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Ethnographic research

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1. Introduction

This chapter explains the basic concepts and principles of ethnographic research. It describes how such an approach can be applied to understanding the complex activities of translation and interpreting (T/I) and the cultural contexts in which they occur or in which their products (translations and interpretations) are used. In addition to introducing the general principles of ethnographic research, *cognitive ethnography*, *microethnography* and *virtual ethnography* are identified as particularly suited to data acquisition and the analysis of translation and interpreting processes and new forms of translation on the web.

In this chapter, we focus more on ethnographic data acquisition and analysis and less on the ethnographic way of reporting results. However, it is worth noting that reporting on the results of ethnographic research can take the form of a special kind of self-reflexive and often innovative, setting-induced, or narrative writing in which the representation aims to inform on the voice of the field.

The chapter also provides helpful definitions and descriptions of relevant concepts. Methodological concepts are illustrated with reference to two of the authors' recent research projects: a cognitive ethnography of translation ("Extended Translation: Sociocognitive translation processes in the workplace", ExTra) and a microethnographic study of audiodescription processes ("Multimodal Translation with the Blind", MUTABLE).

2. Definitions

Ethnography is a method of active immersion in a chosen empirical setting in order to learn and thoroughly understand the (cultural) practices that are relevant in the field – to comprehend "what something means in a given social setting" (Westbrook 2008: 9). According to Meyer (2013: 227), "[a]s a rule, the term 'ethnography' refers to the practices and products of description of alien people and to their folkways and cultural achievements". It is a research methodology with a long tradition of studying human cultural practices, often in foreign communities. Ethnography looks at the everyday lives of people and groups, how they act, make sense of, and give meaning to their actions and cultural, social, and material environments. In order to approximate this insider, emic view of the world, ethnographers participate in the daily routines of their subjects and record their observations. They thus produce written records of their experiences, including their subjective reflections on and emotional responses to their subjects. The detailed records of the utterances, actions, and interactions of the observed are then analyzed, often in several rounds and by several ethnographers alone or in groups. This way, ethnographers are themselves the 'instrument' of data acquisition and analysis.

Ethnographic research can rely on multiple sources of evidence like participant observation (with or without video recording), interviews, content analysis, and artefact analysis, but Lewis and Russell (2011: 399) maintain that immersion in the field under study – "being there" – is the one "common denominator" of ethnography (see also section 7). There might be other legitimate ways to get to know a setting and understand the activities therein, but ethnography is distinguished both by its collaborative approach of acting with the members of a social setting within their usual context and its objective to learn to approximate the view of the setting as its members see it.

Ethnographers try not to impose their preconceptions on the research object but to acknowledge what becomes visible for them during observation and immersion. In this sense, they always study the "other", even if they were active participants or members of the social setting (for instance in autoethnography, a form of ethnographic research in which the researchers reflect on their own personal experiences and actions in order to investigate and critique specific cultural and social practices, meanings, and understandings; see Hughes and Pennington 2017). To keep their personal contribution to the situation and the insider view apart – and also to understand the "other" by analyzing their own documented reactions to it – ethnographers rely on an established set of data documentation, recording, transcription, analysis, and interpretation instruments and techniques.[1]

Ethnography has hitherto not been one of the central methodologies in T/I studies. Furthermore, ethnographic research is still rare in translation process research and cognitive translation studies, despite its potential for the study of processes and cognitive phenomena such as understanding and the use of language. These areas have developed in an opposite direction where quantitative, experimental lab research has been the main methodological choice. We therefore illustrate the basic concepts and criteria of ethnographic research by providing an overview of how it differs from experimental research as methodological approach. Accordingly, Table 1 juxtaposes the prototypical distinctions and contradictions between ethnographic, qualitative field research and experimental, quantitative lab research.

Table 1: Prototypical characteristics of experimental, quantitative lab research vs. ethnographic, qualitative field research (adapted from Guba and Lincoln 2005)

[1] See Kapferer and Theodossopoulos (2016) on the risk of exoticism in ethnography as well as Murphy and Dingwall (2007) for an overview of issues of power inherent in the ethnographic research process and on ethnographers' concerns of usurping research participants' right to self-definition.

