to assume a more proactive role in shaping these conditions.

Figure 7.i. Distribution of survey responses to Q 26. *How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?*

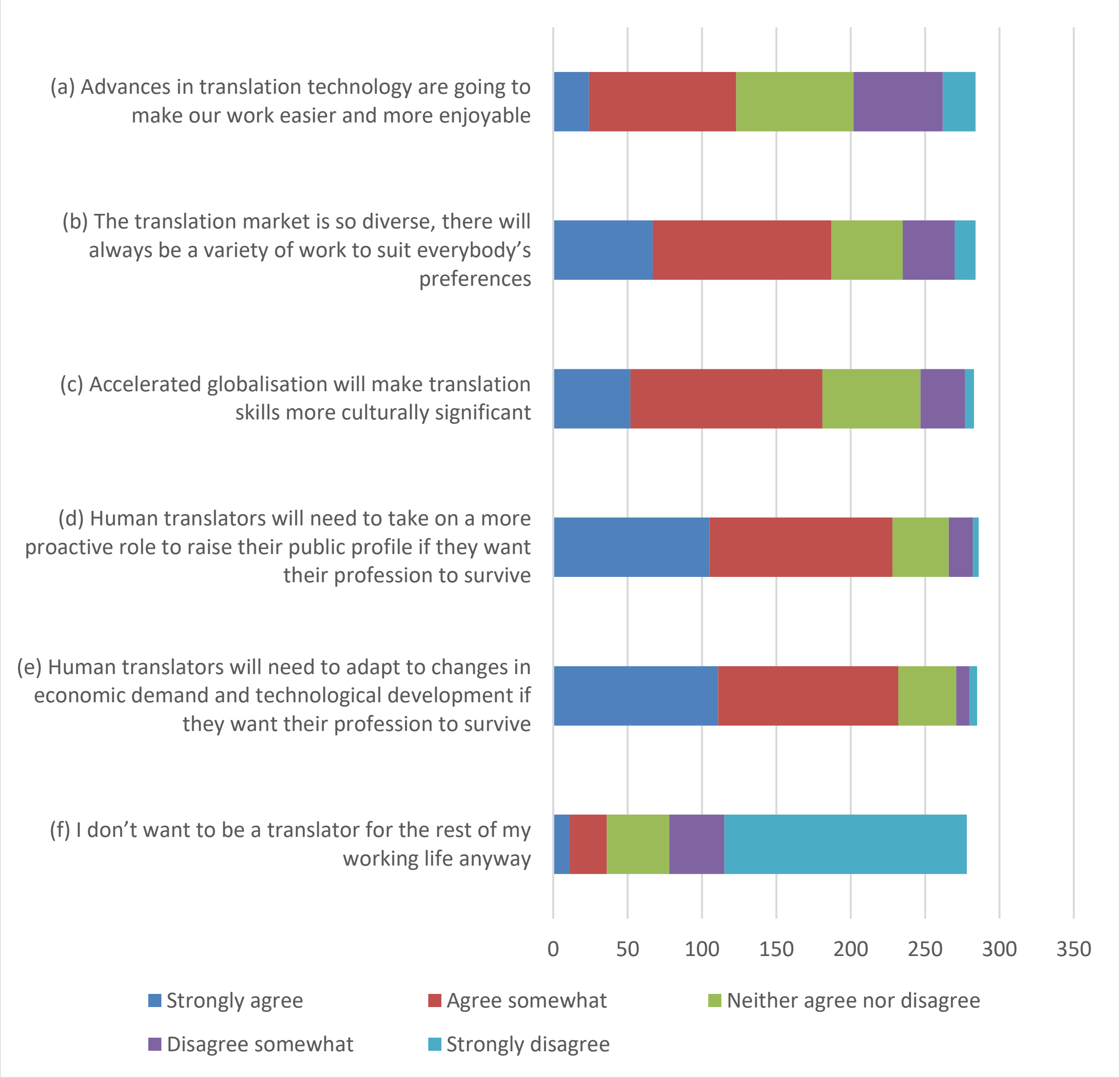
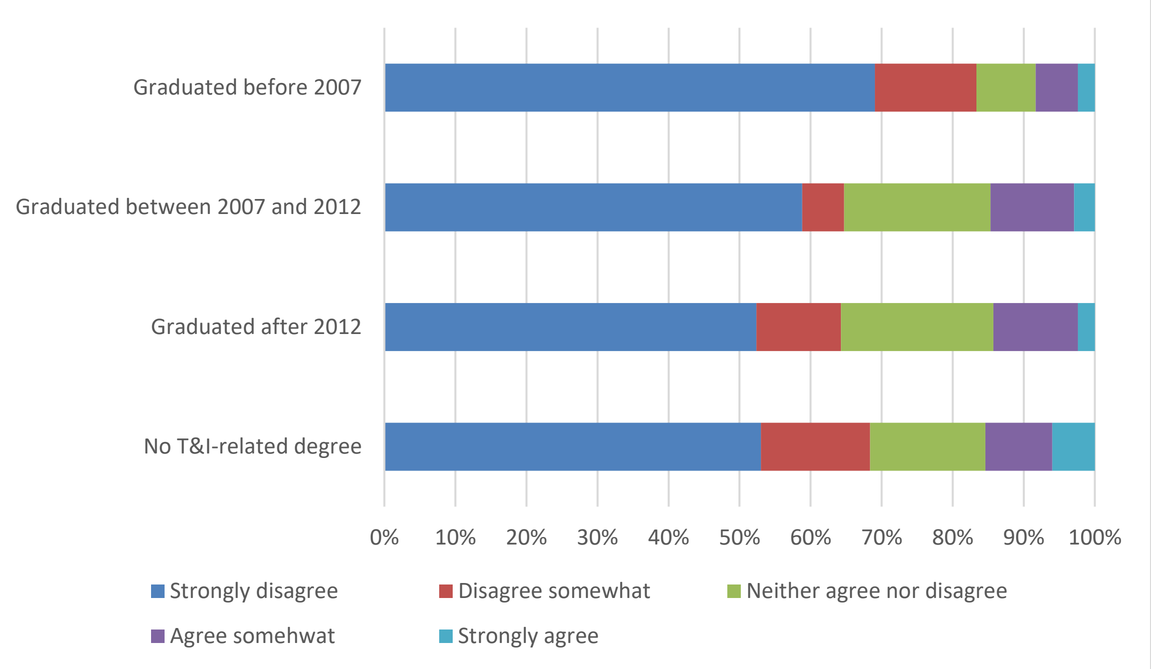


Figure 7.ii. Distribution of responses to Q26(f) for different cohorts of graduates.



