Accessibility and Linguistics Rights

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1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the discussion in translation and interpreting studies (henceforth T/I) focusing on the ethical issues related to accessibility and linguistic rights, therefore addressing the ideal of enabling the participation of all people via translating and interpreting. A variety of communicative means and activities will be discussed here as instruments for ensuring equal participation by providing access to different areas of life.

Accessibility has various dimensions, from overcoming physical, linguistic, and social barriers to coping with sensory and communicative impairments. In T/I, the most prevalent themes have been sensory and linguistic accessibility, along with media accessibility and access to information. In this chapter, we discuss accessibility (focusing on sensory, cognitive, and other functional restrictions) and linguistic rights (focusing on linguistic restrictions) in parallel, although national legislation usually regulates them separately. For example, issues regarding sign languages are often treated as disability-based rights and as medical matters. However, from a socio-cultural perspective, both sign languages and spoken minority languages could be treated as issues of language rights or as questions of marginalised groups and their human rights (Reagan 2019, 272–73).

Accessibility is traditionally related to persons with special needs (Matamala and Orero 2016, 15), such as the visually impaired, the hard-of-hearing, and the deaf, although this view is changing towards perceiving all users and the whole of society as beneficiaries of accessibility. In this sense, accessibility is a transadaptive measure (Gambier 2003) that enables the use of products, communication, and services across different abilities and contexts. To illustrate, anyone can be momentarily "impaired," for instance in hearing because of a noisy environment, but can still follow a TV show with the sound off thanks to the intralingual subtitles that were originally designed for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In their introduction to one of the very first monographs about media accessibility, Díaz Cintas, Orero, and Remael (2007, 13–14) state that "accessibility is a form of translation, and translation is a form of accessibility." This statement crystallises the complex relationship that the two areas share. First, many forms of accessibility utilise translatorial techniques or methods. These methods involve meaning-transfer interlingually between languages (e.g. sign language interpreting), intralingually between language modalities (e.g. speech to text in subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) or intersemiotically or -modally between semiotic systems or communication modes (e.g. audio description from images into words, description of non-verbal sounds in subtitling, and translation of verbal text into pictures) (cf. Jakobson 1959). Second, translation is a means of providing accessibility because it overcomes linguistic, cultural, and sensory barriers to understanding. Translation is one tool or method for accessibility, and accessibility translation is one measure to improve human rights so that everyone is able to participate in society.

Linguistic rights belong to the concept of accessibility especially in the context of present-day multilingual societies and mobile people. Linguistic rights can be either individual human rights, for example similar to the right of the defendant to use an interpreter in court free of charge, or the collective rights of a linguistic minority to use their own language or have public services in their own language (see e.g. Spolsky 2003,119). A minority language can be an indigenous language that possibly has a legally protected status and its (citizen) speakers can have a right to access services in their language (an old minority language), or alternatively, a language spoken by migrants or refugees that does not have a similar status in legislation (a new minority language). In addition to these groups of people, there are also subjects who are on the move across national or linguistic borders for different purposes and need social communication in the environment in which they work or spend their leisure time. The rights to use translation and interpreting services are in each case an essential tool for people with different linguistic backgrounds to find and use services, to establish communication, and to engage in interaction.

Researchers working in the field of language-based inequality and linguistic disadvantage or injustice (Piller 2016) distinguish between speakers who have differential access to opportunities, who lack linguistic competence in the favoured language, or are even "linguistically handicapped" on the one hand, and the linguistically privileged members of a community on the other hand (Van Parijs 2011, 92–97). It must be stressed that many people have different kinds of linguistic competences in languages other than their own. These competences are not static. One can read a popular magazine in another language but may still not be fluent in the spoken language when receiving medical advice from a doctor in a medical encounter. The linguistic proficiency of

minorities and emergent language communities are facts that need consideration from the point of view of linguistic rights if everybody's social participation is to be valued in society.