Issue/Approach	Experimental, quantitative lab research	Ethnographic, qualitative field research
Quality criteria	Internal and external validity, reliability, objectivity	Social and historical situatedness; trustworthiness, authenticity, accountability, reflexivity; catalyst for action
Ontology	Naïve/critical realism: “real” reality, (imperfectly and probabilistically) apprehendable	Relativism: local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities
Epistemology	(Modified) Objectivist; findings (probably) true	Transactional; findings intersubjective/co-constructed
Goals and objectives	Hypothesis verification/falsification, statistical representativity, generalization, adding to edifice of knowledge; prediction and control	Hypothesis generation/transformation, hermeneutic reconstruction; emancipation through giving voice to participants
Control	Resides in researcher(s)	Shared between researcher(s) and participants
View	Observer, etic view	Insider, emic view
Researcher posture	Uninvolved observer, objective reporter	Passionate participant, transformative intellectual

There are also other differences between qualitative field and quantitative lab research. To understand a phenomenon in its social and historical situatedness, ethnographic research tends to capture as many factors of influence as possible in a single case, whereas experimental, quantitative studies striving for statistically significant results have to collect data on a rather small number of specific variables in as many cases as are needed for statistical representativity. The dissonance between the ethnographic and psycholinguistic approaches to translators as agents is another possible issue. For the former, “human bodies in interaction are viewed *not as intentional actors* or physical apparatuses that enclose inner states, but as living persons who are enculturated and socialized” (Meyer 2013: 229; emphasis added). For the latter, the main focus of interest has been the mental processing and thus the inner states and intentions of translators. Ethnography’s potential for translation process research would seem to lie in catching the translators and interpreters in the act of navigating in their authentic social settings and in understanding what cognitive resources they use and what it is like for them to be a translator/interpreter therein.

3. Participants and products

Originally developed as an anthropological method to acquire an understanding of distant cultures (see, for instance, Clifford and Marcus 1986), contemporary forms of ethnography include the study of marginalized social groups (for instance through “engaged ethnography”; see Clair 2012) and of specific work settings (work ethnography; see Smith 2001). Ethnographic research projects can be single or multiple case studies; they can focus on social groups of varying size or even explore the activities of a single person (Iphofen 2013: 7). In the T/I context, ethnographic research methodology can be directed at different aspects of translation or interpreting as activities, such as the translators’ and interpreters’ agency, the social framework of T/I, or the interactive and cognitive processes involved. The empirical setting chosen can be anything from a single location like a translator’s home office (as in Risku, Milosevic and Pein-Weber 2016) to a global network of actors like a publishing house with its distributed authors, lecturers, and translators (as in Buzelin 2007). Because ethnographic research in T/I studies is interested in what occurs in translation and interpreting settings, it gathers and analyzes data from any relevant action and actors involved. In many cases, this will mean both documenting translators’ or interpreters’ work and studying the outcome of the translation process (for instance by collecting intermediate and final translations as well as translation briefs). Researchers are often required to retrace this process by following different actors, artefacts, stories, or media to different places (*multi-sited ethnography*, Marcus 1995).

The choice of cases and participants is usually not arbitrary (“random sample”) but is based instead on the research questions and/or theoretical approach (“purposive sample”; Iphofen 2013: 21; also Walther 2002: 209ff.). When looking for an appropriate field site, researchers also have to take into account that “[f]inding the field is both a conceptual and locational ambition” (Pole and Hillyard 2016: 19). This means that the access to the field usually does not consist just of access to one setting, for instance an organization, a department, or a specific group. It is also pivotal to gain access at this site to the actual group of people or actions that can provide the greatest insight into the research questions. Important thereby are the data collection methods that are possible or permissible (field notes from participatory observation, videos, minutes, documents, interviews) or whether the gatekeepers in the field refuse access to specific activities, persons, or data sources. Such restrictions can ultimately hamper or prevent the answering of the research questions.