Perhaps unsurprisingly in the context of the recent releases of Google NMT and DeepL, machine translation – though not explicitly mentioned in any part of the question itself – is the dominant subject in additional free-text comments relating to Q26. Opinions span the gamut from varying degrees of optimism – frequently grounded in the assumption that the respondents' own language combinations and/or specialist domains will remain exempt from the trend towards automation – to bleak visions of a future where "experienced translators will simply end up as checkers of machine translation".

Although survey respondents who *somewhat* or *strongly agree* with the proposition that *Advances in translation technology are going to make our work easier and more enjoyable* outnumber those who *somewhat* or *strongly disagree* by a margin of 3 to 2 (42% v. 28%), comments suggest that few if any respondents share the confidence expressed in the Common Sense Advisory's vision of technologically "augmented translation" that will enable linguists to harness technology in order to

> be more consistent, more responsive, and more productive, all the while allowing them to focus on the interesting parts of their jobs rather than on "translating like machines."
>
> […]
>
> [Linguists] will no longer be at the end of a chain with no influence on the process. Instead, they will control and work with all of this technology and become many times more productive. It will lower their cost per word even as it increases their value and effective hourly rate. It will relieve the tedium of translating repetitive variants of basic texts and help translators by [*sic*] more consistent and accurate.
>
> (De Palma 2017)

Instead of embracing this "new paradigm" – which hinges on the assumption that corporate LSPs would willingly relinquish their dominant position in the market once project management becomes a redundant capability replaced by workflow automation – survey respondents appear more inclined to agree with Dorothy Kenny's (2016) observation about "one of the supreme ironies of contemporary machine translation":

> In some cases, at least, it has resulted in a division of labour between human and machine that assigns the most mechanical of tasks to the human. It is a classic case of deskilling, in which a complex activity previously accomplished, start to finish, by one person is broken up into a series of simplified tasks, requiring less skill than before from the humans involved.

Accordingly, a number of respondents across the different cohorts of graduates express concerns about the potential impact of progressive automation on the future economic viability, as well as the future enjoyability, of human translation, as the comments collected in table 7.01 below show. Prompted by the wording of Q26(a), two respondents comment that

> I think advances in translation technology are going to make our work easier and less paid.
>
> [Female respondent, Czech Republic
> No T&I-related degree
> Natural sciences
> Lists "Daily job in other field of work" as primary income source, adding that "I used to be freelance translator but gave up the job since it's not paid enough to make living. I occasionally still translate as extra job."]

> Advances in translation technology are going to make our work easier, but not more enjoyable.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related MA, graduated after 2012
> Arts, architecture/design, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

It is also worth noting that two different respondents draw an explicit distinction between "real" (i.e. human) and machine translation:

> "Real" translation will gradually disappear, while automated and imperfect translation will gain ground in response to pressure on bottom lines.
>
> [Respondent based in Switzerland
> No T&I-related degree
> Co-owns and manages a translation agency that specialises in translations for the medical/pharmaceutical and marketing/advertising sectors;
> Comment translated from German]

> The profession of the translator will change as the profession of a shoemaker did in the course of the industrial revolution. There will be "translation factories" where the role of the translator will be minimized just to a special part of the whole process or controlling the output of a machine. The number of "real" translators will dramatically decrease, just a small number of high profile translators specializing for example in literary translation will remain.
>
> [Male respondent, Slovakia
> T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012

> Legal, marketing/advertising]

Taking a post-humanist view, another respondent argues that

> [t]he adaptation needed is mostly for PROFESSIONALS to survive the changes in the market, technology, needs than for the profession to survive. The profession will survive, no matter what: [whether] it is machines or humans doing it, the profession is still there.
>
> [Female respondent, United States
>
> Legal, business, medical/pharmaceutical, real estate translations and translating personal documents (identification, school, police reports, etc.)
>
> Combines full-time translation and interpreting]

Other comments indicate a perceived lack or loss of agency on the respondents' part, with the expectation that changes will happen "whether we like it or not" and translators will be negatively affected "regardless of" their response or adaptation to technological progress. This attitude of passive resignation is emphatically countered in a call to action by one respondent, who says:

> The future is what we make of it. It's about adapting the world collectively to make it suitable to us, not the other way around. But uh, it's not easy. I don't think robots can ever replace the kind of translation I do. I also think any profession can survive but resemble always more slavery. So again, yeah, I think we all need to be very proactive, now, always.
>
> [Female respondent, Belgium
>
> No T&I-related degree
>
> Academic articles, non-fiction books, audiovisual translation (subtitling)]

A number of respondents share more optimistic and/or ambivalent views about the benefits of MT engines that "[do] a lot of the boring legwork", "speed up the work process and reduce the drudgery", as the comments presented in table 7.02 show.

It is worth pointing out that there is a gender imbalance in the additional free-text comments relating to machine translation. In both categories presented in the tables below (comments expressing worries/concerns and comments expressing positive/nuanced attitudes), almost half of the comments were made by respondents who identify as male (22.9% of all respondents). Further, more targeted research would be required to determine whether this imbalance may be indicative of a stronger engagement with these issues, perhaps due to socio-cultural biases associating masculinity with technological competence.

Table 7.01. Selection of free-text comments expressing concerns about the impact of machine translation on the future economic viability and enjoyability of human translation.

> […] Most likely, the technological advances will end up putting a lot of translators out of work. There will come a tipping point where we will see a general winnowing – or translation will be redefined to include post-editing.
>
> [Male respondent, United States
> No T&I-related degree
> "[U]sed to translate medical/pharma and patents but gave that up some years ago" and now specialises in translating academic articles and non-fiction books ("mostly intellectual and cultural history")]

> I think only highly specialised translators will have work in a few decades. General translators will be replaced by AI.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> T&I-related BA Hons and MA from two UK universities, graduated before 2007
> Legal, business, marketing/advertising, tourism, Christian theology]

> I don't expect making a living as a translator will be possible 20 years from now, regardless of how much you "adapt." The market doesn't favour good translations, but cheap and quick ones; and those publishers who want good translations are

usually the ones who can least afford them. Even today, people often can't afford being translators unless they're living with someone who has a "real job," or only work as translators in their spare time.

[Male respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Arts, comics]

My source language is rare, and for various reasons not currently machine-readable. I don't feel under threat by automation. I imagine commercial translation in major languages will become increasingly automated/soul-crushing.

