Benjamins Translation Library

171

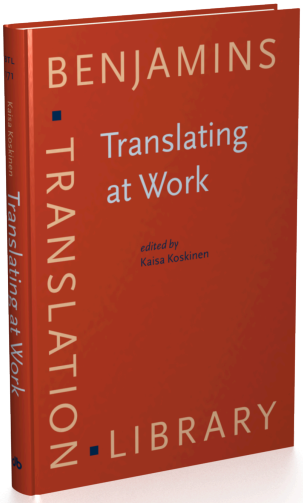
CHAPTER 2

Paraprofessional translators as translatorial agents

Kaisa Koskinen

https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.171.02kos

Available under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.



Pages 18–35 of
Translating at Work: Paraprofessional translation in organizations
Edited by Kaisa Koskinen
[Benjamins Translation Library, 171] 2026. vi, 361 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material, beyond the permissions granted by the Open Access license, written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights

John Benjamins Publishing Company

CHAPTER 2

Paraprofessional translators as translatorial agents

Kaisa Koskinen

Paraprofessional translation, that is, translatorial activities performed by people who are employed in another role but also act as translators, is an emerging area of interest in the interstices of translation studies, international business, and management and organization studies. In this chapter, the aim is to provide a summary of the work already done in these various fields and to discuss what is already known of this activity and its historical roots. One core feature of interlingual paraprofessional translation is its flexible nature. This has led to a desire to develop new terminology that would not be too restrictive in empirical analyses. Using Holz-Mänttäri's classic theory of translatorial action as a stepping stone, an overarching term of translatoriality is proposed to cover the whole spectrum of translation-relatedness one can encounter in multilingual workplaces. The usefulness of the concept of translatoriality is tentatively tested also for contexts where a "translation as knowledge transfer" approach is used, and the results are promising in the sense that features of translatoriality seem to map quite easily to previous findings of the nature of such translation processes.

Keywords: paraprofessional translation, paraprofessional translator, translatorial action, translatorial agent, Holz-Mänttäri, translatoriality, translanguaging, habitual translation

Background

Translation studies has for quite some time already operated with the binary conceptualization of professional vs. non-professional translation. Research into non-professional translation practices has enlarged the coverage of translatorial phenomena and brought forth a number of new perspectives (for example, the role of motivation) as well as shed new light on some old topics (e.g., norm-constructing processes and collaboration). However, binaries are also restrictive. In my own research, around the year 2014, I began to encounter several cases of

https://doi.org/10.1075/btl.171.02kos
Available under the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.© 2026 John Benjamins Publishing Company

translatorial activities that did not seem to fit in either box: 19th century bilingual council meetings of Tampere (i.a. Koskinen 2017), contemporary bilingual meetings of a regional body (Koskela, Koskinen and Pilke 2017) and, finally, the entire ecosystems of headquarters (HQ) and subsidiaries across the field of international business (Piekkari, Tietze and Koskinen 2020). People engaged in written and oral translation in these cases were not translation professionals, but they operated in some other professional or official capacity. It did not seem entirely accurate to define their mediation work as non-professional, as this was not a hobby or leisure time activity, and although it could sometimes be seen as a more or less volunteer activity, it was still volunteering within the organizational context and coloured by their other organizational roles. More typically, translation was not an optional choice to volunteer on. It was needed to move things forward and to keep everyone onboard, and doing the necessary translating was a role assumed by or assigned to some participants.

This uneasy fit has led to breaking the binary model with a third option and examining translation at work (i.e. in a professional setting) not performed by professional translators but by other employees (non-professionals with respect to translation but professionals in other fields) as a separate object of study. This tripartite division has been argued for by Sergei Tyulenev, in 2014. In the one paragraph on this third categorisation of paraprofessional translators (whom he also calls paratranslators), he discusses "those people whose jobs are not directly translation- or interpreting-related who do translate or interpret" (Tyulenev 2014, p. 75; see also Pym 2011, p. 85). Tyulenev mentions journalists and flight attendants as prime examples, and he also raises the question of how to deal with translational activities in multilingual communities. Building on his initial thoughts, it is argued here that it indeed is meaningful to single out translating at work (in jobs that are not directly translation- or interpreting-related) as a particular area of translation worthy of its own empirical examination and theorization (see also Koskinen 2025).