To give an example from our own research, the aim in our research project on socio-cognitive translation processes in the workplace (ExTra) was to explore translation-related activities in different contexts of specialized translation. In order to gain insights into how such activities vary or compare in very different occupational and work contexts, we chose to conduct an ethnographic study with four cases: (1) two freelance translators working independently and together (over distance; plus one of their clients), (2) a translation agency with its CEOs and project managers, (3) the technical writers and localizers at a technology company and the translators at one of the translation agencies it works with, and (4) the head of unit and translators in a translation department in a public service institution. This allowed us to study both inhouse and outsourced translation, translation as a business/industry and a public service, and direct client-translator collaboration and agency-mediated translation. Focusing on people with different roles in the translation process (translators, project managers, CEOs, technical writers and so on) allowed us to compare views on social and organizational aspects of translation and uncover the translators' different processes and social contacts, role profiles, positions in networks, and use of artefacts. While the observation protocols helped us to develop an understanding of the actual work processes, social interactions, and constraints, the interviews revealed the interviewees' personal understanding of and attitudes towards these aspects of their work.

4. Contexts of application

In this section, we will discuss some of the contexts in which ethnographic approaches have been applied in previous and ongoing T/I research and exemplify some special forms of ethnography that have rarely been used in translation studies but would be particularly suited to certain applications contexts.

There are ethnographic accounts of a wide variety of T/I practices and topics. These include studies on liaison interpreting (Mullamaa 2006), institutional translation (Koskinen 2008), court interpreting (Kinnunen 2010), ergonomics of translation work (Massey and Ehrensberger-Dow 2011), translation scholars' and translators' contributions to translation studies (Flynn 2011), theater translation (Marinetti and Rose 2013; Eardley-Weaver 2014), freelance translation (Risku 2014), work practices in translation departments (Tesseur 2014; Olohan 2017), conference interpreting (Duflou 2016), translation project management (Risku 2016), interpreting in religious contexts (Hokkanen 2017), literary translation (Borg 2017; Kolb 2017), and the use of translation memories (LeBlanc 2017).

Ethnographic research methods are not monolithic; they come in different shapes and forms. To illustrate their broad spectrum, we have chosen to describe three approaches, namely *cognitive ethnography*, *microethnography*, and *online ethnography*. They each differ in their data acquisition methods, level of granularity of the data, and the research questions they are able to tackle.

Cognitive ethnography is especially productive as a framework for studying translation from a situated, embodied, and distributed cognition perspective, for instance for examining social contacts, ergonomics, and human-computer interaction in translators' workplaces, cognitive processes in distributed translation production networks, and technology-mediated collaboration in translation (see e.g. Dragsted 2006; Risku 2014; Risku 2017). It follows the basic methodological tenets of traditional ethnography. Edwin Hutchins is considered the 'father of cognitive ethnography' with his paradigmatic studies of navigation in airline cockpits (1995a) and navy ships as "cognition in the wild" (1995b). Relying on his distributed cognition approach, he studied how multiple agents like the pilots or crew and the material environment like the flight instruments or naval radio communications compose the cognitive system and together enable navigation. Along these lines, cognitive ethnography concentrates on describing cognitive processes in real-world settings and assumes that the interactive units of humans in their cultural, social, and material environments constitute the coupled cognitive systems to be studied. Martín de León (2008) discusses how Hutchins' methodology could be applied to translation studies. Risku and Windhager (2013) applied it in an empirical study of translation project management. According to Jiménez-Crespo (2017: 106f.), the same methodological underpinnings might also prove valuable for the study of crowdsourced translation, as it allows a micro-level analysis of interactional or cooperative aspects of translation and community-based problem-solving.

Microethnography offers a way of analyzing the micro-levels of interaction and cooperation in T/I. It studies the empirical realizations of "big" social and cultural issues in "small" communicative behaviors and actions. By using video recordings as data, microethnography focuses on the study of the visible and audible behaviors of social actors embedded in a social and material environment. Video renders the subjects' visible and audible behaviors perceivable for the analyst, and the analysis itself verifiable and repeatable (LeBaron 2005: 276-8; 283). Unlike classical ethnography which uses researchers' descriptions – a more subjective method of data acquisition (Meyer 2013: 229) – and draws away from reproducibility, microethnography strives for more objectivity during data collection. Microethnography lends itself well to the study of embodied cultural practices (for instance Streeck et al. 2011) and is capable of producing knowledge of various aspects of social interaction, including shared thinking, learning, and cognition (Streeck and Mehus 2005: 328-30). The microethnographic approach is being applied by one of the authors of this chapter to study how translation emerges as an embodied, collaborative-interactive process in which individual cognitions are shared (Hirvonen & Tiittula 2018).