[Male respondent, France
No T&I-related degree
Non-fiction books, literary fiction, historical documents, testimonies, personal correspondence]

Worries that experienced translators will simply end up as checkers of machine translation

[Female respondent, UK
Dip. Trans. Technical and Specialised Translation/BA Honours Modern Langs., graduated before 2007
Legal, Finance, Business, Medical/Pharmaceutical]

I love being a translator, but I worry that eventually our role will merely be editing and proofreading machine translations. Also, I am not great with technology and I worry that I won't be able to keep pace with developments.

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Business, marketing/advertising, academic articles, texts relating to arts, architecture/design]

I may be a pessimist, but I see it gloomily. People care less and less about quality and more about money. The uniqueness of language is getting lost in omnipresence of English.

[Female respondent, Czech Republic
No T&I-related degree
IT/User interfaces, marketing/advertising, automotive, gaming
Derives a large share of her earnings from proofreading]

I think that machine translation (e.g., DeepL) will change the industry significantly, regardless of how translators respond to it. I'm not sure the profession will survive, at least for the languages where machine translation is providing translations that need only minor changes during post-editing.

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, environment & sustainable development, social sciences]

Language Technology is gonna take the power (i.e. the jobs), translators will only be used as proofreaders

[Male respondent, Switzerland
No T&I-related degree
IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising materials, non-fiction books, articles for a Sunday newspaper]

I worry about the effects of automation and globalisation on my ability to support myself long term

[Male respondent, UK
T&I-related MA, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Legal, finance, business, architecture/design]

Table 7.02. Selection of free-text comments expressing more optimistic and/or nuanced views about the impact of machine translation on the future of human translation.

> In my humble opinion, machine translating and the advances in pro translating software are huge opportunities for the freelance translator because they will speed up the work process and reduce the drudgery while putting the finishing stages of the job centre stage (editing, proofreading).
>
> [Male respondent, Germany
> No T&I-related degree
> Business, real estate and adjacent fields, such as architecture, urban planning, design]
>
> Translation technology does a lot of the boring legwork, which is great. People who are experts not only in the languages but also the subject about which they are translating will always be needed.
>
> [Female respondent, Finland
> MA Polish and History, graduated before 2007
> Medical/pharmaceutical, academic articles in the humanities – "esp. history and theology"]
>
> I think technology probably won't deliver all that is sometimes suggested, but it will undoubtedly change the way we work. I started in the days of typewriters and days spent researching in libraries so word processing and particularly the Internet have changed my work beyond all recognition in terms of logistics. But fundamentally the rewriting of something someone previously wrote in a different language has remained the same.
>
> [Female respondent, UK
> No T&I-related degree
> Marketing/advertising, academic articles, arts, non-fiction books, literary fiction]

Obviously, tools like DeepL are going to affect business/NGO translations to a much greater extent than they are literary and academic translators […]

[Female respondent, Germany
No T&I-related degree
Academic articles, non-fiction books, literary and genre fiction]

[…] NMT is advancing in leaps and bounds. Humans may well be put out of business for a lot of translation work, so they need to find their own niches.

[Male respondent, UK
No T&I-related degree
Business, arts, non-fiction books]

Every occupation has to adapt to the advances in technology; I don’t think it is a phenomenon restricted to translation. You don’t mention the improvement in machine translation. No doubt it will improve, but it will not rule out translators entirely. A translation programme cannot make cultural judgements. There may be fewer translators in the future, and no doubt their fees will not be comparable to other professionals’ (lawyers’, doctors’, etc.) as a result, for buyers will see us as an optional extra, so we have to keep educating clients (who are usually mono-lingual, or certainly not in a position to judge a translation in detail) that we have an important role to play if they want to sell their goods and services to other countries in a culturally and linguistically relevant way.

[Female respondent, UK
CIoL Diploma in Translation, passed before 2007
Marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books, travel+tourism, arts+museums, fashion+cosmetics, food+cookery, education+training, immigration+human rights/charities]

Re. the needing to adapt/raising profile: the issue here is with machine translation. Texts with a lot of standard phrases/terminology are the most likely to be replaced entirely by machine translation/post-editing. Translators in these fields will need to adapt to that, perhaps by gaining IT or programming skills/post-editing skills/skills as glossary builders/terminology researchers. I see creative translation as more "future proof" in this respect, however both will suffer if translators in neither field work to increase profile. E.g. in the case of creative translators, public may mistakenly believe creative texts can be effectively translated by a machine

[Female respondent, UK
T&I-related degree, graduated after 2012
Marketing/advertising, arts, non-fiction books]

I'm not one to think machine translation is solely a bad thing, but I believe it will be bad news for certain areas of human translation (especially for subject matters which tend to be somewhat formulaic, e.g. legal texts, where MT already does a somewhat decent job). For creative translation, I do not believe advances in technology are anywhere near replacing human translators, but I am already starting to see that they CAN be a helpful tool. As with all other areas of the professional world, there will be some adapting to do, and I am unsure as to whether or not this might mean that some translators will no longer find work that's enjoyable to them, but I don't believe there is a universal answer here.

Adapting to economic and technological changes will no doubt be necessary as well (as stated above, I have already experienced this), but I – perhaps optimistically – think that quality translation should have its price, and that translators as a collective should not blindly accept increasingly low rates. However, increased globalisation will put pressure on translators in that regard, as good translators willing to work for low rates may become more readily available.

[Male respondent, Luxembourg
T&I-related MA from a UK university, graduated after 2012
Business, IT/user interfaces, marketing/advertising, arts]

More of our time will be taken up with post-editing and proofreading, whether we like it or not. Transcreation will become more important.

[Female respondent, Spain
No T&I-related degree
Legal, business, academic articles]

I think that it is less about if we want "our profession to survive" and more about if we want to be part of a decreasing number of people who are practicing that profession. These people are going to have to market themselves differently and thoroughly embrace technology.

[Male respondent, Germany
BA in History and German, MA in Translation, Diploma in Modern Chinese from UK universities, graduated between 2007 and 2012
Works "mainly [as] a self-employed translator, but […] now also subcontract[s] some work to other translators"
Marketing/advertising, sports, arts, architecture/design, aircraft, B2B, internal corporate communications]

I believe fears of translators being replaced by machines are overrated, but maybe that is because the kinds of texts I translate are quite specialized and often written in an academic or refined manner that machines will not soon be able to match.

