From language check to creative editing: exploring variation in the revision stage of the LSP workflow

Annamari Korhonen, Tampere University

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a survey charting the revision policies of Finnish language service providers (LSPs) and proposes a visual model that can be used for developing those policies further in a systematic manner. The purpose of the survey is to learn more about real-life LSP practices in order to develop a theoretical model and a practical tool concerning the use of revision in translation production workflows. The survey results presented here focus on revision parameters, the allowed level of creativity, various cases that require a specific kind of revision, and decision-making power. It was found that there is much flexibility in practices, and the client's wishes are generally considered paramount. To further develop translation workflows, it is proposed that revision tasks that differ from each other as to their purpose and variables such as the text type, degree of creativity, practical procedure or revision parameters could be systematically defined using a revision continuum which would range from simple linguistic check to creative editing and tailoring and would help secure the financial viability of LSPs' operations by highlighting the appropriate pricing of different revision tasks.

According to Arnt Lykke Jakobsen (2019: 64), "translation and revision are more in transition than ever before". Jakobsen refers to the transition that is brought about by new technologies, above all machine translation. This chapter, however, discusses another way in which revision could take on a bigger role in the translation industry's workflows: different kinds of revision tasks could be used in the design of new services when language service providers (LSPs) expand from translation into a wider selection of multilingual communication services. In such production environments, revision takes on a purpose beyond translation quality assurance.

Jakobsen (2019: 69), like many others, groups translators together with writers. Dam-Jensen and Heine (2013: 90–91; see also Risku, Milosevic & Pein-Weber 2016) discuss writing, translation and adaptation as the three types of text production and consider similarities and differences between these three tasks. This chapter builds on that line of thought and sees translation first and foremost as text production, as creating pieces of communication for many different purposes, and looks at the potential of revision not only in correcting the translators' errors, but also in editing texts further. To help understand the flexibility, complexity and vast potential of revision, the concept of revision continuum is introduced in this chapter.

The ideas presented in this chapter are based on the different ways in which language service providers (LSPs) that operate in Finland, and mainly serve corporate and public sector clients, use translation revision in real-life business contexts. These different ways have been investigated by means of an online survey targeted at representatives of LSPs. Specific focus is firstly, on revision task specifications in terms of revision parameters (see Mossop 2014) and the allowed degree of creativity, secondly, on various circumstances that may require that revision is carried out in a specific manner, and thirdly, on who decides the scope of revision. The role of revision in the production workflow of different creative translation services will also be discussed based on the survey. The discussion of the survey results, as well as the idea of the revision continuum, is expected to be of interest to various stakeholders including LSPs, translator educators and researchers.

The online survey was sent to LSPs in May 2018, and it aimed to increase the so far rather meagre body of empirical study on revision policies (see Rasmussen & Schjoldager 2011, Uotila 2017, Ko 2011). The questionnaire was largely built based on Brian Mossop's (2014) comprehensive discussion of revision policies and procedures. When presenting and

discussing the results of the survey later in this chapter, I will also draw on the experience accumulated in my 20 years as a translator working at LSPs.

Before moving on to the results of the survey, I will briefly discuss the importance of studying the LSP workflow and, more specifically, the revision task. I will also introduce the idea of a revision continuum, and take a look at some previous research on revision policies. Research design will then be introduced, and the findings from the survey presented with the help of diagrams. Before the final conclusions, I will return to the concept of revision continuum and how it could help us chart revision policies in all their inherent flexibility.

1   Revision as part of the translation workflow

In this chapter, the focus is on revision as a separate step in the workflow performed after translation, and by someone else than the translator. Self-revision as well as other types of revision, such as the kind a translator does when producing a translation based on translation memory matches, remain outside the scope of this chapter. This means that revision is primarily defined in terms of its position in the workflow and role in producing a service for clients.

In translation studies, process research traditionally refers to investigating the translator's (or sometimes the reviser's) thought processes (see Englund Dimitrova 2010). However, translations are hardly ever produced in isolation. In reality, translators work in production networks (see for example Abdallah 2012, Solum 2017) with many different people taking on various roles. These roles and the workflow that consists of the tasks they perform have a great impact on how translators work, and Drugan (2013: 40) quite appropriately calls attention to the need of investigating the production processes and models of translation industry operators. Lauscher (2000: 161) even states that the lack of knowledge of translation production processes – or the workflow – results in a lack of real-life foundation for all scholarly models of translation quality. In their discussion of contextual factors that influence the production of translations, Dam-Jensen and Heine (2013: 91, 94) list the physical environment, technical tools and collaborative networks – but the networks are only referred to in terms of social interaction, ignoring the role of the workflow. More empirical research is therefore needed to lay down a proper theoretical foundation that will help understand the implications of different workflows.

LSPs usually follow a more or less standardised production workflow that consists of various tasks from planning and file preparation to translating, revision and generating

target files (see for example Drugan 2013: 105–106, Dunne 2011: 169–170, Gouadec 2007). Although descriptions of workflow differ on some specifics, they generally agree that revision is a well-established and necessary part of the workflow. The translation industry standards EN 15038 (European Committee for Standardization 2006) and ISO 17100:2015 also require including revision of the target texts as part of the translation workflow.

Bisiada (2018: 290–291) presents a workflow description that is of particular interest in that it foregrounds the text modification phases. His model includes a translation stage (Orientation – Drafting – Revising), which takes place within a translation company, and an editing[1] stage (Stylistic editing – Copyediting – Structural editing – Content editing), which takes place outside the translation company – in the case of Bisiada's data, within a publishing company. However, such a straightforward division may not apply in the context of translation services offered to corporate clients. When an industrial operator outsources the production of its translated corporate communications to an LSP, they usually expect to receive finalised products that are ready for publication online or in printed form. While they in most cases review the materials before actually publishing them, this review may not constitute an actual editing process. From the point of view of efficiency and financial viability, it makes sense to include the editing stage into the translation stage or, more specifically, into the revision task that is considered part of the translation stage in Bisiada's workflow model and takes place within the LSP.

2 The revision continuum introduced

The revision continuum is a visual representation of the hypothesis that the scope of revision can be, and in fact frequently is, adjusted to meet different objectives in a manner that also secures the financial viability of LSPs' operations. According to Martin (2007: 60), "fit-for-purpose translation, when applied systemically to a varied workflow, is a viable way of using translation and revision resources intelligently." This is precisely what the revision continuum aims at – providing a systematic model for the intelligent and flexible use of revision resources to produce fit-for-purpose translations. The continuum will help pin down the various revision practices that LSPs apply when processing many different text types from technical manuals to marketing materials and blogs.