Online or *virtual ethnography* (Hine 2015; Boellstorff et al. 2012; see also Kozinets 2009 on *netnography*) attempts to retrace complex connective practices by adapting ethnographic principles to "the conditions of contemporary society, in particular the conditions created by the increasing saturation of everyday life with various forms of computer-mediated communication" (Hine 2015: 1). Virtual ethnographies explore categories such as "experience, practice, relationships, things, localities, social worlds and events" (Pink et al. 2016: 15) in virtual communities or in relation to different forms of online-mediated communication and practices, be they part of specialized, professional or mundane, everyday settings. In this approach, the internet is understood both as a culture and a cultural artefact that is shaped by people's understandings and expectations of virtual worlds and interactions (Hine 2015: 30). Given the variety of settings and practices explored and the range of possible data collection sources (social media, translated content, online surveys, email or conventional interviews, observations, etc.), virtual ethnographies take an individual approach to each and any object of inquiry. Researchers adapt their study as they follow actors, practices, or digital artefacts through different communication channels and between overlapping online and offline spaces. However, all virtual ethnographies share "a commitment to ethnography as an experiential form of knowledge, and a belief that engagement with the field should be driven by a pursuit of the ways in which a setting uniquely makes sense, rather than the application of a particular model of what a field should be" (Hine 2015: 31). Virtual ethnography has so far rarely been applied in T/I studies. However, there is increasing research into different forms of amateur or fan translation, for instance studies into 'fansubbing' and other types of non-professional subtitling (Li 2015; Li 2017; Wu 2017), ‘scanlation’ (Valero Porras and Cassany 2017), or different forms of online communities (Rogl 2016), that integrate online-ethnographic principles. Other studies expand traditional ethnographic projects to include data gathered on social media as a complementary source of insight (e.g. Cadwell 2015). In future, virtual ethnography might prove a particularly valuable tool for exploring issues related to the increasing virtualization of translation practice. It might also help shed light on predominantly online-mediated translation practices (for instance different forms of professional/non-professional translation on the web, collaborative translation, or translators’ use of digital communication devices) or on the intersections between offline and online spheres in which translation and interpreting activities are assigned and negotiated, and translations are produced, reviewed, and distributed.

5. Recommendations for practice

This section describes the logistics and practical challenges of ethnographic research on translation or interpreting practices and discusses the issues to be resolved when choosing and entering field sites, informing, observing, recording, and interviewing participants, and managing, analyzing, and reporting on data.

Ethnographic research typically involves the following phases (inspired by the outline of microethnographic research in LeBaron 2005: 277f.):

5.1. Select a research site and gain access to the field

Depending on the research agenda and practical issues such as access to the field, the researcher selects a suitable site, that is a location in time and space where people meet and interact, either face-to-face or remotely (see Ch. 3). Although this can often mean a place (for instance a particular courtroom), it can also be defined by the interactive space or function rather than by the physical or temporal location, for instance a set of connected instances of virtual interaction. In the MUTABLE project, the meetings in which the audio-describing teams work constitute the research site. Thus, the common denominator for the site is the functional setting (see Ch. 2) which the subjects form: various times and places for creating a team translation. Selecting the same setting (albeit at different locations) permits comparative analyses of contexts that bear on the same function but diverge in time, space, and even language and culture.

