TRANSLATION AND INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION
Building Bridges and Strengthening Skills

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The globalization, the diversification, and the fast mobility of today's markets—aiming to serve as many heterogeneous settings and audiences as possible—have posited a growing need for high quality products and optimal performance in nearly all areas of everyday life. Specialists in communication play an important, albeit often hidden, role in these processes. Translators and other international professional communicators operate as mediators to facilitate understanding across global and local contexts through diverse communication channels.

In *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009), Michael Cronin sets out from the premise that "translation always implies that there is something to be articulated, a message to be communicated, and a context that facilities communication" (2009, p. 61). Translating today often involves several agents with different roles, responsibilities and skills. This entails creative work, various innovative procedures, and collaborative networks in highly technological, distributed environments. All these agents can be seen as text producers with an

increasing expertise in the tools and skills of their trades to find, manage, process, and adapt information to target audiences.

Despite diverse attempts at acknowledging the importance of approaching professional communication as translation or as involving translation-related skills (e.g., Hoft 1995; Weiss 1997, 1999; Melton 2008), translation often remains invisible both in the literature and in the training of (international) professional communicators. The extant literature in communication studies that actually addresses translation usually tends to emphasize, and concentrate on, localization issues, and it often draws from functional approaches to translation as production of a communicative message or instrument (e.g., Vermeer 1996; Nord 1997; Reiss 2000).

In translation studies, on the other hand, there is an increasing awareness of the need to tend bridges to research in communication studies (e.g., Risku 2010; Ehrensberger-Dow & Daniel 2013). Indeed, some research reveals that the fields of translation and professional communication are converging, as practitioners initially trained in one field seek cross-training in the other, in part to capture both ends of the documentation market (Minacori & Veisblat, 2010; Gnecchi, Maylath, Scarpa, Mousten, & Vandepitte, 2011). However, more research and dialogue are needed to grasp fully the implications and commonalities in all areas of multilingual professional communication, not least that they are usually ascribed peripheral roles in business, technical, and scientific endeavors. This special issue is a modest attempt at contributing to both the research and the dialogue.

The Contents of this Issue

This special issue is divided into three sections: research articles, teaching cases, and *connexions* interviews.

The first section includes three selected research articles that focus to different extents on the figure of the translator as a multitasked professional communicator and intercultural mediator, thus raising issues related to professionals' skills and training. This section begins with Anne Ketola's article "Translation Diaries of an Illustrated Technical Text." Ketola adopts a

phenomenographic approach to study how a group of informants—translation trainees at MA level—envision the interaction of linguistic and graphic information when translating. The informants' diaries yield two main approaches where linguistic and visual informations are conceived of as either parts of a single, complex (multimodal) communicative artifact, or as different sources of information that compete with each other. Interestingly, the informants seem to be able to hold both visions and to alternate between them as they progress through the task, depending on their interaction with the text. In general, the informants consciously strived to conceptually interweave visual and verbal information, but would switch to the two-source view when information from the visual and the linguistic sources did not seem to totally cohere. In such cases, the informants would assign more importance to one or another source, probably following their own quality or truth-value assessments. In brief, Ketola shows that a text with images may be translated differently from the same text without them, thereby supporting the notion that translating is not (only) a matter of language, but of communication.

The second research article is "Social Inclusion: Text Optimization for Translation and Readability in a Multilingual World." In it, Cathy L. McGinnis and Joleen R. Hanson report the results of a study that they conducted to evaluate the readability of Global English Style (GES), as defined by Kohl (2008) when applied to US government-commissioned translations into English. Notably, the subjects of the study were multilingual readers, either in English and Spanish or English and Vietnamese. The study's results suggest that adhering to GES guidelines does indeed boost texts' readability. Although anecdotal evidence might lead one to say that such results are not a surprise, evidence from empirical studies, such as this one, begins to provide much firmer grounds on which to advocate for the expertise, time, and money required to apply GES guidelines.

The third research article is a position paper. The co-editors of this special issue on translation and professional communication see merit in exposing *connexions*' readers to issues of power differentials when matters of language are involved, including in decisions about translation. The fact that this special issue must be published in English in the early 21st century, in order to reach an international audience, illustrates the degree to which a history of political, social,

economic, and—all too often—military power may lie behind choices regarding which language(s) to use and even whether to translate at all. The article "Bridging for a Critical Turn in Translation Studies: Power, Hegemony, and Empowerment," by Yusaku Yajima and Satoshi Toyosaki, is deeply rooted in the authors' own experiences in moving from their native Japan to their current residence in the US. Their experiences and the opinion stemming from them may differ significantly from those of its readers, as indeed it differs from those of *connexions*' editors and this special issue's co-editors. However, this piece does reveal power differentials that native English speakers in particular may take for granted and even exacerbate, if they are not made aware of how their decisions about language(s) can be apprehended by non-native speakers of English—or by those who do not speak English at all.

The second section of this issue comprises two teaching case studies. The first one, by Sleasman, focuses on ethics in professional interpreting; the second one draws on the notion of "user-centered translation," coined by the same authors (Suojanen, Koskinen & Tuominen 2015).

Brent C. Sleasman's article, "A Philosophy and Ethics of International Classroom Translation: Communicative Implications of Oral Mediation in Haiti," is a reflective contribution to the philosophy of communication and communication ethics that focuses on translation understood as an oral process of information access and sharing. It combines a personal teaching case of professional communicators in a multilingual classroom setting within the Emmaus Biblical Seminary in Haiti, which relies on real-time in-class translation and interpretation into Haitian Creole, with a focused commentary on the ethical implications of a dialogic approach to international classroom translation. Sleasman builds on this international setting as a hybrid space of collaboration between communication and translation professionals and an undergraduate target audience. Based on his personal experience, the author draws attention to the visibility of translators by questioning the limits of their mediation and intervention in the communicative process, the ways the directionality of information works, and how cultural patterns interfere with message delivery.

In "Usability as a Focus of Multiprofessional Collaboration: A Teaching Case Study on User-Centered Translation," Tytti Suojanen, Kaisa Koskinen and Tiina Tuominen argue that the notion of usability may work as a bridge between translators and technical communicators. In their paper, they summarize a series of trials of usability methods in the translation classroom, namely mentally modeling (a) fictive archetypes of users or personas to be used as targeted addressees; and (b) implied readers as hinted at or presupposed in text features; (c) applying a checklist of their own as heuristics to determine usability; and (d) carrying out usability tests in class. Their results show that translation trainees found it positive to mentally model intended and implicit readers as a way to raise their awareness of processes, which they already carry out intuitively. Heuristic evaluation yielded mixed results; while students found the notion appealing, they found some heuristic categories could overlap and were prone to conflate the checklist with other lists they were already familiar with. Usability testing was welcomed by students for certain text types (e.g., games, cooking recipes), but the authors warn that it is also the method that presents more challenges to translation quality assessment.

The third, and final, section includes two interviews with professional communicators, namely Aitor Medrano and Kirk St. Amant, the latter of whom is also a communication studies scholar. ■

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