Figure 1: *The revision continuum*

LINGUISTIC REVIEW	CREATIVE EDITING

The survey presented in this chapter provides information on some of the variables that together constitute the definition of revision tasks, and reveals some factors that LSPs consider when making decisions about the scope of the task. The survey is a step towards placing different kinds of revision tasks on the continuum that would range from simple linguistic review – or just a quick proofreading – to creative stylistic editing and tailoring for a specific readership (see figure 1). Between these two extremes, any number of revision levels with different task definitions may exist, all of them used for a specific purpose.

The revision continuum could be used in two different ways: firstly, as a theoretical model that would help us imagine all the possible ways in which revision could be carried out, and secondly, as a practical tool that describes the different revision levels applied by an individual LSP. Neither of these are simple tasks, and are in fact well beyond the scope of a single survey. In-depth interviews and the analysis and classification of revised materials would probably be necessary to build such models. I will return to the potential uses and benefits of the revision continuum after the analysis of the survey data.

3   A brief look at previous studies on revision policies

Much of the academic study on revision focuses on revisers' working procedures and mental processes. Important work in this area has been carried out by Künzli (for example, 2007); for an account of other interesting studies, see Mossop (2007). The practical viability and benefits of some procedures have also been investigated (see for example Robert & Van Waes 2014). LSPs' policies and workflows have attracted less attention, and only few systematic surveys of them have been published. Perhaps the most important of these is the research project of Rasmussen and Schjoldager (2011) on Danish LSPs. They used a questionnaire and interviews to find out whether unilingual or comparative revision was preferred, which revision parameters were included and who the revisers were. They found, among other things, that problems in financial viability and tight schedules often prevent thorough revision.

Uotila (2017) repeated Rasmussen and Schjoldager's questionnaire, but not the interviews, in Finland for her master's thesis. Most of Uotila's findings regarding revision policies agree with those of the Danish study, but she found, for example, that fewer Finnish than Danish LSPs have specific guidelines for revision. Neither Uotila nor Rasmussen and Schjoldager consider the possibilities of designing the revision task to suit different purposes or text types; they only focus on whether texts are subjected to revision or not, and why.

From the point of view of the present study, however, Uotila's survey provides valuable additional insight into the revision policies of Finnish LSPs.

Ko (2011) considers revision in the Chinese translation market through some personal experiences, but discusses translation revision as well as the review carried out by clients under a single concept of translation checking. The analysis is based on case studies. Ko's approach brings out the client's role in the translation production process more clearly than the surveys carried out by Rasmussen and Schjoldager or Uotila. Ko (2011: 133) also states that as translation jobs have different purposes and requirements, general guidelines applied to all revision or review jobs would be impractical. Instead, any guidelines for revision or review should also be tailor-made. The need to tailor the task description for different purposes of course resonates well with the idea of a revision continuum.

All these studies discuss revision as quality assurance. Variation in the scope of revision is not a particular area of focus in any of them, nor are the creative aspects of revision tasks considered. The present study aims to fill this gap and take revision research into a new direction to uncover the full potential of this important part of the workflow.

4   Research design

The survey discussed here looks at workflow processes from the LSPs' viewpoint, examining how they have designed their production workflow and the related revision policies. The targeted participants of the survey were therefore representatives of Finnish LSPs that identify primarily as translation agencies. Based on publicly available turnover information, LSPs that were at least medium-sized as translation businesses, although not very large in the overall Finnish economy, were selected as recipients of the online questionnaire. To allow the inclusion of an adequate number of companies, no definite turnover limit was determined; instead, turnover figures from several years were examined to recognize companies with a steady annual turnover in the league of several hundred thousand euros or more.

In order to obtain some preliminary quantitative data on which revision policies and practices might be prevalent among LSPs, the link to the questionnaire was sent to only one representative of each company. The respondents were informed that the responses would be used for research purposes and published. To ensure the protection of any business secrets, the recipients cannot be described in more detail here.

In the cover letter, it was emphasised that the respondent should be familiar with the company's revision processes and services. The respondents were thus expected to provide

answers based on the companies' established ways of working instead of the respondents' own preferences. However, it was not possible to control who actually responded to the survey. The respondents were not required to enter their own or the company's name, because it was assumed that they would then be more reluctant to respond at all. This means that the respondent may have been someone with incomplete or outdated knowledge. Similarly, it cannot be confirmed that an actual company policy or practice exists regarding all the details addressed by the survey; some of the matters discussed here may not have been considered by some LSPs at all. In these cases, the responses would in fact reflect the respondents' individual preferences.

Link to the online questionnaire was sent by email to 26 Finnish LSPs. Reminders were sent, and some of the large companies were contacted via personal connections to ensure a response. A total of 11 LSPs responded to the survey (response rate 42.3%); these represent a major proportion of the Finnish translation industry in terms of combined turnover. The most prominent operators were well represented within the respondents.

The questionnaire comprised 29 questions in total, some with two parts. The questions were given in Finnish and divided into four sections: 1. basic background information about the company, 2. the company's service range, 3. the revision procedure, and 4. creative translation and editing services. Both open and closed questions were used.

All the data yielded by the questionnaire have not been analysed for this chapter; here, the focus is on the section dealing with the revision procedure, with particular attention on the scope of revision, its allowed level of creativity, and who has the authority to make decisions about these. To learn more about the role of revision in the workflows of creative translation and editing services, some questions in the fourth part of the questionnaire that dealt with these were also looked at. The following specific questions are discussed here:

1. Does the typical translation workflow include a revision task carried out by someone other than the person who translated the text?
2. Which text features is the reviser expected to pay attention to?
3. What types of stylistic editing is the reviser expected to carry out?
4. In what situations may the reviser make or propose changes to deviate from source text content?
5. Has the company defined different revision levels, or may the reviser decide the scope of revision?
6. Is the reviser provided with a description of the scope and objectives of each revision task?

Basic information about all these was obtained from closed questions, and the responses to them are presented below in section 5. However, some of the open-ended questions provided a more nuanced picture by revealing contextual factors behind the practices. Information from these has therefore also been included in the present analysis.