Gaining access to the field is a key issue in ethnography. In organizations, companies, or other hierarchical entities or groups, this will often mean first seeking formal access to the decision-makers in order to negotiate this access. This might entail going through institutional authorization processes or negotiations on which data can be accessed or gathered, how long field observations can be carried out, or who can be contacted for interviews. However, as Pole and Hillyard (2016: 27) point out, access to a site does not automatically mean that all prospective participants will automatically be willing to cooperate:

> negotiating access must be seen as an on-going process rather than a singular, isolated task or moment. It occurs at all levels throughout the fieldwork site and with everyone who is a subject of the research. (Pole and Hillyard 2016: 27)

Seeking consent to conduct research at a specific research site will involve providing participants with detailed information on what being part of the study might entail for them (aims and duration, methodology, privacy and anonymity strategies, and how the findings will be reported). How this is communicated to potential participants can have a direct influence on building trust between the researchers and the participants. For example, the main aim of the communication strategy we employed in the "Extended translation" project was to assure participants that we sought to learn from their experiences and perspectives on their work, not to evaluate, judge, or criticize it. We were also aware that they might feel uncomfortable about being 'observed' or 'monitored' at work, so we avoided these 'trigger words', choosing instead to explain that we wanted to "gain insights" into a small part of their day-to-day work. Another important measure to ensure cooperation was giving the participants full control of when data collection would (not) take place. They were free to exclude us from certain processes in the observation sessions – and did indeed do so in a meeting on financial issues.

5.2 Collect naturally occurring data

The research data are gathered from a site that would exist "whether or not it was observed or recorded by the researcher" (LeBaron 2005: 277). Although the research has an effect on the site by the mere fact that the subjects are – and ethically must be – conscious of being studied, their activities (like work) on the site would occur without the research. Given that ethnographers strive to capture as much as possible of the practices, environments, or experiences they are exploring "first hand" (Pole and Hillyard 2016: 60), it is important to choose the most suitable methods of data collection (or the ones the field will allow, for instance taking field notes if video recording is not permitted):

> This ambition to be close to the field therefore does not dictate what methods you use to proceed, but we would argue that it is rare that fieldwork relies upon only one form of qualitative method. (Pole and Hillyard 2016: 61)

The best data collection methods for a specific research project will also depend on the required level of data granularity. The microethnographic approach requires the capturing of communicative details that can later be reviewed and verified, and therefore uses video recording, supplemented by other methods such as interviews and field notes. Although observation may be seen by the research subjects as a less invasive method and thus be more readily accepted, video recording overcomes, at least partly, the problem of subjectivity (for instance the researcher's memory affecting the observation protocol/field notes). However, the use of video does come with the unavoidable necessity of selection: the researcher must make decisions about camera perspective(s) and time slot(s), among other things, which influence the data and must be justified in the context of the site and the research agenda (see Jewitt 2012). Some research (e.g. on translator-computer-interaction, Teixeira and O'Brien 2017) can also benefit from complementing the traditional set of ethnographic methods with those more widely used in translation process research (eye-tracking, screen-logging, keylogging, and so on).

The data collection phase has to be prepared well, making sure that all field researchers have all the necessary (recording) tools or note-taking and interviewing skills. If the research involves a team of researchers or the data is to be used at a later stage, field notes have to be transcribed into texts that can be understood by more people than just the original observer and for a longer period of time after data collection.

5.3 Manage the end of the data-gathering phase

Ethnographic research is often considered a continuous process without any real end ("Ethnographic projects are never finished, only left"; Jeffrey and Troman 2004: 538). Ethnographic data are often revisited or added to over time through additional fieldwork. The extended time a researcher spends immersed in the field is also what distinguishes ethnography from other types of qualitative research (e.g. Jeffrey and Troman 2004). While the duration of a stay in the field would ideally last until no new insights can be gained ("theoretical saturation"; see Sandelowski 2008), in most cases, fieldwork will be limited by practical (internal or external) constraints, for instance grants with a specific duration or temporary agreements with decision-makers in the field (Pole and Hillyard 2016: 110ff.). When the data-gathering period in the selected field is concluded, the exit from the field should be managed as carefully as the entry and the participants informed or reminded accordingly. Depending on the extent of the researchers' involvement, this can also mean carefully evaluating possible expectations that might have arisen on the part of the participants (for instance information on dissemination plans; Pole and Hillyard 2016: 114).