Accessibility has been used to characterise translation in general, and these characterisations include many ethical considerations. Bassnett (2014, 169) describes the task of the translator as allowing "readers to have access to texts that would otherwise be incomprehensible to them." Pöchhacker (2018, 45) defines interpreting as "expressing or giving access to the meaning of something." Chesterman (2001, 144) mentions accessibility as a parameter in the ethical contemplation of translation and interpreting: accessibility means clarity—the ease of understanding a text—and thus it constitutes "good" service and communication in translation. The parameter of accessibility also features in Chesterman's proposal for a universal ethical promise of translators, the Hieronymic Oath: "5. I will respect my readers by trying to make my translations as accessible as possible, according to the conditions of each translation task. [Clarity]" (Chesterman 2001, 153). The orientation to the target user and the service character of translating and interpreting are thus reflected in many discussions of accessibility by T/I scholars. However, this entails a contradiction: serving the target users in an appropriate manner may involve aspirations and strategies that are generally thought of as unacceptable in the professional community of translators and interpreters. The *identical* reproduction of source material is considered impossible in translation studies, while the ideal of accessibility postulates that everyone must have the opportunity to access the *same* information. We will discuss this with examples later on in this chapter.

The chapter begins with an overview of how accessibility and linguistic rights became an issue in T/I. We outline the conventions and legislation upon which accessibility and linguistic rights are grounded. Then, we discuss some central aspects and research in T/I related to ethical issues in accessibility and linguistic rights. In conclusion, we consider some implications of the ethical consideration of accessibility for the professional and theoretical development of T/I.

2. Historical trajectory

The role of institutions is relevant as they create the framework—that is, the legislation and policies—to support the choice of accessible practices in different situations of life. The framework guides actors to make the right decisions when fulfilling their responsibilities. In addition, it gives many rights to people who otherwise would be discriminated against. Today, there is a wealth of policies and legislation affecting the practical application of accessibility and linguistic rights.

2.1. Human rights as the basis

Article 2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) stipulates that everyone "is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." The Declaration then goes on to specify human rights as rights that allow anyone to take part in all the basic fields of human life: work, education, and cultural life, as well as the community and public services. Human rights have affected both societal values as well as

the policy and planning of accessibility and linguistic rights. The two areas partly diverge and partly converge, as we will explain next. We start with linguistic rights because they have a longer legislative tradition compared to accessibility.

2.2. Linguistic rights

Linguistic rights are the means of accessing other fundamental human rights, e.g. the right to healthcare or the right to a fair trial. From the viewpoint of T/I research, it is therefore important to consider the role of linguistic barriers as an important aspect of accessibility in all fields of translation and interpreting. Regarding the linguistic rights of minorities, there is a notable difference whether a minority language speaker is "a rights holder" on the basis of the country's legislation or a person who is a "carrier of deficiency," i.e. a person that has insufficient proficiency in the official language (Córdoba Serrano and Diaz Fouces 2018, 6). In the former case, for example in Finland, Swedish and Finnish are both national languages, and their speakers have similar legislative rights. Similarly, citizens of the European Union have a right to access EU legislation in the official 24 languages. In both situations, language policy management and linguistic justice require a lot of institutional translation and interpreting and public funding. In the latter case, for a person defined as a "carrier of deficiency," translation and interpreting are a means of overcoming temporary linguistic barriers. A minority language speaker's access to translation and interpreting services in such a case is then typically a societal question of ethical, political, and financial decisions: to what extent societal are resources distributed to help people who are not competent speakers of the majority language (González Núñez and Meylaerts 2017)? These decisions affect translation policy, i.e. "as a set of legal rules that regulate translation in the public

domain: in education, in legal affairs, in political institutions, in administration, in the media"
(Meylaerts 2011a, 165).