When analysing the responses, the respondent companies were divided into major (5 respondents) and minor operators (6 respondents) based on their number of employees, countries of operation, service range and selection of language pairs. Based on their responses in the background information section of the survey, all major operators offered translations in all language pairs, had operations in several countries, and had an extensive service range including creative translation services. The division into major and minor operators will be used in the presentation of the survey results below.

5   Results of the survey: revision policies of LSPs that operate in Finland

In this section, I will go through the responses to the six questions listed above and briefly discuss the possible implications of the responses. With the exception of the first question, the results will be presented in a graphical format. As the data were limited, it must be kept in mind that any conclusions that are drawn must be only preliminary, hypotheses for further study at best. Since it is difficult to obtain a larger sample among Finnish LSPs, any further study will have to rely on in-depth methods such as interviews.

The status of revision in the typical workflow

To begin charting the LSPs' revision policies, they were asked whether the typical translation workflow included other-revision, that is, a revision task carried out by someone other than the person who translated the text. The question was formed to ask about a *typical* translation process, because based on Rasmussen and Schjoldagers (2011) as well as Uotila's (2017) findings, it was expected that most LSPs allow some flexibility in their processes and do not revise each and every translation. Rather surprisingly, only seven of the eleven respondents stated that their typical translation workflow includes revision. Among large operators, only two of the five companies did, which was even more surprising as large companies could certainly be assumed to have adequate resources for revision. When asked to give an account of the entire workflow, however, most of those who did not indicate revision as part of the typical workflow still mentioned it as a possible step; only one did not mention revision at all.

In Uotila's (2017) survey of Finnish LSPs, the respondents were not asked whether a typical workflow included revision. Instead, they were asked to estimate what percentage of their translations are revised. Of Uotila's nine respondents, four claimed that they revise all translations, and nearly all revised more than half of the translations. The texts were chosen for revision based on criteria such as the language pair, the client's requirements, knowledge of the translator's skill, and whether the translation had been outsourced from a service provider who has their own quality assurance process (Uotila 2017: 48–50).

Uotila's findings as well as the present survey indicate a strong emphasis on flexibility in LSPs' workflows. It would be interesting to find out more about why so many LSPs, even the large ones, do not include revision into their typical translation process despite the fact that revision is strongly recommended in the literature on translation workflow and even required by the translation industry standards. One of the possible reasons is that they have a very reliable translator base. Perhaps they translate high volumes of non-critical text types where low pricing does not allow revision, or outsource a large proportion of translations from service providers who have their own QA procedures. Further research is needed to achieve any degree of certainty on why some companies do not consider revision so important as to make it a standard part of the workflow.

Revision parameters

Figure 2 lists 14 revision parameters from four groups (A–D) and shows the number of respondent companies that included each parameter in the scope of typical revision. The respondents were able to select several options – which was also the case for most of the other questions presented in this chapter.

Figure 2: *Revision parameters that the reviser is expected to pay attention to*

Which text features is the reviser expected to pay attention to?
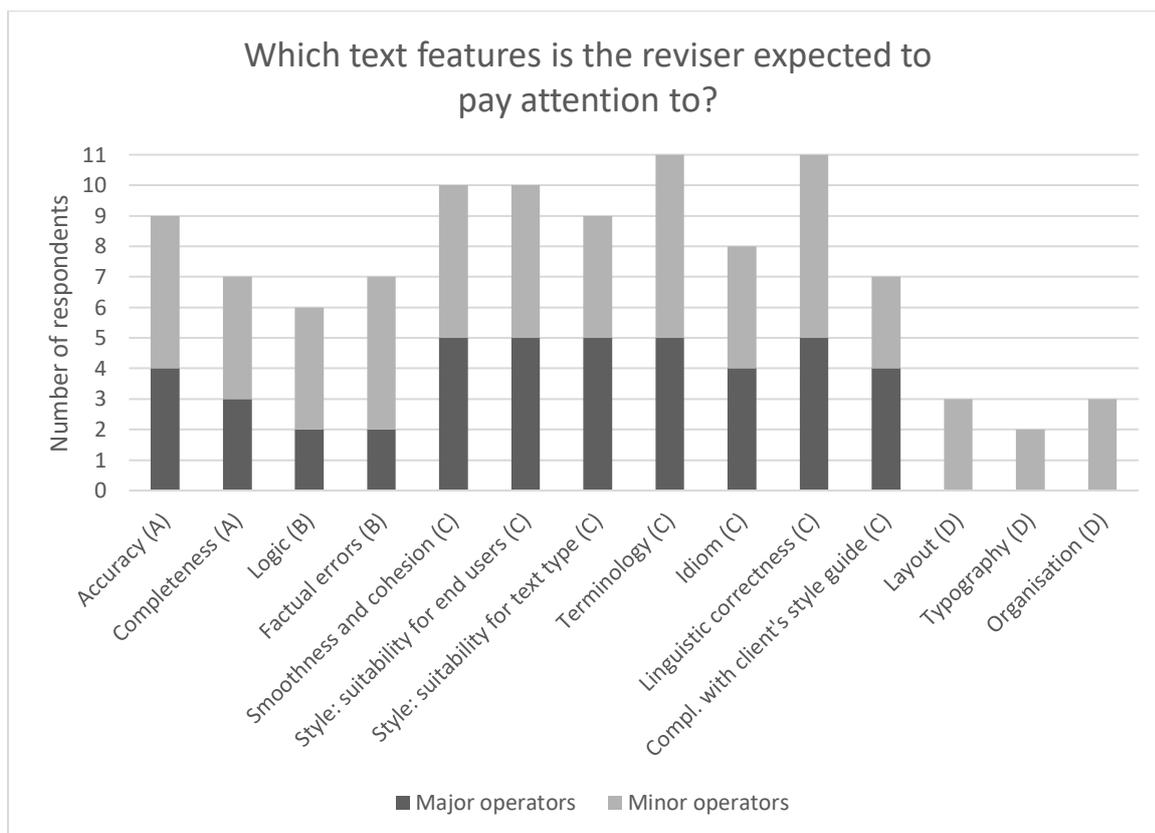
The options used in the questionnaire roughly follow the revision parameters identified by Mossop (2014: 134–135). Some modifications were made to use wordings that were more likely to be familiar to the respondents[2]; this was somewhat challenging as the jargon used at LSPs varies considerably from one company to the next (see Uotila 2017: 45). Two of Mossop's parameters were divided further so that more detailed information of the task content could be obtained: the parameter 'sub-language' was presented in the questionnaire as 'stylistic suitability for the text type' and 'terminology', and 'mechanics' was divided into 'linguistic (grammatical) correctness' and 'compliance with client's style guide'. It is true that client-specific style guides often include instructions on appropriate grammar. Still, general grammatical correctness and compliance with a style guide constitute two different things to check, which made it logical to separate them in this context. Similarly, style and terminology, while both aspects of the sub-language, are different from each other in that style can be understood as a feature of all texts, while terminology is more important in some texts than in others. The differences in how many respondents selected each of these options proved the divisions justified.