5.4 Choose the data analysis method

There is no consensus on what constitutes the best method of qualitative data analysis for ethnographic research. While researchers might have to adapt the analysis method to each individual research project, most will stick to a series of steps shared by most qualitative data analysis frameworks (Angrosino 2007: 69). These include preparing data for analysis, careful familiarization with the material prior to formal analysis, (inductive) categorizing, coding or classifying of data, and comparison with theoretical assumptions and/or resulting theory-building (for an overview, see Pole and Hillyard 2016.)

To illustrate with microethnographic analysis, the video data are first studied by viewing the entire collection and simultaneously jotting down the actions that take place. On the basis of this 'log', specific actions or moments are selected for more detailed inspection. These are viewed and analyzed repeatedly in order to fully grasp what it is going on and how, and to identify features and patterns. In a study of multimodal interaction between blind and sighted audio-describers, Hirvonen and Schmitt (2018) use a 7-minute video clip from a 6-hour recording of one team translation site to show how the audiodescription work is distributed among the team members. Transcribing and annotating the selected data are constitutive parts of the analysis because they require the researcher to concentrate on fine nuances of action and contemplate on the choice of labels and verbal descriptions for non-verbal action (see Mondada 2018).

Since ethnographic research projects usually involve large amounts of data from a variety of sources, data archiving, management, and analysis are challenging but all the more important. Resorting to software specifically designed for qualitative data analysis makes this task easier (for instance Angrosino 2007: 74f.; Kuckartz 2016). Programs such as MaxQDA, Atlas.ti or nVivo allow systematic data storage, organization, analysis, and visualization. Most of them include in-program transcription of audio and video material and support a variety of data formats, thus allowing researchers to work in a single environment for the entirety of the analysis process. However, the development of conceptual patterns and their interpretation is still something ethnographers have to accomplish on their own.

5.5 Describe and report research findings

The aim of this phase is to describe how the subjects make certain actions relevant and how others act on or react to them. In microethnographies, such descriptions are demonstrated in the research report visually and textually, via still shots from videos and excerpts from transcriptions. In order to make claims about the “big” issues, the detailed descriptions of observed practices can be supplemented by findings gained from the analysis of other data, such as interview transcripts, written (online) communication, photos, documents, or even maps, charts, and drawings. This sets the observations in a wider context, making a claim about the processes and the background of the participants which would not be discovered by field notes or video data alone. Although ethnographic research is not directed at generalizing its findings, it is important to contemplate how the “site-specific findings have relevance beyond the site and [that] particular patterns of behavior resonate with larger social orders” (LeBaron 2005: 278).

The data can also be used to engage the research subjects. Giving the participants (translators, project managers, CEOs, and so on) access to parts of the research material can be either a planned phase in or even a requirement of the research process. While it would be problematic to show a researcher’s original observations, field notes, personal remarks, and subjective reflections to anyone other than the members of the research team, the interview transcripts themselves can prove an interesting reading for the interviewees. Draft analyses and results with anonymized quotes from the transcripts and field notes, on the other hand, can be reflected upon with participants.

Finally, the researcher must take proper measures to avoid the unintentional distribution or inappropriate use of insider knowledge produced during the research process. Good options are to let the subjects read the research report before publishing it and/or involve them in planning the research. However, the researcher should also be careful not to let the subjects influence the analysis of the data or the reporting of findings in an inappropriate way.

6. Critical issues and topics

Since ethnography studies people, three key factors for its success are the position of the researcher in the field, good management of the relationships in the field, and appropriate and ethical ways to handle person-related data (Pole and Hillyard 2016).

6.1 Position of the researcher in the field

The methodological decisions made when conducting ethnographic research inevitably influence the researchers' position in and perspective of the field on a continuum from "etic" (outsider) to "emic" (insider). Participant observation enables researchers to grasp the intrinsic logic of the work processes and to try to understand them from the emic perspective (Bergmann 2006). Combining the observation with video recordings allows for a "verifiable emic perspective", that is a possibility to verify the observations by repeated viewings of data. Although ethnographers attempt to minimize their influence on authentic situations, the influence of the researchers (and their camera) on the situations observed should be reflected on and seen as part of the outcome of an ethnographic investigation.

