

***Literary translators’
perceptions of their roles
and attitudes towards technology
in contemporary society***

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Research questions

1. How do literary translators perceive their role in society?
2. What are their attitudes in relation to technologies?
3. What is the dynamic between humans and technology in literary translation?

Rationale

1. Translation as a form of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) (O'Brien, 2012)
2. Human issues arising from translator-technology relationship (Kenny, 2017)
3. Research on application of translation technologies to the literary translation workflow (Voigt and Jurafsky, 2012; Jones and Irvine, 2013; Besacier and Schwartz, 2015; Toral and Way, 2014, 2015a, 2015b)

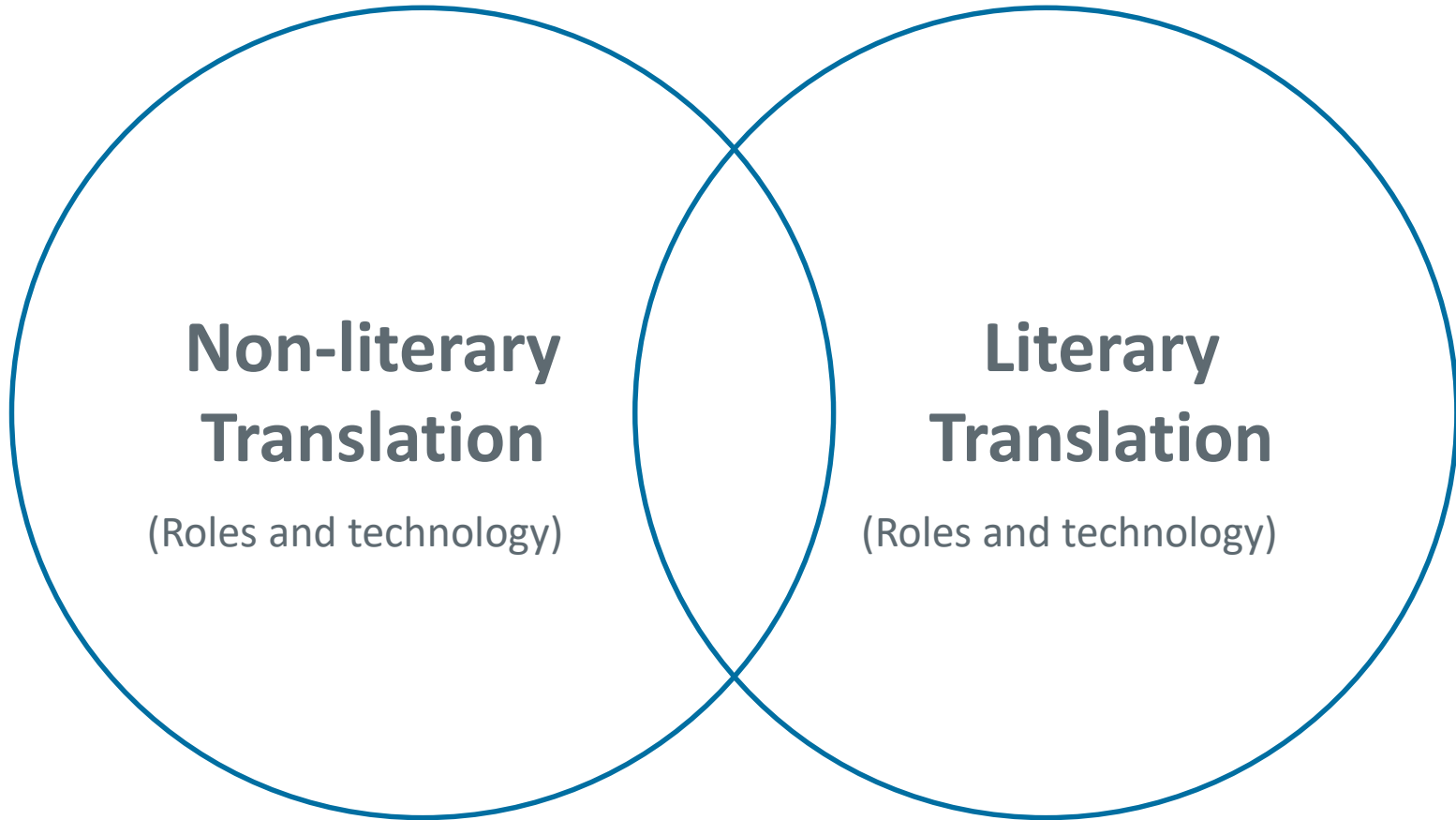
Wolf, 2007

‘The process of translation seems, to different degrees, to be conditioned by two levels: the “cultural” and the “social”.’ (Wolf, 2007: 4)