The only two parameters that all respondents marked as part of the typical revision procedure were 'linguistic correctness' and 'terminology'; the same two parameters were

considered most important by Uotila's (2017: 54) respondents. Most of the parameters related to language and style – Mossop's (2014: 134) parameter group C, marked (C) in figure 2 – were, in fact, routinely included in revision by nearly all respondents. 'Idiom' and 'compliance with a client's style guide' were selected slightly less frequently than the other parameters in this group.

The first two parameters, which deal with meaning transfer (Mossop's group A), were also included by the majority of respondents, although 'completeness' was selected less often than 'accuracy'. As accuracy can only be verified if a comparative revision is carried out, it can be concluded that this revision method seems to be the norm. Uotila's (2017: 51) findings support this conclusion: seven of her nine respondents used a comparative procedure for all their revisions. In their survey of Danish LSPs, Rasmussen and Schjoldager (2011: 104–105) also found that comparative revision was the prevalent practice, although it was not always carried out for the entire text.

What's perhaps most striking about figure 2 is how marginal the visual aspects of the text (parameter group D) are. This group includes the parameters 'layout', 'typography' and 'organisation', which refers to the use of headings and footnotes. Each of these parameters was only selected by two or three respondents, and by none of the major operators. One respondent explained that the working file formats used in the translation environment prevent a layout check, even though reference material of the original layout is often available. Layout may be separately checked at a later stage, but the check is not part of the revision task and is offered to clients as an additional service by this particular LSP.

The parameters related to content ('logic' and 'factual errors', group B) are an interesting category. More than half of the respondents included them in the normal revision procedure, but the difference to the parameters of language and style was clear. While it is generally agreed that obvious source text mistakes such as dates that do not match should be corrected – and the client notified – many apparently consider the content parameters to be part of the client's and not the LSP's scope of responsibility.

Variation in the level of creativity

When the logic of the text or factual errors are corrected during translation or revision, the resulting target text will naturally differ at some points from the source text. The question of whether the logic and factual errors should be corrected in a translation thus takes us towards a bigger question: are actual changes to the content of the text allowed during translation and revision? Two questions addressed this issue in the questionnaire. The first of

these concerned the degree of creativity allowed in stylistic modifications, and the second dealt with the specific situations in which the reviser was allowed to make changes to the content of the text. The options and responses are presented in figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: *The types of stylistic editing that the reviser is expected to carry out*
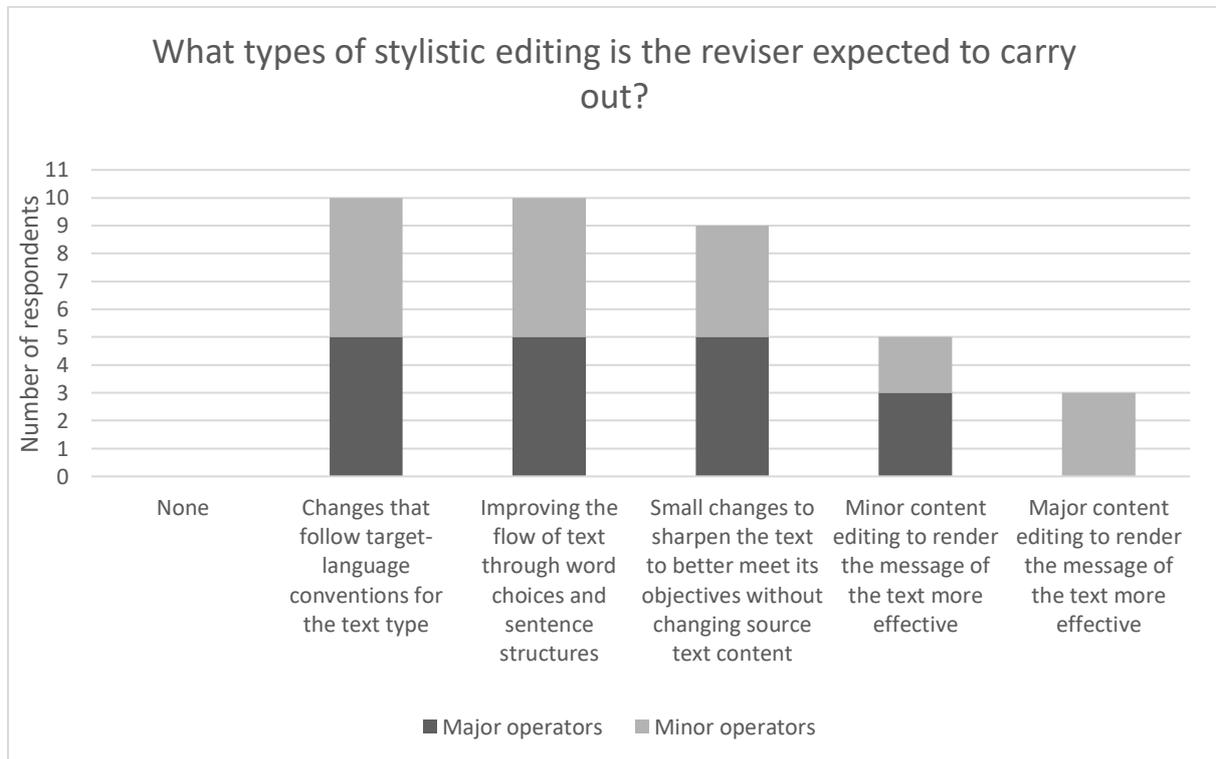

Nearly all respondents expected the reviser to correct the style of the text in accordance with text type-specific target-language conventions, to make the text flow better through improved word choices and constructions, and to sharpen the text by small changes. However, many drew the line at actual content editing. None of the large operators expected the reviser to engage in major content editing. It is rather interesting that three minor operators did; at this point, we can only speculate whether these companies specialise in creative translation and communication services, or whether these respondents perhaps just had a different definition of major content editing in mind.