[Male respondent, Czech Republic
No T&I-related degree
Arts]

7.2. The Risk(s) of Spoiling the Job

For reasons discussed throughout this thesis, the current model of instrumental translation as an increasingly pressured global growth market dominated by profit-driven corporate LSPs strikes me as undesirable and unsustainable for translators who are “in love with [their] craft”, as one survey respondent puts it, deeply care about the quality of their work and aspire to be more than translation resources or “checkers of machine translation”.

It is possible to interpret the figures presented in chapter 3 as a moderate success story, as I have largely chosen to do in this thesis. However, with almost 50 per cent of respondents failing to make what they consider a sustainable income from their chosen profession within the first two years of their careers – including 41 respondents (14%) who selected the option *I still can’t make a living from professional translation or interpreting* – the same findings also tell a different and darker truth. Neidhardt quotes an even more alarming statistic from a 2011 survey among members of the German professional translators’ association BdÜ, according to which almost a quarter of respondents reported an annual turnover below 17,500 euros (the threshold that requires businesses to register for VAT under German tax law) from full-time translation or interpreting work:

> 47% of respondents are able to earn a living from translation or interpreting work; 31% would like to but are unable to, while 22% are not trying to make their living from translation or interpreting. (Neidhardt et al. 2016: 10)

While a number of respondents to my own survey profess their “love” or “passion” for translation itself, and a majority strongly disagree with the idea of ever doing anything else for a living, many feel stressed by tight deadlines and the conflicting expectations of deep immersion and instant responsiveness and under pressure to work longer hours and/or at greater speed than they would ideally like to.

Based on these observations, I see a danger that the combined effects of key factors that shape the current translation market are encouraging humans to translate like machines – efficiently and economically, with little regard for cultural context, stylistic nuance, textual coherence or the needs and expectations of a target audience. By doing so, they forfeit their remaining competitive advantage over faster and cheaper MT engines: the ability to make sense of source texts written by other human language users and then recreate them in the target language for the benefit of human readers, rather than mechanically substituting target-language for source-language units.

As argued in preceding chapters, the factors referred to above include:

- the emphasis on speed and productivity, which turns a complex contemplative process into a race against time
- the dominance of "instrumental" over "interpretive" or creative models of translation, which reduces intellectual labour to service provision
- the marginal position of translators in the "ill-structured knowledge domain" (Király 2000: 27-29) of the industry's supply chains or "production networks" (Abdallah 2012)
- the piecemeal nature of many translation jobs, where large volumes of decontextualised strings are shared between multiple anonymous "translation resources" and no effort is made to put them in contact with each other
- the segmentation of texts in CAT tool interfaces, which favours a *sentence-by-sentence* over a *sense-for-sense* translation strategy (Kronenberg 2016/1), inhibits flow, as some respondents argue, and restricts interpretive agency (e.g. not generally allowing translators to add, omit or

rearrange information presented in the source text in accordance with target-culture conventions or expectations)

- the control of corporate LSPs over the (technological) means of production, which allows them, rather than the translators themselves, to reap the profits resulting from any gains in speed and productivity (Garcia 2009: 202).

As Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2014) found, there is an additional risk of translators' autonomy being constrained by the routine working practices they observed in their research,

> with even low-level decisions having to be checked against what has already been documented in style guides, parallel texts, websites, concordances, bilingual dictionaries, forums, and translation memories. Minor problems and details, such as commas and spelling, are strongly foregrounded, and the professional translators spend considerable time checking to see if solutions already exist.
>
> […] If translators are being constrained by the technologies and system with and in which they work, it may be difficult for them to improve. Constrained systems run the risk of producing professionals who are very good at routine work but may not necessarily be capable of adequately handling new problems.
>
> (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey: 77)

For specific text types and skopoi, approaches that favour mechanical substitution over intelligent recreation may be perfectly adequate or even more efficient – but, in accordance with functionalist principles, should it not be up to translators as professional experts, perhaps even in consultation with end clients, to decide on the most appropriate strategy for each individual commission?

The fact that translators by and large accept the conditions described above as immutable features of their professional existence – to an extent where any serious attempt at resisting them seems either unfeasibly radical or ridiculously naïve – does not make them any less corrosive. It does, however, make it harder for institutions or individuals to pursue a change agenda that might ensure the status of professional translators as highly qualified knowledge workers with specialised skills and expertise.

On an individual level, translators try to minimise the combined pressure of these trends by getting to a position where they are able to secure work at the premium end of the market (leaving less desirable jobs for novices), as the evidence presented in section 4.10 above shows. A growing number of professional practitioners are willing to share relevant advice through social media and books (cf. Durban and Seidel 2010, McKay 2010, Chriss 2006, Jenner and Jenner 2010, Neidhardt 2016, Guillemin 2019, Sattler-Horvad 2016 and 2019, Tomarenko 2019). On an institutional level, translators' associations campaign to raise the profile of the profession by educating clients about the intellectual complexity of translators' tasks and the implications for output quality (cf. the brochure *Getting It Right: A Guide to Buying Translation* developed by Chris Durban for the Institute of Translation and Interpreting[40]), and educating their members about the need to upskill beyond *just translating*.

As I have suggested above, the strength of many respondents' passion for "translating itself" entails the risk of making them vulnerable to (self-) exploitation; there is a danger that translators may be prepared to put up with unsustainable conditions for the sake of doing work they enjoy. However, in accordance with the arguments developed by Richard Sennett

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[40] Available in different languages at: https://www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php, last retrieved 27 September 2019

(2006), the craftsperson's "disinterested commitment" and professional pride in "[g]etting something right, even though it may get you nothing" (ibid.: 194, cf. chapter 2) can also be a potential source of resilience and resistance against the "unfriendly revolution" (Gouadec: loc. cit.) of automation. Following Sennett's reflections, and based on my own experiences and observations as a practitioner and researcher, I have argued above that professional translators are frequently motivated by this desire to do their work well for its own sake. (Even if Gouadec's [loc. cit.] "Last of the Mohicans" was fully aware that "no one is going to read or listen to his translation ever", his commitment to *getting it right* would barely be affected by that knowledge.)