Accepting that the people one is talking to, working with, or indeed living among might have a very different view of their world than expected can be especially challenging for translation scholars as "indigenous ethnographers" (Fahim 1982; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984) studying their own professional field. Koskinen (2006: 115) emphasizes that when "researching a familiar professional activity (…) one has to be ready to question one's own interpretations and not blindly trust one's own insider knowledge." She herself used to work in the setting that she observed, the Finnish translation department of the European Union. Reflecting on her own position as a researcher in the investigated field, she describes herself as "an earlier insider turned into an outsider" (Koskinen 2006: 114).

6.2 Trust between researchers and participants

The practical implementation of ethnographic research includes a number of significant methodological challenges, some of which may influence or be influenced by the relationship between researchers and participants. As mentioned above, one of the first and main challenges when starting ethnographic research is gaining access to the field. Miller (1997) stresses that, in addition to hearing what people say, ethnographers must also observe what they do, since the two might be quite different. Yet, being allowed to become immersed in a community and observe its daily practices depends strongly on the trust the people observed have in the researchers and on their understanding of the research. In T/I-related ethnography, trust between researchers and participants can be built on the fact that researchers are often insiders themselves (translators, interpreters, or T/I graduates) and therefore have knowledge and experience from the field (Hubscher-Davidson 2011). Gaining access may also depend on the participants' attitudes towards research per se and scientific "authority": The feeling of being observed at one's own workplace by someone who could potentially evaluate or criticize the way things are being done could be a reason for inhibition and insecurity. Consequently, the participants have to be able to trust the data and the findings (see Hubscher-Davidson 2011: 13).

Researchers can also be perceived as outsiders to the practices they want to study, as was the case in one of the settings in our "Extended Translation" project. The participants in the technology company felt uncertain about whether we, as 'outsiders', would be able to understand work processes observed 'live' and did not allow participant observation at their workplace. Instead, they decided to talk us through some of their past projects, thus providing retrospective accounts and their own perspective on the processes instead of real-time observation. In contrast, the participants in the translation agency case study saw the research and the methods selected as highly relevant for the field and practices of translation project management. Not only were we granted access to the setting, the participants also expressed their own interests, which were then taken into account in the research. They felt that our presence and the fact that they sometimes explained to us what they were doing made them reflect on their work processes in a different way, which was something they appreciated. In the case study with the two freelancers, one of them had participated in previous studies which, as we were told, made it easier for her colleague to agree to participate. In the case study at the public service institution, some of the participants had previously known the main researcher and were familiar with her work.

Approaching potential research participants personally often makes it easier to establish trust. This is also why gaining access to online settings, where there tends to be no possibility to interact face-to-face with the users, can be particularly challenging. Trust as a critical issue might also be a decisive factor in participants denying access to certain settings, such as those including information on confidential innovations (for instance technology companies and their translation and localization projects) or sensitive settings where personal confidential information is exchanged (for instance health, police, or asylum settings).

6.3 Ethical issues

The ethical issues regarding ethnographic research relate to, among other things, anonymity, informed consent, and sensitive data, all of which are relevant for all phases of a research project, including its afterlife from a data management perspective (for instance whether the data can be archived – and reused – or has to be destroyed). Careful measures need to be taken in this regard *before*, *during*, and *after* the study.

6.3.1 Choice of participants

Whether or not an individual or a group participates in a study should be decided not on the ease of access but on the basis of the actual research (Iphofen 2013: 28). From an ethical perspective, attention should be paid to how people are motivated to participate. Potentially vulnerable or particularly sensitive groups, for instance people from marginalized groups, people with disabilities or ill health, the elderly, and minors, should be treated with particular care. Due consideration must be given to the fact that they might be less able to protect themselves. Conversely, systematically excluding groups who are already disadvantaged can lead to their views being excluded even more strongly from societal debates (Iphofen 2013: 49f.). As an example, the MUTABLE project is directed explicitly at defining the blind professionals' expertise in audiodescription (see Hirvonen & Schmitt 2018).