Figure 4 lists some situations in which LSPs may allow content editing during revision. Only one respondent indicated that they allow revisers to freely deviate from source content; on the other hand, one respondent allowed no deviations at all. It seems to be a fairly common practice that changes to content are allowed in cases such as certain text types of specific clients. In my own experience, which is supported by the responses to some of the open-ended questions in the survey, this is usually based on an agreement between the LSP

and the client to the effect that some text types are given a special treatment. Two respondents selected the 'Other, please specify' option: both described cases where the client has specifically ordered a creative translation or wanted the text to be edited further. It must be noted that both of these respondents also selected other options; these were therefore not the only situations where they allowed deviation from source text content.

Figure 4: *Situations in which changes from source text content are allowed*
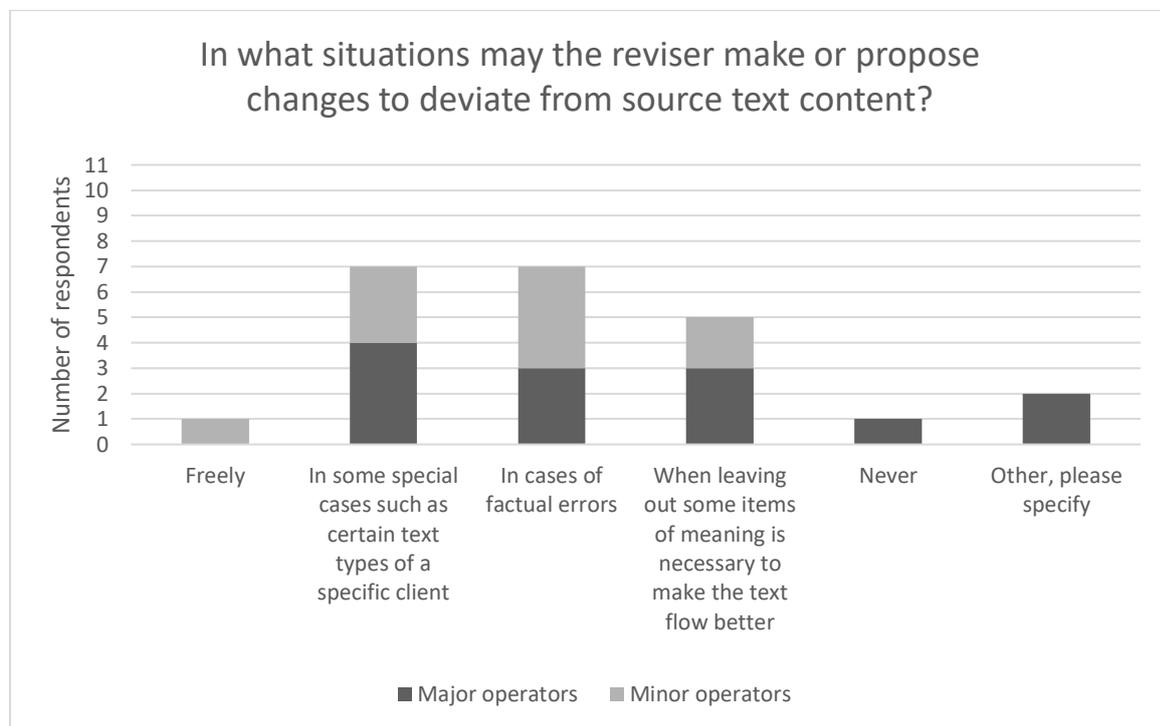
The responses to some of the open-ended questions in this survey indicate that the client's requests and what had been agreed with the client constitute the most important factor when deciding what kinds of changes are allowed during the revision task. The respondents repeatedly mentioned the wishes of the client and the fact that service specifications must be mutually agreed upon. In some other translation contexts, the client's wishes may not need to be automatically observed, and Mossop (2014: 123) indeed does not recommend doing so. When producing a commercial service in an extremely competitive operating environment, however, listening to the client is clearly of crucial importance. Dunne (2011: 176) stresses that a translation can only be adequate or inadequate with relation to the communicative function that it should fulfil (see Nord 1997: 34–37), which is "not a quality inherent in a target text, but rather is a quality assigned to the target text by an evaluator from his or her particular point of view" – and that point of view can, in the context of a business-to-business translation service, only be the client's.

Other factors that respondents mentioned as having an impact on the scope of revision include the text type, the target audience and the intended use: the text must be revised so that it works as intended in the target context. However, the target audience, or the end user, was mentioned far less frequently than the client, which clearly implies that in all considerations, the client comes first. Other factors to be considered include local legislation, which may require changes to the text, and the layout that may be so tight that some content must be left out to make the text fit into the designated space. In some text types, strict limits for the number of characters are imposed.

One respondent foregrounded a further factor that can be best described as a precondition for all the other revision policy choices: the pricing of the job must allow using enough time for the work to produce the necessary quality level. As creative editing is a time-consuming activity, it can only be carried out if the price of the project has been negotiated to allow the use of adequate time. According to the respondent who raised the price issue, translations of marketing texts must be sold to clients under service labels that justify the higher price. The label makes it easier for the client to accept that creative quality takes time to produce. This is a crucial matter for LSPs, because in the commercial reality where today's LSPs operate, translation prices are often pushed down to the limits of profitability (see European Commission 2018), and it is simply not possible to spend enough time on all translations to hone them to perfection.

Distribution of decision-making power

Who then decides what the scope of revision will be and what the reviser can or cannot do? Do revisers receive instructions, or a brief, for each task? In this area, the respondents seemed to give somewhat contradictory answers to two slightly overlapping questions (figures 5 and 6). The first question deals with whether the LSPs have defined revision levels that are given to revisers as instructions, and the second explores different situations in which instructions may be provided.