This precisely echoes what Robinson (2012: 27) says about the "[p]rofessional pride in reliability" that drives translators to "spend hours hunting down a single term":

> What is our pay for that time? Virtually nothing. But it feels enormously important to *get it right*: to find exactly the right term, the right spelling, the right phrasing, the right register. Not just because the client expects it; also because if you didn't *do it right*, your professional pride and job satisfaction would be diminished. (emphases in original)

Following Briggs (2017: 261-262), I would further argue that with every translation undertaken, there is risk involved in the sense that the outcome – let alone a *successful* outcome on either the translator's own (internal) or the (external) terms of work providers or Translation Studies scholars – cannot be guaranteed at the onset. A translation, in other words, is less a finished product than a contribution to an ongoing conversation about the (im)possibilities and limitations of translation: "a provisional answer to the question, 'can this text be translated?'" (Cronin 2003: 132). It may well be that this is true of most, perhaps even all, human endeavour: that every architectural design is a provisional answer to the question *Can this structure be built?*; every medical treatment a provisional answer to the question *Can this disease be cured?*; every mathematical equation a provisional answer to the question *Can this problem be solved?*; every work of literature a provisional answer to the question *Can this story be told?*, and so on.

For all that she – only half-mockingly, it seems to me – refers to herself as a "lady translator" (ibid.: 148),[41] Briggs raises important points about the nature and purpose of the translator's difficult business. Quoting David Pye's (2007 [1968]) reflections on *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, she insists that translation is unlike "the kind of workmanship […] found 'in quantity production, and found in its pure state in pure automation'" even if "tools and templates" are used.

> [T]he difference [is] that here the outcome depends far more on the "judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works". In this case, the "essential idea" is that the "quality of the result is not predetermined [but] continually at risk during the process of making" [and] "the risk of spoiling the job," [Pye] stresses, "is at every minute real". (Briggs 2017: 261-262)

In her case, the stakes are high due to the exposure – within academic circles – that her translations of Roland Barthes's lecture and seminar notes are bound to give her. For the – typically anonymous – translators of legal or medical documents, technical manuals and other time- and/or business-critical materials, the risks lie elsewhere. The hope that the risk of failure can be reduced to zero by relying on technology to eliminate human error may well be misguided. There are, it seems to me, far greater risks associated with the idea that human languages should be instantly convertible and comprehensible at the touch of a button, as though they were interchangeable expressions of the same universal contents – or, perhaps worse, inconvenient deviations from a universal norm that impede global commerce. Conversely, for the reasons outlined above, the argument that human translations are more likely to be error- and thus risk-free than MT output strikes me as a risky proposition in itself.

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[41] Behind the façade of (false) modesty, Briggs's defence of the "amateur translator" reads as an acknowledgement and critique of the economic conditions that enable and constrain her translatorial practice, which strikes me as anything but amateurish in the ordinary sense.

In its other aspect as a trade, however, the guarantee of a successful outcome of the "purposeful activity" (cf. Nord 1997) of translation on the client's or work provider's terms – i.e. the completion and delivery of a fit-for-purpose target text by or before a pre-agreed deadline – is deemed implicit in the translator's promise of professionalism. Translators would be taking a risk of a different order altogether – that of professional and/or economic suicide – if they were to advise prospective clients of the precarious and provisional nature of translations as

> personal experiment[s]: to see what it might be like, what would happen, *whether or not it is even possible* for me to write this line, this work, in my own language, again.
> (Briggs 2017: 134, emphasis added)

If there is an added human value translators can bring to the process, and perhaps to the product, it is to translation as interpretive action – rather than mechanical reproduction, which (N)MT engines may soon be able to deliver more efficiently than human translators. Freed from the constraints of service provision, translation can become, for translators, an exercise in enriching their own reading experience and, for readers of translations, a way of experiencing and responding to another reader's deep engagement with a text. If the invention of photography liberated painters from the constraints of realism (cf. Berger 1973), perhaps a similar argument can be made for the potential of machine translation to liberate human translators from the constraints of mechanical reproduction. The challenge would then be to identify – or create – new markets for human translation in its (non-instrumental) interpretive, creative and experimental dimensions if/when the option of subsidising such practices with more conventional translation-as-service-provision is no longer economically viable.

While this would satisfy my survey respondents' overwhelming desire to continue working as translators, it would probably require translators to engage in activities extraneous to "translating itself", which many of the same respondents experience as unpleasant or stressful. These would include educating clients about the specific competences and benefits human translators bring to the process, and actively promoting definitions of their professional identities as intercultural mediators, word artists and guardians of linguistic resources – along with the specialised skill sets that will qualify future generations of language learners for these roles.

If the instrumental model of translation as service provision by the most cost- and time-efficient means possible is unsustainable for passionate professionals, it may be worth asking to what extent it is satisfactory for clients who care about the (human) quality of the translation products and services they rely on. Is there a market for artisan translation, perhaps comparable to the markets developed for fairtrade and sustainably sourced products in other areas in recent years?

Widespread adoption of such alternative practices, it seems to me, would require academic research that theorises the full complexity of professional translation in its hermeneutic and functional dimensions as interpretive action and service provision, as well as translator education that guides students towards approaches to shaping their careers that are both reflective and proactive. To safeguard a future for human translation as a sustainable and enjoyable career choice in the sense discussed in this thesis, conceptions of human-quality translation will need to be extended beyond accuracy, and perhaps even beyond fluency. Efforts to identify defining factors could be aided by further research into the differences between human and artificial intelligence (cf. Kurzweil 2012).Tentatively, they may include the following:

- empathy
- passion
- creativity
- ambiguity
- linguistic experimentation
- critical reflection
- sense-making (ability to translate *sense-for-sense* rather than *sentence-by-sentence*)
- awareness of the risk of failure
- awareness of the provisional nature of translation
- analytical skills
- background (domain) knowledge and experience
- intercultural and contextual awareness.

In recent years, Chantal Wright (2013), Clive Scott (2014) and Christina MacSweeeney (Luiselli 2015) have all published literary translations that, in different ways, showcase some of these qualities and point the way towards a non-instrumental conception of human translation. None of these address, let alone answer, the question how such practices might become sustainable outside of (or even within) a very small niche market of academic and independent literary publishers. Current conditions and trends, as discussed in this thesis, present considerable challenges for any scenario that offers economically viable alternatives to prevailing industry models of translation as complete and accurate reproduction of a given source text in as short a time as possible:

- The pressures and stress factors reported by survey respondents are not conducive to working practices that privilege the human skills and competencies listed above. If anything, they encourage a robotic approach to translation as mindless mechanical reproduction, as argued above. "Unrealistic deadlines", as Cronin (2003: 71) says, "produce dead lines" that might as well have been generated by an algorithm; animating a translation takes both time and a living, breathing brain.
- There is currently at best a limited, and probably shrinking, market for translation as an emphatically human endeavour that showcases and celebrates the qualities proposed above. Extensive client education campaigns would be required in order to persuade sufficient numbers of translation buyers to value these human qualities over the speed, cost-efficiency and convenience of machine translation. These could be modelled on similar campaigns in other fields that foreground the

benefits of fair trade over exploitation of human and material resources, small-scale manufacturing over industrial mass production, deceleration over acceleration, craftsmanship over automation, individual diversity over universal standardisation.