Further, contemporary workplaces are more often than not also multilingual communities and hence also translation spaces in the sense of needing to create multilingual practices for social purposes and to recognize that many members of staff are "living in translation" (Cronin 2006, p. 61). Moreover, it is rational to assume that in different professions (journalists, flight attendants and many more) translation needs emerge that are likely to share some features and be different in other aspects, as the goals and purposes of different professional contexts will colour the translation processes and practices in particular ways. That said, it is also important to accept that the categories are porous. For example, many trained translation professionals are employed in non-translator positions where they engage in paraprofessional translation, naturally bringing their pro-

fessional translation competences to play, and some of the paraprofessional translation work is indeed entirely voluntary, and therefore in many ways close to non-professional translation practices.

Undoubtedly, all translation — professional, paraprofessional and non-professional — have some unifying features, but there are also significant defining differences that warrant separate treatment. By definition, paraprofessional translation takes place at work, and this creates a number of constraints as organizational roles and hierarchies, contractual issues and management powers may restrict the agency of the paraprofessional translator (for a more detailed discussion see Koskinen 2025). At the other end of the organizational hierarchy, high status can be used to leverage significant translatorial freedom and agency, as was exemplified by a subsidiary manager's way of using translation as a tool to resist HQ control in a case study by Logemann and Piekkari (2015). Norms and ethics of professional translation are not of primary importance for paraprofessional translators, perhaps even not known to them, as they have not been acculturated to these, neither in their training nor at work. Instead, they may be strongly bound by some other professional ethics that guide their professional conduct and, by extension, also their translation work related to the aims and goals of the organization.

Since the mid-2010s, a number of insights into paraprofessional translation have already been accumulated. The first of these is the realization, a surprise to me at the time, that a significant part of the existing research into paraprofessional translation work in organizations had and has been done outside translation studies, in international business (IB), management and organization studies (MOS). Already in the 1990s, it had been recognized in IB literature that some employees serve as 'language nodes' (Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999) and engage in translation work beyond their formal job role (Piekkari et al. 2013).

A significant amount of research on the phenomenon that we call paraprofessional translation has been published by IB and MOS scholars, with more or less explicit engagement with TS research. Much of existing research is interview-based, following the disciplinary traditions of these fields, and often the role of the interlingual element of the translation process is largely overshadowed by other cultural and organizational boundaries the translators are crossing. For example, an insightful study of translating corporate social responsibility reporting from headquarters to foreign subsidiaries by "subsidiary translators" (Gutierrez-Huerter et al. 2020) uses interviews rather than the resulting reports as their main source of data and overlooks the role of crossing a linguistic divide as part of the translation process. This lacuna indicates that there is a wealth of new insights to be uncovered in HQ — subsidiary relations by tapping into the cultural, political and strategic translation solutions via a close reading of interlingual processing of

company documents (Koskinen 2020). This is where collaboration and interdisciplinarity may come in handy: translation scholars are trained to execute textual and comparative analyses, and, in return, they can benefit from the in-depth contextual understanding and interview analysis skills of business studies scholars.

Some studies have begun to look at individual translation solutions and to analyse the micro-processes of interlingual translation and their micropolitical consequences. One prime example is Ciuk, James and Śliwa (2019). They build explicitly on Holz-Mänttäri's theory of translatorial action (I will return to it below) and skopos theory in analysing their data on a translation of an HQ mission statement into a meaningful, localized version for the subsidiary. The translation was collaboratively produced in a group meeting, and the researchers were able to observe its gradual emergence as well as all the discussions and debates around it.

In another study that uses translation as a dataset and explicitly refers to translation studies, Tietze, Tansley and Helienek (2017) focused on the specificities of the local, receiving culture, and the agentic role of the paraprofessional translator in addressing the 'discursive void' that characterised the local Slovak experiences with respect to talent management, a US consultancy-based, English-language concept and practice. In the successive interviews with the translator, they discussed the translated material in detail, making visible the difficulties in finding ways to express core elements of the practice to a culture and language where it was novel, and which therefore did not have the vocabulary or existing semantic frameworks for understanding it. The results highlight the importance of the translatorial competences and the interventionist role of the paraprofessional translator for the success of the translation process.