A linguistic minority's access to public services—or its exclusion from society—is a topic that has
been politically debated for many years (Edwards et al. 2005; González Núñez 2016; Pokorn and
Čibej 2018, 113). According to investigations in the United Kingdom, health, legal, social welfare,
and education services could not be accessed by migrants whose language proficiency was not
sufficient for formal language use in official settings (Edwards et al. 2005). From this perspective,
i.e. regarding accessibility, linguistic minorities can be compared to other minorities in society
who do not possess a certain competence required for participation in social life. However, while
a linguistic lack of proficiency can usually be corrected, a disability cannot. Linguistic non-
proficiency in the dominant language is therefore considered a political language problem that
should be corrected, and translation and interpreting services are conceived of as forms of
accommodation (Córdoba Serrano and Diaz Fouces 2018, 7). It has also been claimed without any
research evidence that the availability of interpreting services hinders the inclusion of migrants in
society, as they do not learn the dominant language (Pokorn and Čibej 2018).

Overall, translation and interpreting activities find their base in legislation or international
provisions and standards (Meylaerts 2011; de Shutter 2017; Mowbray 2017; Pokorn and Čibej
2018). In general, the policies and practices of guaranteeing access to translation and interpreting
services reflect the application of human rights agreements and regulations in a society. After
reviewing international human rights agreements that explicitly or implicitly include provisions
that mandate translation and interpreting as linguistic human rights, Mowbray (2017, 33)

concludes that from the perspective of accessibility and linguistic rights, the most important provisions are those that "require translation in order to ensure that linguistic minorities can participate fully in the democratic process and public life of the state."

2.3. Accessibility

Accessibility cannot be considered comprehensively without the framework of human rights (Diaz Cintas 2007, 14), since accessibility is a constitutive part of safeguarding equality and an instrument for putting certain human rights into effect (Greco 2016). In the *United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2006), the purpose of Article 9 on Accessibility is to "enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life." According to the Convention, parties are requested to eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility, including information and communications that are not available in a suitable form. Access to information and information technologies should be promoted, as should assistance to persons with disabilities.

In T/I, accessibility is typically discussed in connection with audiovisual translation, such as media accessibility (e.g. Diaz Cintas et al. 2007). Gambier (2006) describes accessibility as a factor in audiovisual translation overall and, for him, accessibility concerns a wider audience than the disabled: accessibility means that information and services are available to all users, "irrespective of issues such as where they live, their level of experience, their physical and mental capacity, or the configuration of their computer" (Gambier 2006, 4). In *The Handbook of Translation Studies Online*, accessibility as a keyword is discussed in the article entitled "Media accessibility" by Aline

Remael (2012). Media accessibility refers to the ways in which "information and entertainment disseminated via audiovisual media, including the Worldwide Web, is [made] accessible to all" (Remael 2012). Remael's definition of accessibility is similar to that offered by Yves Gambier (2006) in entailing a comprehensive context in which access is made possible: "the concept of accessibility refers to the degree to which a product, service, environment, concept or even person can be used, reached, understood or accessed for a specific purpose." Thus, accessibility touches upon various ways of communicating between people and, ultimately, all areas of life, including work, education, citizenship and societal participation, and culture (see Maaß and Rink 2019; Hirvonen and Kinnunen 2020).

In the 21st century, accessibility has become an important part of European Union policy. Even before this, there were European declarations (see Wehrens 1991) and joint projects to foster accessibility (see Hernández-Bartolomé and Mendiluce-Cabrera 2004). In the 2010s, several Directives were put into force to mandate the accessibility of digital services and media. *The Audiovisual Media Services Directive* (Directive 2010/13) states that Member States should take measures to implement accessibility services in television broadcasting. *The Directive on the Accessibility of the Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies* (Directive 2016/2102) aims at making the public sector accessible to all. It provides a legal definition for accessibility: "Accessibility should be understood as principles and techniques to be observed when designing, constructing, maintaining, and updating websites and mobile applications in order to make them more accessible to users, in particular persons with disabilities" (Article 1, EU 2016/2102). Thus, accessibility no longer concerns only the disabled but everyone using these services, taking into account possible functional deficiencies of digital platforms (e.g. the inability

to perceive visuals or hear sounds). The latest addition to the accessibility directives is the *European Accessibility Act* (Directive 2019/882). It aims to improve the functioning of the EU market for accessible products and services, with benefits to both users (persons with disabilities and the elderly) and businesses.[1] In consequence, accessibility is spreading from the public sector into private business. The EU directives are converted to legal obligations as they are implemented in national legislation.