- There is a danger of distinctly human translation skills being increasingly sidelined in academic and other training programmes for aspiring translators. While training providers are right to focus on technology-driven skills such as post-editing machine translation, working with CAT tools etc., it strikes me that this sometimes comes at the expense of nurturing the very skills that might ensure a sustainable future for human translation. Professional associations are starting to fill the gap, e.g. by offering CPD sessions on transcreation (Sattler-Hovdar 2016 and 2019) and creative writing.

The consequences of current and future advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning for other areas of knowledge-based and creative professional activity, including medicine, law, accounting, financial services, software development and copywriting, have been extensively considered and discussed in recent years (cf. Harari 2016, Frase 2016, Susskind and Susskind 2015, Mason 2015). It is worth noting in this context that none of these authors even mention translation except in reference to a fully automated service that facilities the provision of other professional services.

In his scenario for a society of pure abundance combined with social equality, Peter Frase (2016: 51) does offer a potential solution to one of the key challenges discussed in this chapter: how to make money from enjoyable – and, arguably, culturally significant – creative work for which there is no longer an economically viable demand. In this imaginary future, technological innovation has been able to resolve or avert the scarcity of resources caused by environmental crises. Meanwhile, automation combined with universal basic income has eliminated precarity by de-commodifying human labour, i.e. abolishing the need for members of that society to "sell [it] on the market in order to earn the means of supporting themselves".

Not just for translators, this newly levelled playing field – in which, technically speaking, everybody is an amateur – would raise difficult questions about the meaning and distribution of work, including menial tasks that cannot easily be automated. For translators specifically, the hard-fought battles for recognition of their professional status and expertise would need to be reconfigured in different terms. As Frase (ibid.: 56) foresees, in this scenario

> the wage for desirable work eventually falls to zero, because people are both willing to do it for free and able to do so because a basic income supplies their essential needs.

(As Frase also points out, and as borne out by the survey results discussed in section 3.6 about the career prospects of literary translators, this is already happening under present conditions in creative fields in particular, although without a "basic income [that] supplies their basic needs".)

On the positive side, these conditions would afford translators the opportunity many of my survey respondents clearly long for: to indulge in the pleasure of *just translating*, without the constant pressures of having to compete against machine translation to earn a living under increasingly precarious conditions – and without relinquishing their agency to become "unwitting guinea pigs" in the cynical experiment Gouadec (loc. cit.) envisages.

However, it is important to stress that the “communist” scenario of abundance plus equality is only one (and probably the least likely) of four potential outcomes Frase extrapolates from the current constellation of growing economic inequality and impending ecological catastrophe. None of the other three – labelled “socialism” (scarcity + equality), “rentism” (abundance + hierarchy) and “exterminism” (scarcity + hierarchy) – would provide a particularly hospitable environment for human translation to thrive in, although the scarcity of resources in his “socialist” future might well drive increasing demand for less technology-dependent solutions to vital problems of social organisation and (intercultural) communication.

The foundation myth of translation – revisited by George Steiner (1975), whose *After Babel* may well prove a more lasting monument to the power of human intelligence than the original tower – is a story about human hubris, divine retribution and the catastrophic breakdown of verbal communication. The more recent faith in the ability of machines to communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural gaps strikes me as hardly less hubristic. As I have argued above, human translation is associated with risks of a different kind, only some of which are chances worth taking. The risk of overworked and underpaid translation resources spoiling the job due to lack of time and contextual information is one that professional translators, educators, researchers and clients must work together to eliminate by the means discussed in preceding chapters of this thesis:

- promoting awareness of the complexities of professional translation, along with fair rates, realistic deadlines, short supply chains and constructive communication within production networks;
- encouraging habits of critical reflection and offering appropriate

guidance to new translators (e.g. mentorship schemes).

The risk of failure and imperfection inherent in any endeavour as complex as the difficult business of translation can only be acknowledged and mitigated as far as (humanly) possible by supporting the “judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works” (loc. cit.), and by encouraging an ongoing open-minded and open-ended dialogue between the various stakeholders affected by exposure to these risks.

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Appendix

A.1. Main Survey Questionnaire (292 Responses)

Background Information

1. Which of the following is/are currently your main source(s) of income? (If you select more than one, please provide a brief explanation in the comment field below.)

- Employment as an in-house translator
- Employment as an interpreter
- Employment as a project manager for a language service provider
- Self-employment as a translator
- Self-employment as an interpreter
- Outsourcing work to other translators or interpreters
- Academic research/teaching
- Other

2. Which country are you currently based in?

3. Which language combination(s) do you work in?

4. Which domain(s) do you specialise in? Please select any that apply and/or use the text box below to add any others that are missing from the list.

- Legal
- Finance
- Business
- Medical/Pharmaceutical
- IT/User interfaces
- Marketing/Advertising
- Academic articles
- Sports
- Engineering
- Arts
- Architecture/Design

- Automotive
- Non-fiction books
- Poetry
- Literary fiction
- Genre fiction
- Children's books
- Subtitling/Audiovisual
- Gaming
- Other

5. Are you a member of any professional translators' and/or interpreters' association (ITI, IoL, TA, BdÜ, VdÜ,...)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

6. In terms of gender, do you identify as...?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other…

Academic Training

7. Do you have a translation/interpreting-related degree?

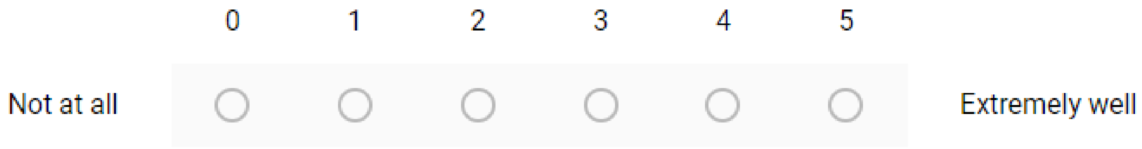
- No – please skip to question 9
- Yes – please use the text box below to specify the title(s) of any translation-interpreting degree(s) you hold (e.g. MA in Applied Translation and Interpreting, BA in Modern Languages, Translation and Interpreting etc.) and the institution(s) where you obtained your degree(s)
- Prefer not to say

When did you finish your translation/interpreting-related degree?