Figure 5: *Definition of different revision levels and the distribution of decision-making power*

Has the company defined different revision levels, or may the reviser decide the scope of revision?
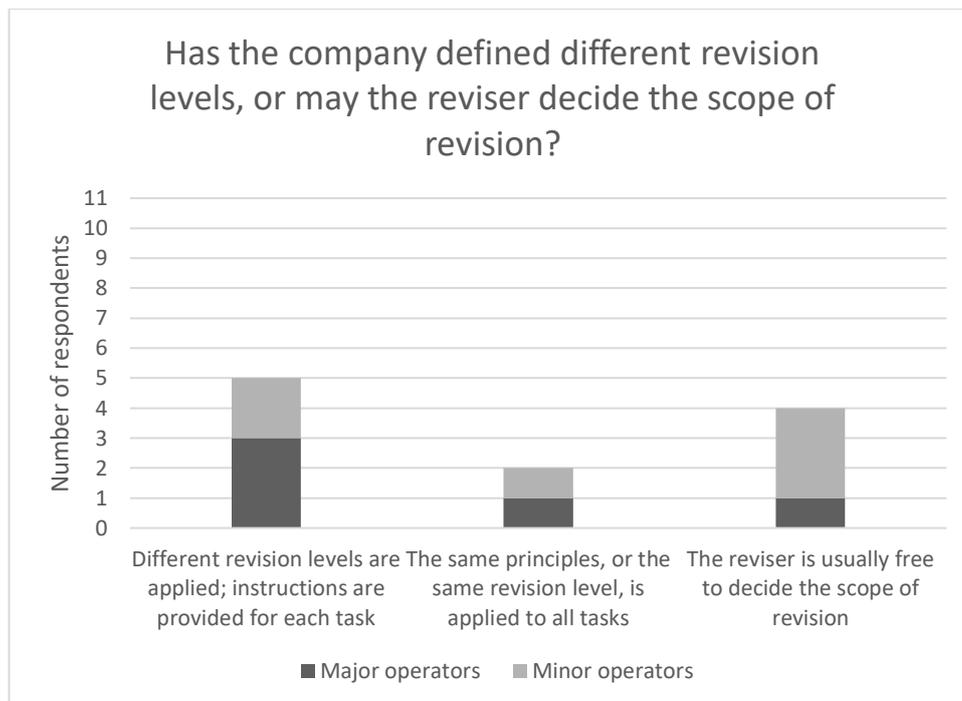
For the question presented in figure 5, the respondents were only allowed to select one option. It seems that large operators favour providing instructions, while smaller ones more often rely on the reviser's judgment. It remains unclear whether the respondents who always apply the same revision level communicate their revision principles to revisers. These responses also provide proof that most LSPs recognise that variation exists between revision tasks: the responses represented by the first and the third column are based on the assumption that the scope of revision needs to be decided at some point. The respondents who selected the first or the third option only differ on whether the decision is made by the LSP or whether the reviser may decide the scope independently.

Figure 6: *Situations in which a description of the scope and objectives of the revision task is provided*

Is the reviser provided with a description of the scope and objectives of each revision task?
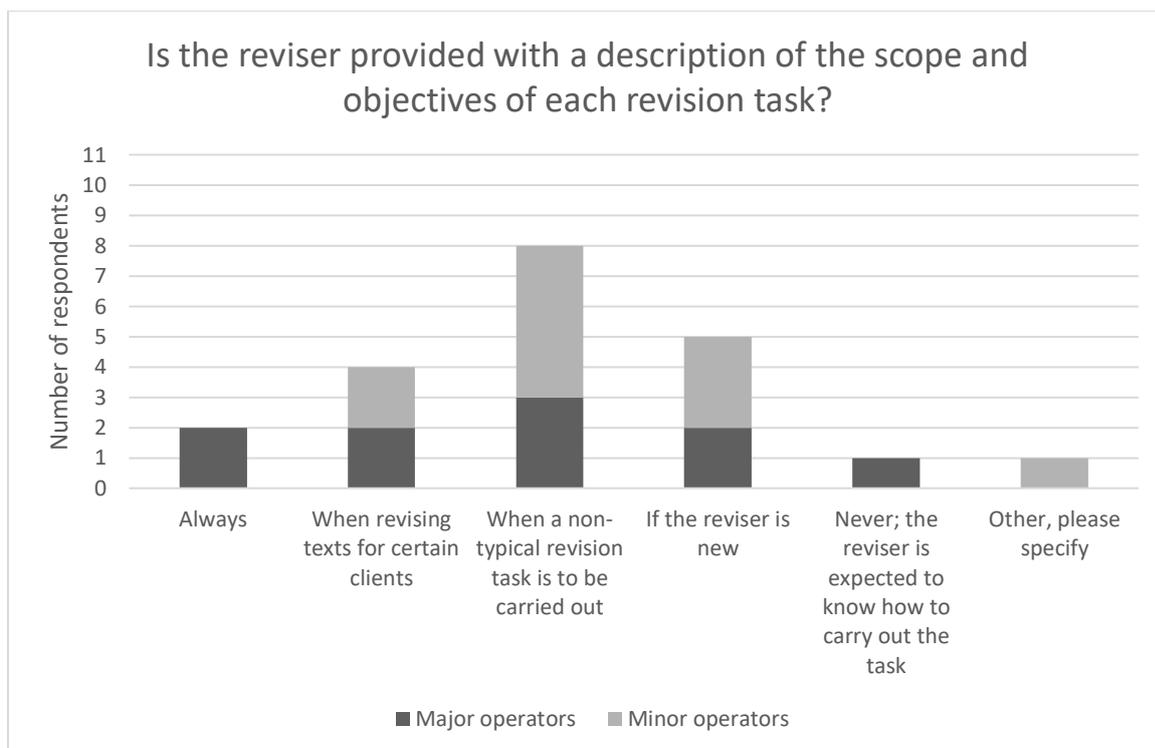
The responses presented in figure 5 seem straightforward enough – until figure 6 is examined. The respondents were now again allowed to select several options. While five respondents had previously indicated that the company applies different revision levels and that revisers receive instructions for each task, now only two stated that revisers always receive a description of the scope and objectives of the task. This can only be understood by assuming that in the previous question, the respondents did not mean that instructions would be provided for each and every task; instead, they meant that instructions for different revision levels existed and would be provided when necessary. Furthermore, eight respondents now state that a task description is provided when a non-typical revision task is to be carried out, although only five had previously said that such descriptions exist. This must mean that a task description can be provided on an ad hoc basis for each case even when definitions of revision levels have not been established in advance.

One respondent did not find an appropriate option among those provided and explained that the procedure was well established and no actual instructions were usually required, but when they were, even detailed instructions could be provided by the project manager, translator or the account manager. This seems to be a good summary of all the responses to this question: the procedure is very flexible for most LSPs, and is based on only providing instructions when they are needed. In other cases, instructions would only waste the reviser's time. On the other hand, if the procedure is indeed well established and revisers are normally expected to know the routine, this could mean that there is little variation in how

revision is carried out, and the service that is being provided is usually the same. There may therefore be a lot of untapped potential in how the workflow's revision phase could be used for producing different services for clients.