To conclude this section, we would like to recognise the extensive research on accessibility in fields other than T/I, such as information and communication technology (ICT) and human–computer interaction, in which accessibility has been conceptualised under the notion of Design for All (or universal design, inclusive design, etc.). This work has been ongoing since the 1950s. An important forum for such research is the journal *Universal Access to Information Society*. A paper by Persson et al. (2015) is of special interest; it addresses the terminological, historical, political, and philosophical aspects and developments of accessibility as a concept.

3. Core issues and topics

Apart from sign language interpreting, T/I research that directly addresses the ethics of accessibility is scarce. Ethical issues related to linguistic rights have been dealt with especially in the study of public service interpreting, and as this handbook includes a separate chapter on this, our focus in the present chapter is on accessibility. Furthermore, the focus of this subsection is on two forms of accessibility that have received the most attention in T/I in the past: subtitling for the

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202 (27 Feb 2020)

deaf and hard-of-hearing and audio description for the blind and partially sighted. Two issues relating to ethics have been dealt with extensively: professionalisation and norms. Both are expressions of the need for a collectively defined status for this rather novel area of (translatory) expertise.

3.1. Professionalisation

Badia and Matamala (2007) call for the professionalisation of the profiles of audio describer, subtitler (for the deaf and hard-of-hearing), and sign language interpreter, and they describe different models in which Spanish universities have introduced media accessibility in their curricula. Adequate professionalisation occurs when the training reaches the university level; experts are thus trained who can develop the field also by conducting research (Badia and Matamala 2007, 68). At present, the ADLAB PRO project (ADLAB = Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind) is developing the professional profile of audio describers. It explicitly advocates the strengthening of the social and professional status of the audio description expert (Perego 2017b, 134). Overall, involving (media) accessibility in the area of Translation Studies and therefore in the universities changes the position of this formerly non-academic field to an academic one, thus heightening its status. Professionalisation—the development of the professional profile—relates to the communal level of ethics (see Koskinen 2000, 15), as the desired model of an accessibility professional reflects the moral values of the community.

3.2. Norms

Norms have been the subject of active investigation in the form of defining guidelines for different accessibility services. A European research and development project, ADLAB (Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind), has created a set of common guidelines (Remael et al. 2015) for the audio description of audiovisual products (especially films and television) in Europe. The project was preceded by other research that studied the possibility of internationally valid guidelines (see e.g. Mazur and Chmiel 2012; Mazur 2017) that would achieve the status of a standard in order to meet a desired, uniform quality (see Perego 2017a, 218). Now, however, it is maintained that such universally applicable genre-specific guidelines–such as general rules for describing films–should leave enough freedom for localisation, as "each country has its own needs, language specificities, stylistic idiosyncrasies, rhetorical preferences" (Perego 2017a, 219). Different agents are currently in the position of defining audio description guidelines: some guidelines are drafted by a country's officials, while others are prepared by professionals, associations, or academics (see Perego 2017a, 218). The strive for normativity relates to Chesterman's (2001) model of the norm-based ethics of translation, which emphasises loyalty and ethical conduct according to the prevailing norms.

3.3. Quality

Normativity is reflected also in the research into quality—i.e. what kind of accessibility is good and on what grounds. In this context, the relevance of the target audience is often emphasised. A particular feature of accessibility is the value assigned to the target audience, whether in the willingness to learn from it in reception studies (e.g. Romero-Fresco 2015; Szarkowska et al. 2016; Tiittula et al. 2018) or as concrete cooperation in the translation practice (Hirvonen and Schmitt

2018). Matamala and Orero (2016, 15) give end-users a key role by endowing them a foundational status in the new research field called Accessibility Studies. This relates to user-centred approaches to translating (Suojanen et al. 2015) and the ethics of service (Chesterman 2001): the interest is in serving the audience properly, i.e. in defining translation quality from the viewpoint of those using it.