- Before 2007
- Between 2007 and 2012

- After 2012
- Prefer not to say

8. Do you feel that your degree course prepared you well for your professional career as a translator/interpreter?



	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely well

Transition into Professional Work

9. Did you feel well-supported during the early stages of your career as a professional translator or interpreter? Please select the answer(s) that most closely reflect(s) your experience and/or use the text box below to comment.

- Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my university
- Yes, I receive(d) a lot of support from my professional translators' association
- I would have liked more support from my university
- I would have liked more support from my professional translators' association
- I had to find my own support, but found it was readily available
- I had to find my own support and found it wasn't readily available
- I didn't feel I needed much support
- I find it difficult to ask for help
- Not applicable – I don't work as a professional translator or interpreter
- Prefer not to say

Can you think of anything that could be done to offer more support to new translators and interpreters?

10. How long did it take you until you were able to make your living from professional translation/interpreting?

- Less than a year
- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 5 years

- More than 5 years
- I still can’t make my living from professional translation/interpreting
- Prefer not to say
- Not applicable – please use text box below to comment

11. Have you done any translation/interpreting-related internships or work placements?
    - Yes, and I found the experience useful
    - Yes, and I didn’t find the experience useful
    - No
    - No, but I wish I had
    - Prefer not to say

Professional Practice

Please note that the questions in this section refer to translators only. Investigating the working conditions and professional practice of interpreters (or of project managers) would be a separate research project – one that I don’t feel qualified to undertake. If you are not currently working as a translator, please skip straight to question 26. Thank you!

12. If you are currently working as a freelance translator, what type(s) of client do you primarily work for? Please select all answers that apply.
    - Translation agencies/Language service providers
    - Private individuals
    - Marketing/advertising/PR agencies
    - Publishing companies
    - E-book publishing platforms (e.g. Amazon Crossing)
    - Corporate clients other than translation, marketing or publishing companies
    - Government bodies/International organisations
    - NGOs/Charities
    - Varies from one month to the next
    - Prefer not to say

Looking back over the last 6 months, how many different clients have you regularly worked for?

- One or two
- Between two and five
- Between five and ten
- More than ten
- Don’t know
- Prefer not to say

Looking back over the last 6 months, where did you get your work from?

Frequently Sometimes Rarely Never Don't know

- Online platforms, e.g. Proz, Translators Café etc.
- Existing clients (direct clients and agencies)
- New clients as a direct result of your own marketing/networking activities
- New clients via recommendation by third parties
- Others – please specify

13. How many hours a week do you typically spend on professional translation work (including related activities such as proofreading/editing or transcreation, but not marketing, invoicing and other admin work)?

- Over 40
- 30 to 40
- 20 to 30
- 10 to 20
- Under 10
- Don’t know
- Varies wildly from one week to the next
- Prefer not to say

How many hours a week do you typically spend on marketing, invoicing and other admin tasks relating to your work as professional translator?

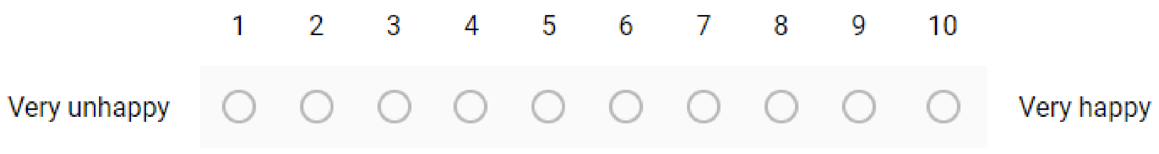
- Over 20
- 15 to 20
- 10 to 15
- 5 to 10

- Under 5
- Don’t know
- Varies wildly from one week to the next
- Prefer not to say

14. Are you happy with your current workload, or would you prefer to work more/less? Please select the answer that most closely reflects your personal experience at this stage of your career, and/or use the text box below to comment.

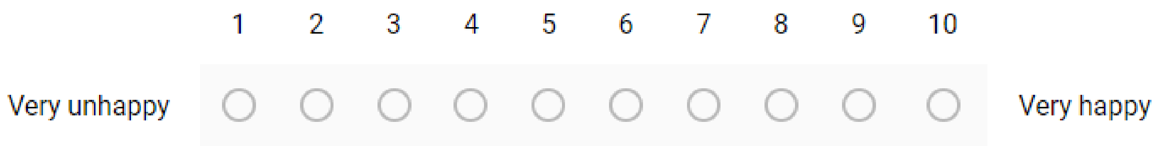
- My current workload suits me perfectly
- I would like to work more, but can’t find the work
- I would like to work more, but external circumstances (e.g. childcare, health issues, contractual restrictions) are stopping me
- I would like to work less, but can’t afford to reduce my workload
- I would like to work less, but I don't like to disappoint clients by turning down requests
- I have already reduced my workload
- Prefer not to say

15. As a freelance translator, how happy are you (overall) with the rates you are currently getting paid for your translation work? Please feel free to use the text box below to comment.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unhappy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very happy

As an in-house translator, how happy are you with the salary you are currently getting paid for your translation work? Please feel free to use the text box below to comment.



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Very unhappy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very happy

16. When you decide whether to accept or turn down a job, which of the

following factors tend to be most important to you? Please select up to three answers and feel free to use the text box to comment.

- Timescales/Deadline
- Size of the project
- Payment - Good rates
- Payment - Promptness
- Relationship to client
- Resources and support provided
- Whether the text/subject matter interests me
- Whether I feel competent to take the job
- I can't usually afford to turn down work
- Other

17. Do you visit online translators' forums, Facebook or LinkedIn groups etc.?

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Hardly ever
- Never – please skip to question 18

Which online forums do you visit?

What are the main reasons you use online forums for? Please select as many as applicable.

- Terminology research
- Discussing issues related to translation
- Finding work
- Outsourcing work
- Feeling less isolated
- Other

18. Do you read other translators' blogs?

- Yes – please use the text box below to specify which one(s)
- No

Do you write a translator's blog yourself?

- Yes
- No

Do you regularly contribute to other translators' blogs, online bulletins or other translation-related publications?