Some responses to section 4 of the questionnaire, which charted creative translation and editing services of the LSPs, provided proof that revision already is being used in that manner by some LSPs. Respondents from companies that offer both a transcreation[3] service and a separate creative editing service were asked to explain how these two differ in terms of the workflow or the practical execution of the task. Two respondents answered this question; both stated clearly that the workflows used when producing these two services are similar. One of the two also explained that both services are based on a regular translation workflow to which a more extensive editing phase is added.

Although this shows that dividing the work in steps is clearly considered a useful practice, using the same production process for different services could also indicate a need for further service development. The need was in fact identified by several respondents: when asked whether they have established definitions for their creative translation and editing services, only one respondent stated confidently that service descriptions exist for all services. All the others were more or less unhappy with their current service definitions or admitted that service design had not yet been completed. In the survey, five of the eleven respondents said that their companies had increased their service range in recent years, most of them in the area of marketing and content production services. With the development of new services, service design is probably an ongoing effort for many LSPs. The next section discusses the possible role and benefits of the revision continuum in this effort.

6 Role and benefits of a revision continuum

Section 2 of this chapter introduced the concept of a revision continuum that ranges from simple proofreading to extensive creative editing of a translated text; in the above, we saw that editing can indeed be used for producing creative translation services. Furthermore, figures 4, 5 and 6 showed that variation exists in the revision tasks carried out at LSPs. All in all, the survey yielded important information about how different situations influence revision practices and seem to require specific procedures. This information helps us understand the flexibility inherent to LSP policies. To turn this flexibility into efficient workflows, the systematic definition of specific revision types that meet different needs will be necessary.

As was mentioned above in section 2 of this chapter, the revision continuum could be used as a theoretical model, providing insight into all the different ways in which revision

could be carried out, or it could be a valuable practical tool used as a basis of daily operations at LSPs. At least two practical uses can be identified: firstly, as a service design tool when defining the scope of a revision task that is part of a specific service, and secondly, helping to ensure the financial viability of LSPs' operations.

When using the revision continuum as a service design tool, the first step is to consider what variables constitute the different types of revision that would be useful to LSPs, and that would be positioned along the revision continuum. Choosing which revision parameters to apply is an obvious starting point: based on figure 2 above, some revision parameters are considered more essential than others. This makes it fairly easy to define a budget revision service that only includes the most important parameters (linguistic correctness and terminology being the most obvious candidates based on the present study as well as Uotila's (2017) findings) as well as a full service that would encompass all, or most of, the revision parameters. The level of creativity to be allowed – which was discussed in the above as deviation from the source text content but could also be understood as creative use of language – is another powerful way of making a difference between types of revision. Other variables include choosing between a spot check and complete revision and focusing on unilingual or comparative revision – or including both into the workflow as separate steps.

Next, let's look at how the revision continuum could help LSPs avoid wasting resources. LSPs often engage in fierce competitive bidding in which price is the most important factor. The company that has the best production process, resulting in adequate quality at the lowest price, wins. Adequate (or fit-for-purpose) revision can be considered as key to adequate quality. In practice, this means that LSPs must consider when to apply extensive revision and when a less thorough check will do, and the depth of revision must be reflected in the price.

The need to make the task description and the price meet has not previously been fully recognised in revision research. Martin (2007: 58), for example, takes it for granted that revision needs to be kept "within sensible and affordable limits". The underlying assumption appears to be that the price that the client pays for revision is always the same, and the cost of revision must be affordable with respect to that price, which of course often limits revision to a minimum level. This results in problems that could be solved by increased variation in the price of revision. The survey results presented here have shown that LSPs already use the revision step in the workflow to produce services that are sold under different labels, for example creative editing or transcreation, for which a higher price is charged. This proves that revision is an important part of the workflow with potential to make a difference between

regular translation and a high-quality creative communication service; charging a different price for different types of revision is thus also justified. From the clients' point of view, it also makes sense that they receive texts with the quality level and style that they need in each case, and only pay for the level that they need.

It could of course be argued that in the case of extensive editing of a translation, we are no longer talking about revision in the sense usually ascribed to the term in translation studies. Creative editing could be seen as falling outside the realm of translation revision, and ample justification for that approach can certainly be provided. One such justification can be found within this very survey: it seemed to be a fairly common practice that when the translation workflow includes creative editing, it also includes another revision step such as language review or proofreading. However, when discussing creative editing that is carried out within the LSP, by the same people who also do other revision work, and directly following the translation phase in the workflow, I believe it should be discussed under the overall concept of revision.

The revision continuum is presented here as a hypothesis only, and its further development and practical application is left to later works. The factors that determine the placing of tasks on the continuum must be elaborated based on more thorough empirical research on LSP practices. Different revision tasks can then be identified and defined in order to create a representation of how revision is currently being used. Based on these, new efficient ways to make use of revision in service production could be revealed. The very shape of the visual representation could change as a result of more detailed research: a simple continuum between two extreme task types might not be adequate for dealing with all the different factors involved. The role of different actors or agents, such as the project manager as the one who decides what to include in the workflow (see Stoeller 2011: 296), as well as the client as an agent that influences all decision-making, is also worth examining.

7   Conclusion

The survey results presented here make it clear that although LSPs are often seen as a fairly unified entity, a closer look on their service workflows reveals many differences between them and in how they serve their clients. It is logical that differences should exist: LSPs are free enterprises that compete against each other and work hard to find the best practices that will allow them to get a bigger share of the available business. It is unlikely that clients, whose knowledge of translation is usually limited, are aware of all the differences in how the services are produced. Clear definitions of services in terms of workflow and task

content, based on terms that can also be understood by people who are not experts in translation, would therefore be useful for the clients and would allow them to make informed purchase decisions.

It must be noted that when revision is expanded to include creative editing, it no longer equals quality assurance. Revision and quality assurance have always been strongly linked by both researchers and practitioners. When Drugan (2013: 37) asked her interviewees how they manage translation quality, they responded by explaining their revision procedures – forgetting at first all the quality management measures that take place at other stages of the process. However, if we look at revision as a task that goes beyond checking and reaches into the production of creative translation services, we must also accept that quality assurance is only one possible purpose of revision. A shift in how revision is seen and defined is therefore necessary: instead of merely checking for errors, it needs to be seen as part of the text production effort.