As accessibility aims at ensuring agency and an independent life for differently abled people, one core issue is defining good service and the functions of the accessibility service (provider) as a mediator: How much should the service be geared towards the capacities of users, helping them to assimilate the information given? Should the service instead perhaps focus on mediating the characteristics of the source material, disregarding the effects of semiotic and modal differences on the reception and use? In subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, this contradiction is reflected in the dilemma of choosing between a verbatim rendering of "all" that is said and heard and an edited rendering that is a condensed and/or simplified version of the audio in order to foster comprehension by the readers (Szarkowska et al. 2011). Users and broadcasters typically favour verbatim rendering, albeit for different reasons: users demand equal access and consider edited subtitles as censorship, while broadcasters are motivated by the lower production costs of verbatim subtitles (which are often possible to produce via speech recognition technology). Researchers, for one, have traditionally spoken in favour of edited subtitles to ensure comprehension and adequate reading time (Szarkowska et al. 2011, 364). One of the important findings of Szarkowska and colleagues (2011) is that "objective" performance does not always go hand in hand with "subjective" preference: in this case, the edited or standard subtitles may be easier to understand but they are less favourable. A recent study by Tiittula et al. (2018) indicates that a verbatim

rendering of speech is preferred by all of the different users (Deaf, hearing impaired people, and language learners), albeit for different reasons. Interestingly, equality may overrun understandability even deliberately: some users wish to preserve a foreign language (that they may not understand) in the subtitles so as to have equal access to the "otherness" (Tiittula et al. 2018, 25). The research results described above demonstrate that the ethics of being loyal to the Source (i.e. representing the source material faithfully) and being loyal to the Target (i.e. serving users "correctly") can converge (cf. Chesterman 2001). Thus, in accessibility, faithfulness to the Source can be regarded as a good service, as it prohibits censorship and the withholding of information.

Withholding or manipulating information, i.e. censorship, is a key issue in accessibility. It also relates to how to deal with sensitive content (see Sanz Moreno 2017). In audio description and subtitling, one must deal with the verbalisation of sex, pornography, violence, and the like (see Fryer 2016, 141–54). In sign language interpreting, on the other hand, sensitive issues have to be embodied and visualised, which is likely to have negative impact on the translator who has to, for instance, embody pornography (see also the Chapter on ethical stress). How to audio describe sensitive issues can be instructed to some extent in the guidelines, so norms are an important tool for exercising ethical power. There might also be cultural issues involved in the ways in which sensitive material is represented and which styles of mediating it are considered acceptable (Fryer 2016, 142).

3.4. Role

Research on sign language interpreting repeatedly brings up the issue of the (new) definition of the interpreting profession and the role expectations involved in it (Janzen and Korpinski 2005; Shaw 2014). Janzen and Korpinski (2005) discuss the various roles sign language interpreters have had over the years in North America. The "ally" role they describe emerges with the need to genuinely take part in the interaction for the benefit of the deaf consumer; the interpreter as an ally works *with* the deaf clients, not *for* them, "supporting their goals and interests as *they* see them" (Janzen and Korpinski 2005, 171; however, on the problem of allying, see Boeri 2015, 37). These roles emerge and blend in the practices of accessibility as well. For instance, audio describers who meet their audience face-to-face at live events, such as museum tours or theatre performances, may take a helper role as they instruct the partially sighted audience in practical matters, such as mobility on site, but shift to serve as a conduit as soon as the audio description begins. The role of ally is complicated because users of accessibility are so versatile and, consequently, problems may arise when there is more than one client for whom the service is designed and provided.

4. New debates/emerging issues

This section tracks ethically challenging issues that are emerging either in research or in practice. They deal with questions of equality in social, cultural, and political participation and have deep roots in the distribution of financial resources.