- Yes
- No

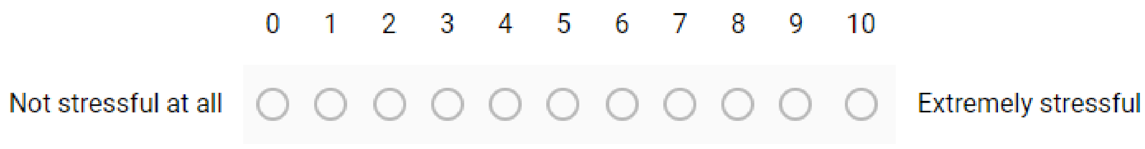
19. The translator and Translation Studies scholar Douglas Robinson describes flow as "the subliminal state in which translation is fastest, most reliable and most enjoyable – so enjoyable that it can become addictive, like painting, novel-writing or other forms of creative expression". Do you ever experience this state when translating?

- All the time
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't know

20. If you could name one factor that would make your work as a professional translator more enjoyable, what would it be?

21. If you could name one aspect that you find most unpleasant about working as a professional translator, what would it be?

22. On a scale from 0 to 10, how stressful do you find your job as a professional translator?



	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not stressful at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Extremely stressful

Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find most stressful?

Which aspect(s) of working as a professional translator do you find least stressful?

23. Would you agree with Emma Wagner's claim that most professional translators "had a brief brush with theory in our student days, when we absorbed whatever was needed to get us through our exams... and then proceeded to forget it, as we got to grips with the realities of learning how to do the job"?

- I disagree – a knowledge of translation theory can provide useful guidance to professional translators
- I agree – translation theory is largely irrelevant to my professional practice
- I don't usually have time for theoretical reflection
- Other

24. Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.

- Service provider
- Word artist
- Supplier of word-based products
- Knowledge worker
- Language expert
- Intercultural mediator
- Guardian of linguistic capital
- Translation resource
- I object to the term "translation industry" – professional translation is an art or a craft
- Other

25. Which of the following definitions most closely represent(s) how you think your clients see your role in the translation industry? Please select as many answers as applicable and feel free to use the text box below to comment.

- Service provider
- Word artist
- Supplier of word-based products

- Knowledge worker
- Language expert
- Intercultural mediator
- Guardian of linguistic capital
- Translation resource
- Other

26. How do you think working conditions for professional human translators will change in the near future?

Strongly agree	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Strongly disagree

- Advances in translation technology are going to make our work easier and more enjoyable
- The translation market is so diverse, there will always be a variety of work to suit everybody's preferences
- Accelerated globalisation will make translation skills more culturally significant
- Human translators will need to take on a more proactive role to raise their public profile if they want their profession to survive
- Human translators will need to adapt to changes in economic demand and technological development if they want their profession to survive

- I don't want to be a translator for the rest of my working life anyway

And finally…

How did you become aware of this survey?

- E-mail
- Flyer
- Other

Is there anything you would like to add, or any other important issue(s) that you think should have been covered in the survey?

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview by phone, Skype or in person? If so, please leave an e-mail address where you can be contacted. (Your e-mail address will not be passed on to any third parties or used for any other than the stated purpose.)

If you would like to receive a report of my findings once the survey has ended and I have analysed the results, please leave an e-mail address where you can be contacted. (Your e-mail address will not be passed on to any third parties or used for any other than the stated purpose.)

A.2. Follow-up Survey on Enjoyability (17 Responses)

In your own words, could you say a little more about what you find enjoyable – or in any case “least stressful” – about translating itself as opposed to other aspects of your work as a professional translator?

Can you think of anything translators themselves can do – individually or collectively – to reduce stress in other aspects or areas of their professional work?

Is there anything you would like to add that hasn’t been covered in the two questions above?

A.3. Follow-up Survey on Time Management (19 Responses)

For each of the statements below, please select the option that most closely describes your own experience. Feel free to use the text box below to comment on your answers.

Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No comment

- I turn down requests for translation work if the deadlines seem very tight and the client refuses to negotiate
- I would be able to deliver better quality if I was under less time pressure
- My time-management skills are poor
- I don’t mind tight deadlines; they keep me focussed
- Clients cause stress by setting tight deadlines
- I set my own deadlines, but underestimate the amount of research/creative thinking/formatting… required for the translation
- I set my own deadlines, but would probably lose work if they aren’t competitive enough
- I don’t care about stress as long as I get paid well
- I create stress for myself by trying to juggle too many projects
- Clients cause stress by making last-minute changes to the source text and/or translation brief
- I accept tight deadlines because I don’t want to lose the client

Do you use machine translation to help you meet deadlines?

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- I haven’t so far, but would consider it
- Prefer not to say

Can you think of anything translators themselves – individually or collectively – can do to reduce stress caused by time pressure/tight deadlines?

Do you have any strategies that help you cope with stress in your professional life?

Is there anything you would like to add that hasn't been covered in the questions above?

A.4. Follow-up Survey on Translation Rates (53 Responses)

Have you been able to raise your translation rates for agency clients over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – I don’t work for agency clients
- Other

Have you had to lower your translation rates for (some) agency clients over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- No, but I've lost agency clients because I've refused to lower my rates
- Not applicable – I don’t work for agency clients
- Other

Have you been able to raise your translation rates for publishing houses over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – I don’t work for publishing houses
- Other

Have you had to lower your translation rates for (some) publishing houses over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- No, but I've lost clients in the publishing industry because I've refused to lower my rates
- Not applicable – I don’t work for publishing houses
- Other

Have you been able to raise your translation rates for direct/private clients over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – I don’t work for direct/private clients
- Other

Have you had to lower your translation rates for (some) direct/private clients over the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- No, but I've lost direct/private clients because I've refused to lower my rates
- Not applicable – I don’t work for direct/private clients
- Other

If there’s anything else you’d like to add, please use the text box below for further comments.

Background Information

1. Which country are you currently based in?

2. Which language combination(s) do you work in?

3. Which domain(s) do you specialise in? Please select any that apply and/or use the text box below to add any others that are missing from the list.

- Legal
- Finance
- Business
- Medical/Pharmaceutical
- IT/User interfaces
- Marketing/Advertising
- Academic articles
- Sports
- Engineering
- Arts

- Architecture/Design
- Automotive
- Non-fiction books
- Poetry
- Literary fiction
- Genre fiction
- Children’s books
- Subtitling/Audiovisual
- Gaming
- Other

4. In terms of gender, do you identify as...?
    - Female
    - Male
    - Prefer not to say

A.5. Follow-up Survey on Internships/Work Experience (17 Responses)

Please provide a brief overview of the work experience you undertook (e.g. length, type of organisation, typical tasks you carried out...).

Looking back on your work experience, what if anything was the most important thing you learnt for your subsequent career?

Was there anything your work experience provider did particularly well?

Is there anything your work experience provider could have done to make the experience even more useful for you?

Do you have any other comments on the work experience you undertook and/or on work experiences in general?