→ Translation as a socially- and culturally-embedded activity

Aims and Objectives

1. Identify human and technological factors at play in the literary translator-technology relationship
2. Provide a picture of literary translators' roles
3. Give literary translators a voice
4. Reduce epistemological and empirical gap between literary and non-literary translation



Technology and non-literary translation

- Feelings of dehumanisation, devaluation and scepticism towards translation technologies (O'Brien, 2012; Fulford and Garnell-Zafra, 2005, Moorkens and O'Brien, 2017)
- Issues of autonomy, trust, usability and willingness to adopt new technology (Koskinen and Ruokonen, 2017; O'Hagan, 2017)

Technology and non-literary translation

- desire from translators to be part of the tools' development process (Lagoudaki, 2006; Moorkens and O'Brien, 2017; Garcia-Aragon and Lopez-Rodriguez, 2017)
- challenges to the idea that translators are averse to technology as such/mixed feelings (Guerberof, 2013; Cadwell et al., 2016; Koskinen and Ruokonen, 2017)

Technology and non-literary translation

- trial/adoption of sociological frameworks applied to the study of human-computer interaction in translation (Olohan, 2011, 2013, 2017; Risku and Windhager, 2013; Cadwell et al., 2016; Koskinen and Ruokonen, 2017; O'Hagan, 2017)

Roles in non-literary translation

- lower status of translation profession and lack of awareness by translators (Katan, 2009; Ferreira-Alves, 2011)
- satisfied with their jobs in terms of passion and vocation (Ferreirra-Alves, 2011)
- translator's status '*moving towards a more industrial future, with less autonomy and recognition*' (LeBlanc, 2017: 46)

Technology and literary translation

- statistical machine translation for the rendering of poetry (Genzel et al., 2010) and prose (Jones and Irvine, 2013)
- comparison between human and machine translation rendering of referential cohesion in literature and news (Voigt and Jurafski, 2012)

Technology and literary translation

- post-editing of trained machine translation output for literary texts (Besacier and Schwartz, 2015)
- training of machine translation, and its usability and integration in the literary translator's workflow (Toral and Way, 2014, 2015a, 2015b)

Roles in literary translation

- Creation of idealised personae and philosophical and emotional narrative vs. unattractive image of their profession (Sela-Sheffy, 2008)
- Literary and non-literary translation both subject to same economic imperatives → need to adopt tools to increase productivity (Buzelin, 2005)

Theoretical Framework

- Digital Age or Translation Age? (Cronin, 2013)
- Materiality vs Immateriality (Littau, 2016)
- Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) framework (Pinch and Bijker, 1984; Woolgar, 1989; Collins, 1989; Olohan, 2017; Braun, Davitti and Dicerto, in press).

Methodology

Interpretivist, social constructionist and mixed-methods approach

Methods

- (1) Questionnaire
- (2) Interviews
- (3) Focus groups

Main questionnaire

- Open and closed questions
- Snowball sampling
- Purposive sampling tool to select participants for next stage of the project

Pilot Study

- Test questions, fine-tune the main study
- Convenience sample
- 22 open/closed questions
- 5 sections: demographic, language skills, professional status, familiarity with technology and open questions on roles and attitudes towards technology

Pilot Study - Results

- 25-34 years-old
- Up to 5 years experience
- Postgraduate-level degrees in translation with translation technology training
- Non-paid, mainly non-literary projects
- Confident with general technology, not with translation-specific tools

Pilot Study - Results

Essential traits:

- patience, passion, creativity, ability to self-reflect, open mind and vast knowledge of literature and culture, attention to details, thinking outside the box, empathy
- competence of both source and target languages
- noble activity that requires set of skills belonging to the sphere of art, passion rather than work.

Pilot Study - Results

- outsiders underestimate translation and think that translators could be easily substituted by technology
- translators should have more visibility, taken less for granted
- helplessness in the face of outsiders' misunderstanding

Pilot Study - Results

Attitudes towards technology:

- translation technology (CAT tools and MT) majorly dismissed
- positive attitudes towards glossaries, corpora and terminology tools
- technology as a way to network with other translators
- not against technology as such, but against it stealing the essence of the literary translation activity and/or making it more difficult

Pilot Study - Implications

- Clearer definition of what is meant by 'technology' and 'role'
- Restructure open questions
- Avoid redundancy, more user-friendly structure
- Literature review's findings seems to be confirmed
- More varied target group

What's next:

- define parameters of the target group for the final study
- drafting main questionnaire
- developing the study's theoretical framework

Thank you!

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