A Finnish service of cultural accessibility gives the following accessibility checklist to the organisers of cultural events, which can also be read from the general point of view of translation

and interpreting services management (Kulttuuria kaikille 2019, orig. in Finnish, reformulated into English by the authors of the article):

- Accessible attitudes: Are employees and service providers open-minded?

- Accessible communication: Is information provided in different ways?

- Accessible pricing: Are fees reasonable and scaled to different socio-economic groups?

- Accessible physical environment: Are the facilities physically accessible?

- Sensory accessibility: Have the ways in which people use their senses been considered?

- Cognitive accessibility: Have different types of learning and cognitive abilities been considered?

- Social access: Have the experiences and interests of different groups been considered?

In reflecting on the checklist in terms of some ethical discussions in T/I, we recognise familiar topics, such as the costs and the availability of the translation and interpreting service for minorities. Only the usual question of quality is missing from the checklist. It is not yet commonplace for organisers to anticipate the audience experience from the viewpoint of the audience's linguistic backgrounds, let alone from the perspective of the intermodal ways of communication needed in the audience. Thus, it is not always the question of the actors' negative attitudes but rather of the general awareness of these issues as a part of the stock-in-trade. The problem reflects the difficulty in perceiving the wide spectrum of recipients and their sensory or cognitive skills. Additional or alternative communication methods and modes are probably considered costly or time-consuming if their benefits are not realised as tools of social equality and common understanding. There is much more room for researchers to look into questions like who should take the role of supporting such efforts financially, or who should help with

technological solutions, assistive devices, and service platforms for audiences consisting of the differently abled, for example in the media.

Accessibility converges with linguistic rights in the context of access to information. In the face of mass migration and global crises, access to (foreign-language) information seems to have the position of a human right, and linguistic barriers need to be overcome in addition to physical and sensory ones (see Matamala and Orero 2016, 16). Different types of agents are involved in translation in the humanitarian context, ranging from human interpreters (Moser-Mercer 2015) to machine translation (Nurminen and Koponen 2020). For the former, issues such as interpreter roles and professional status come in to play. For the latter, the key questions are the (re-)definition of quality (e.g. "first-aid quality" where the translation is adequate enough to function as a linguistic first aid), the status of different languages in the development of machine translation (well-resourced, major languages vs. under-resourced, minor languages), and certainly also the responsibility of the provider offering a non-human, machine translator or interpreter; the consequences of false information must be carefully reflected upon before embarking on the use of raw machine translations (Nurminen and Koponen 2020).

The ethics of technology must also be considered (see the chapter translation technology and ethics in this volume). First of all, machines are substituting for human translators in some tasks, as happens in translation and interpreting overall. For instance, speech recognition is being used to render speech to text (Tiittula et al. 2018), and automatic machine vision methods are being developed to describe masses of images and videos (Braun and Starr 2019). Moreover, with sensory accessibility, we are dealing with broader effects, such as the danger that machine vision

is used to control people for hostile purposes (e.g. video surveillance). The development of automatic methods is in many ways dependent on human work. They are designed and programmed by people, and their learning requires vast amounts of human-produced data. For instance, speech recognition that is automatising intralingual subtitling may not perform well when its algorithms learn from inadequate data, such as using written language that is read out loud to teach recognition of colloquial speech (see Tiittula et al. 2018, 27). The development of automatic video description also suffers from the lack of data (Braun and Starr 2019, 14, 32). One obvious issue for professional ethics is whether translators and interpreters want to take part in the development of technologies that aim to replace human translators.