As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, the translation industry standards EN 15038 (European Committee for Standardization 2006) and ISO 17100:2015 both take a strict view on revision, requiring that all target language content is revised. Considering the flexibility of practices generally adopted by LSPs, and the need to ensure profitable operations by not wasting resources, it seems that any widespread adoption of the standards may not take place unless these requirements are reconsidered. As has been repeatedly found in empirical studies, for example Rasmussen and Schjoldager (2011: 101), revision is sometimes not possible for practical reasons. Adoption of the standard would, therefore, mean having to follow requirements that are not financially and practically viable in the translation industry.

Research into LSP workflows challenges the way a translator's work is traditionally seen – as an individual, isolated effort where a translation is created as a result of one person's thought processes. Any up-to-date theory of translation must account for how translations are created in real production contexts, and in the ongoing effort of bridging the gap between translation theory and the practical work (see Chesterman & Wagner 2014), a move towards recognising the impact of teamwork in everyday working environments is a welcome development. Research in areas such as the sociology of translation has already resulted in great advances in our understanding of these in recent years; more detailed investigations of translation workflows will contribute to the same goals.

References

Abdallah, Kristiina (2012) *Translators in Production Networks. Reflections on Agency, Quality and Ethics*. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

Bisiada, Mario (2018) 'The editor's invisibility: Analysing editorial intervention in translation'. *Target* 30:2, 288-309.

Chesterman, Andrew and Emma Wagner (2014) *Can Theory Help Translators? A Dialogue Between the Ivory Tower and the Wordface*, 2nd edition. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dam-Jensen, Helle and Carmen Heine (2013) 'Writing and translation process research: Bridging the gap'. *Journal of Writing Research* 5:1, 89–101.

Drugan, Joanna (2013) *Quality in professional translation: Assessment and improvement*. London: Bloomsbury.

Dunne, Keiran J. (2011) 'From vicious to virtuous cycle. Customer-focused translation quality management using ISO 9001 principles and Agile methodologies'. In *Translation and Localization Project Management: The Art of the Possible* (E. S. Dunne and K. J. Dunne eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 153–187.

Englund Dimitrova, Birgitta (2010) 'Translation process'. In *Handbook of Translation Studies. Volume 1* (Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 406–411.

European Committee for Standardization (2006). *EN 15038:2006 Translation services – Service requirements*. Brussels: CEN.

European Commission (2018) 2018 *Language Industry Survey – Expectations and Concerns of the European Language Industry*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017_language_industry_survey_report_en.pdf [Last viewed 5 November 2018]

Gouadec, Daniel (2007) *Translation as a Profession*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

ISO 17100:2015. *Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services. Services de traduction – Exigences, relatives aux services de traduction*. ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

Jakobsen, Arnt Lykke (2019) 'Moving translation, revision, and post-editing boundaries'. In *Moving boundaries in translation studies* (Helle V. Dam, Matilde Nisbeth Brøgger and Karen Korning Zethsen eds.), Abingdon: Routledge, 64–80.

Ko, Leong (2011) 'Translation checking: a view from the translation market'. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 19:2, 123–134.

Künzli, Alexander (2007). 'Translation revision. A study of the performance of ten professional translators revising a legal text'. In *Doubts and Directions in Translation Studies, Selected contributions from the EST Congress, Lisbon 2004* (Yves Gambier, Miriam Shlesinger and Radegundis Stolze eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 115–126.

Lauscher, Susanne (2000) 'Translation quality assessment: where can theory and practice meet?' *The Translator* 6:2, 149–168.

Martin, Tim (2007) 'Managing risks and resources: a down-to-earth view of revision'. *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 8, 57–63.

Mossop, Brian (2007) 'Empirical studies of revision: what we know and need to know'. *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 8, 5–20.

Mossop, Brian (2014) *Revising and editing for translators*, 3rd edition. Abingdon: Routledge.

Nord, Christiane (1997) *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.

Rasmussen, Kirsten W. and Anne Schjoldager (2011) 'Revising translations: a survey of revision policies in Danish translation companies'. *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 15, 87–120.

Rike, Sissel (2013) 'Bilingual corporate websites – from translation to transcreation?' *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 20, 68–84.

Risku, Hanna, Jelena Milosevic and Christina Pein-Weber (2016) 'Writing vs. translating. Dimensions of text production in comparison'. In *Reembedding translation process research* (Ricardo Muñoz Martín ed.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 47–68.

Risku, Hanna, Theresa Pichler and Vanessa Wieser (2017) 'Transcreation as a translation service: process requirements and client expectations'. *Across Languages and Cultures* 18:1, 53–77.

Robert, Isabelle and Luuk Van Waes (2014) 'Selecting a translation revision procedure: do common sense and statistics agree?' *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 22:3, 304–320.

Solum, Kristina (2017) 'The tacit influence of the copy-editor in literary translation'. *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice* 26:4, 543–559.

Stoeller, Willem (2011) 'Global virtual teams'. In *Translation and localization project management: the art of the possible* (E. S. Dunne and K. J. Dunne eds.), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 289–317.

Uotila, Anna (2017) 'Revision and quality assurance in professional translation: a study of revision policies in Finnish translation companies'. Master's thesis, University of Tampere. http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201712202991 [consulted 26 October 2018].

---

[1] It must be noted here that while Mossop (2014) uses the term 'editing' primarily when discussing non-translations, Bisiada (2018: 290) explicitly states that he uses the term for both translations and non-translations. There is really no reason why the various editing tasks could not be performed for a text that has been previously translated; the text is then no longer treated as a translation. This process is also recognised by Mossop, and is in fact included in his glossary definition of the term 'editing' (Mossop 2014: 224).

[2] A good example of the terminological variation is that Finnish LSPs generally do not use the concept of revision (or the direct Finnish correspondent of the word) when referring to checking translations (Uotila 2017: 44–45), and that for Danish LSPs, it is only one of several terms that are used (Rasmussen & Schjoldager 2011: 100).

[3] Risku et al (2017: 54) cite Rike's (2013: 72f.) definition of transcreation as "a concept in which the advertising text and message are completely rewritten and redesigned in order to produce a creative and effective target text". The term is used here in this sense, referring to a commercial service that meets this definition.