6.3.2 Privacy and/or anonymity

Research must pay particular attention not to harm its subjects: In ethnography, this means not only treating them appropriately in the course of data acquisition but also justifying the findings to the setting and subjects. Careful measures are required to ensure no harm is done to the privacy of people or organizations. Given the 'naturally occurring' context, the researcher may easily come into contact with sensitive information, for instance confidential company knowledge (see also Fine 1993). Making subjects anonymous is generally considered to protect their privacy, yet cannot always be fully achieved. Studying the processes of translation bears the risk of making the translators identifiable when the translations they have produced are recognizable. If metadata (including the name of the translator) for a particular work (for instance a film) is published and that work is identifiable in a research report, the translator can be identifiable as well. Such risks should be recognized and made known to the subjects.

6.3.3 Data management

Getting acquainted with data management is also a prerequisite (for instance for Finland, see Finnish Social Science Data Archive n.y.). Ethnographic research involves legal persons as subjects and it is nowadays compulsory to obtain their informed consent and reach agreement on the subjects' rights and the researchers' obligations. In the "Extended Translation" project, we have found that granting the right of approval prior to publication to the subjects, company management, and copyright holders of the material the translators are working on is an effective approach. Offering this can be seen as a trust-building measure during the initial negotiations, before the decision to participate is taken. In fact, we have only once received a request from a company to change a passage in a publication. In that particular case, we were asked to extend our description of a problematic issue to include the measures that had been taken to resolve it. In other cases, we have even received permission to use anonymized interview transcripts and field notes, including pictures, for teaching purposes (Risku 2016) and to use authentic still images from video data for research reporting (Hirvonen and Schmitt 2018).

The implementation of ethical standards can prove more challenging in some forms of ethnography than in others. In online ethnography, a multitude of information and social interactions can be viewed on the internet without the research necessarily being visible. This might at first glance seem to make research easier and thus be a tempting option. However, this apparently easy access to data (including data that could be viewed as personal or sensitive) can become one of the biggest methodological problems when one endeavors to apply ethical standards. The reason for this lies in the different nature of this research field. Researchers in traditional ethnographic research projects generally do not even gain access to the field until they have obtained the consent of the people involved, while in its online counterpart there is often the possibility to observe the field openly or covertly. Since there is seldom a clearly defined field with a set number of participants in online research, where it can be difficult even to reach out to and contact participants, and where (often sensitive) information is already available for retrieval before researchers even begin to inform people of their research endeavor, field conditions may greatly limit the possibilities to comply with even basic ethical standards. A particular challenge is the anonymization of data gathered online as the origin and author of online content can be easily identified using a search engine. Frequently used strategies include the translation of cited contact, linguistic adaptation, paraphrasing, or the avoidance of quotes from online sources when these are available from interviews. In online research fields where there is no face-to-face contact with participants and the true identities behind online profiles can rarely be discovered, measures should also be considered to protect any minors participating in a study.

7. Further reading

Atkinson, Paul, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland, and Lyn Lofland (eds) (2001) *Handbook of Ethnography*. London, SAGE.

This handbook describes the basics of ethnography and includes a synthesis of critical thinking, current issues, and potential future paths.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds) (2018) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 5th ed. London, SAGE.

This handbook presents the state-of-the-art in theory and practice in qualitative research and compares ethnographic approaches to other qualitative research traditions. It also includes several chapters on the current directions in ethnography.

Hine, Christine (2015) *Ethnography for the Internet. Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London, Bloomsbury.

This recent book on virtual ethnography provides a comprehensive overview of possible theoretical conceptualizations of the internet, presents a history of ethnographic internet research, describes current trends, and provides a thorough introduction into the research principles and practical challenges based on the author's own extensive research experience.

Iphofen, Ron (2011) *Ethical Decision Making in Social Research: a Practical Guide.* London, Palgrave Macmillan.

This step-by-step guide aims to assist researchers with ethical concerns in social research projects. Possible ethical dilemmas are illustrated with examples from concrete case studies. The author also provides a checklist for ethical reviews, a template for research proposals, and a list of useful websites detailing ethical codes, guidelines, and professional associations.

8. Related topics

Part two: Methodology in Translation Research

2. Anthropology
5. Conversation Analysis/Ethnomethodology

Part Three: Methodology in Translation Practice

9. Translation process research

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