The social ethical question of the distribution of resources remains to be negotiated. Although conventions and legislation exist, ethical problems considering linguistic rights keep arising because of governmental cost reductions that affect minorities in law, healthcare, social care, and education. Many cost reductions relate to the public procurement of translation and interpreting services, and cost saving can lead to the use of cheaper, non-qualified interpreters. Therefore, one way of restricting access to the fulfilment of human rights is refusing to finance the use of competent interpreters. For example, after the Dutch government stopped the funding of qualified interpreters in health care in 2012, the use of interpreters reduced radically (de Boe 2015; Mikaba 2018). Generally, also the reception centres of asylum seekers have identified the lack of interpreters "as one of the main challenges about healthcare provision" (FRA 2016, 14) in European Union member states. One of the most important debates in this area is thus the price of human rights: at what level is one entitled to claim one's rights are to be fulfilled, if at all? Moreover, the concept of cost has many dimensions; it involves not only the financial costs but

also psychological and other immaterial costs, such as a decrease of working efficiency and exclusion from society (Gazzola and Grin 2013; Persson et al. 2015).

In the light of strengthening accessibility legislation and policies, one emerging issue is the definition of how much accessibility is ethically "enough" or required to cater for the human right of participation, and along with that, how limited resources should be divided. To illustrate, in Finland, hearing and visually impaired people are in unequal positions in spite of various national laws on the accessibility of broadcasting. While the proportion of intralingually subtitled programmes is mandated by law, the proportion of audio-described content is not (Hirvonen 2014, 22–23). Another example comes from Poland, where legislation obliges the broadcasting industry to make 10% of their content accessible to people with sensory impairments, but the specific proportions of how to divide this between the different modalities (subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing, audio description, signing) are lacking (Mliczak 2015, 204). In addition to legislation, local traditions may create divides between accessibility services. In Spain, the commercial and therefore free distribution of films with audio description is still not happening because of the controlling position of organisations that are used to distributing accessible products solely to their members (Sanz-Moreno 2017, 50). In Germany, a country where dubbing is the norm, it is the hearing impaired and Deaf who are generally quite dissatisfied with television accessibility (Bosse and Hasebrink 2016, 10). The opposite is likely to be true in countries like Finland where subtitling is the norm, because the regular interlingual subtitles that appear in foreign-language programmes can be used by anyone who needs the conversion of speech to text.

Finally, new debates are likely to surface from the fact that translation ethics is a problematic field: "none of the models is very clear about what the appropriately ethical action might be in a situation where values (or loyalties) clash" (Chesterman 2001, 142). Indeed, some research on accessibility seems to take the ethics of service as its context, while other research views it from the viewpoint of the ethics of representation. The ethics of representation and service can be hard to manage simultaneously, for instance when the there is a demand for a faithful transmission of information but the client or the client's representative (e.g. an NGO that is financing the accessibility service) prefers quantity over quality. What is more, the ethics of communication have been inadequate for the area of accessibility translation and interpreting, because it has thus far been conceptualised as a one-way service rather than as a relationship of equal cultures cooperating. Here, sign language interpreting is an exception, because Deaf communities are cultural and linguistic entities (see Schembri and Lucas 2015), and thus communication with the communities of spoken languages can be defined as intercultural. The aspect of user-centredness in accessibility practices and in reception research, however, points to the possibility of considering the ethics of communication in this context as well.

5. Conclusion: a summary and implications

In this chapter, we have discussed ethical viewpoints to accessibility and linguistic rights. Accessibility is bound to societal changes and is currently on the rise thanks to national and international policies. At the same time, accessibility is being redefined as beneficial not only for the differently abled—or people with specific needs—but for all.

Our focus has been on the research that has emerged or is emerging in the context of Translation Studies. While "giving access" is used in various definitions of translation in general, accessibility—in particular media accessibility—has become the topic of intense T/I research. We noted that research explicitly treating issues of ethics in accessibility is scarce so far, but several research topics have an ethical grounding: professionalisation, norms, reception/user-centeredness, and roles. More recent topics include censorship and the overcoming of linguistic barriers, and future research should include debates on the distribution of resources for accessibility, collaborative practices with users, and the connection between technology and accessibility. Possible clashes between ethical models in accessibility are also worth studying.

T/I is in fact a suitable framework for the ethical-philosophical contemplation of accessibility because a vital component in the theory of translation is "otherness." Giving "otherness" an existentially necessary role creates good grounds for accessibility: it is contrary to the position of "normality" that is popular in the philosophical tradition of ICT-related accessibility considerations (e.g. "the normal user," see Persson et al. 2015, 521). We believe that future theories of interpreted and translated communication should also include ethical considerations of accessibility. An example of the implications is the change of the interpreter's role from a neutral mediator to an "ally" with the differently abled customer to whom they give voice in the workplace (see Shaw 2014). This involves a discussion of the ethical premises of the theoretical positions that are used in defining accessibility, such as audience design, adjustment, and adaptation according to the recipient group, but also a critical review of well-founded translation theories (e.g. for the ethics of skopos theory, see Kopp 2012). Nevertheless, this transformation is bound to produce controversy. Accessibility challenges the disciplinary boundaries of T/I and widens the spectrum

of modalities and role expectations. An example of such a challenging practice is environmental description (Lahtinen and Palmer 2012): it is a communicative aid primarily targeted at people who are impaired both in sight and hearing. It is an utterly multimodal form of interpreting, as the interpreter's and the user's bodies function as communicative resources fully: language (spoken, signed and/or written), voice, and the body (e.g. pointing, touch, drawing and movement) are used in transmitting information from the environment (Lahtinen and Palmer 2012, 107). This kind of interpreting, just like audio description, which involves non-human entities as a source, challenge Translation Studies and invite debate about the boundaries of the discipline (cf. Mossop 2016; Pöchhacker 2018).

Apart from investigating accessibility in the framework of translators' ethics, T/I researchers and translator educators should draw from social ethics. The role of accessibility as enabling participation is in line with recent ethical notions of interpreting ethics, which consider interpreting services to benefit not only the market but society as a whole (Boéri 2015, 40), and the perspective of T/I ethics can include the social sphere along with the professional one (Drugan and Tipton 2017). Accessibility applies to all of the roles of translation listed by Drugan and Tipton (2017, 121): 1) increasing human understanding, 2) enabling communication, and 3) fostering survival. In crises, the role of accessibility is often about survival: guaranteeing enough communicative resources to cope during migration to a foreign land, for instance. In other cases, like in the access to cultural products through media accessibility, the question is not immediately fatal but more of increasing human understanding and enabling communication between people so as to improve quality of life. Accessibility as an activity thus converges with the ethical goal of 'how translation can support better living together' (Drugan and Tipton 2017, 121).

We may now conclude that the striving for accessibility can be considered ethical in the first place because it fosters the autonomy of groups that have been or are currently being marginalised in society. Accessibility is a way of improving the agency of people to meet the presupposition of self-determination and to make them active members—and not just beneficiaries—of society (see Eurich 2008; Persson et al. 2015). Other than this, if we are to accept the assumption that accessibility involves everyone and that anyone can be "impaired" under some circumstances, then defining accessibility as something for "*people* with specific needs" could well be replaced by communication for all for specific *purposes* (see Remael 2012; emphasis added). Outside T/I, scholars note that defining accessibility seems to be a continuing challenge (Persson et al. 2015). In reviewing international legislation and standards, Persson et al. (2015, 524) suggest the following new definition of accessibility: "the extent to which products, systems, services, environments and facilities are able to be used by a population with the widest range of characteristics and capabilities (e.g. physical, cognitive, financial, social and cultural, etc.), to achieve a specified goal in a specified context." In practice, the shift is already happening, as accessibility services are being used for various purposes and not only by disabled people. Thus, instead of perceiving accessibility as yet another cost, it can be seen as an opportunity to do things differently and as an effective way of working together. Differences in ability may be considered opportunities rather than problems. Enabling people to participate in culture, politics, and society creates new possibilities for societal development, as previously unknown resources and expertise are discovered. These are important societal issues that deserve more attention.

List of related topics in this volume

Public service interpreter, volunteering, non-professional translating and interpreting, human/ethics issues in fully computerised/automated communication.

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