Other scholars have framed their projects with other interdisciplinary constellations beyond TS to take stock of multilingual practices. A recent study of a Kazakhstan bank (Koo & Kim 2024), for example, uses sociolinguistics as its lens, but a reader attuned to identifying paraprofessional translation will recognize many contact points (see Chapter 3 in this volume for a more detailed discussion). Koo and Kim raise the issue of inclusiveness and discuss the questions of power dynamics and language practices. In today's diverse workplaces, organizations ignore the benefits of flexible multilingual and translatorial practices at their own risk and peril (Back 2024). Natalie Wilmot and Susanne Tietze (2020) discuss the wider political ramifications of prioritizing English and overlooking translation in another context of work: knowledge production by IB and MOS researchers themselves. In their meta-analysis, they encountered the invisibility of translation but also identified a handful of papers which recognize the situated nature of texts, critique the dominant mechanistic approaches and advocate cultural and political approaches to translation.

What we already know about paraprofessional translators?

As research findings gradually accumulate, the contours of paraprofessional translation are becoming more discernible. We can already confidently ascertain that it is a widespread phenomenon, and it has a long history. In fact, it is not too far-fetched to argue that the scribes who in 196 BC engraved the Egyptian decree found in Rosetta stone in two languages, Greek and Egyptian, and in three writing systems, hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek, were probably working as paraprofessional translators alongside their occupation as scribes. Much is not known of who these scribes were and how they viewed their translation work. The current focus tends to lie on another set of paraprofessional translators: scholars who have been able to unlock the mysteries of hieroglyphs by uncovering the translation relations between the languages involved.

There is reason to believe paraprofessional translation has been going on throughout history, as people in different occupations have had to operate across language boundaries. For example, in her extensive study of the translating and interpreting practices in the multilingual Habsburg monarchy (1848–1918), Michaela Wolf (2012, p. 90, 103) makes a distinction between institutionalized translation and habitual translation. At the outset, this binary may seem to repeat the professional vs. non-professional translation dichotomy, but this would be an anachronistic interpretation. As her description demonstrates, much of the habitual, everyday translation work was paraprofessional by nature. She (p. 90) defines it as a communicatively oriented and often starkly asymmetrical activity taking place at the lower echelons of the society, often orally rather than in written from. Additionally, she lists (p. 91–92) several (mostly female) service occupations as prime examples of habitual translation domains, for example, handmaidens, cooks, washerwomen, wet nurses and childminders, prostitutes, stableboys and craftsmen. Low status, the intimacy of the multilingual encounters and orality are among explanations for the lack of remaining documentation of their habitual paraprofessional translations, and evidence needs to be gathered from memoirs and contemporary accounts.

Pertinent for our current discussion, the professionalization of translation was only emerging in 19th century Europe, and institutional translation at officially bilingual schools, in the multilingual army and at different levels of the administration of the monarchy was also often paraprofessional by nature. Hierarchies and asymmetricity are discernible also in these domains, for example, in the Habsburg army where the officers were predominantly German (almost 80 percent), whereas the troops were typically multicultural and multilingual, with regiments operating with two to four languages (Wolf 2012, p. 106–107).

Wolf (2012, p. 112) notes that within the administration of the multilingual monarchy where constant translation was a necessity, translation practices lacked explicit regulations and can be seen as a mixture of habitual and institutional translation. In other words, much of it was realized through paraprofessional translation and executed according to the conventions of a particular office. In a manner recognizable from more contemporary discussions of translation, the necessity to keep minutes in eight languages simultaneously, for example, was seen as a mere technical problem (p. 112). The most institutionalized and professionalized domains of translation and interpreting of the Habsburg monarchy were the courts and the judicial system. The list of languages needed between 1864 and 1918 contains 29 items (in addition to German), and more than 7000 translators were known to have offered their services during that same time frame (Wolf 2012, p. 132–133). Importantly, they too were predominantly, if not exclusively, paraprofessionals, or freelancers if you wish, working also as advocates, notaries, consuls, teachers and others (p. 138). Similar accounts of paraprofessional translation and gradual institutionalization and professionalization of translation across 19th century Europe abound (see D'Hulst and Koskinen eds., 2020).

Translation as an emergent practice

Regardless of whether one is looking at the communication between official authorities and citizens, or contexts of more habitual translation, the realities on the ground are complex, as Meylaerts has pointed out:

> If we really want to understand if, how, and when authorities and citizens were able to communicate with each other in 19th-century Belgium (and elsewhere), we have to deal with a myriad of sometimes contradictory and unequally applied language and translation rules, practices and beliefs. We therefore need to study processes of interaction that enable us to understand the complex and paradoxical relations between society and individual, between the local and the central/global, between agency and structure, between translation and non-translation, between official and unofficial translation, between translation and other transfer processes. We need to study translation as an emergent phenomenon, constitutive of social reality. (Meylaerts 2017, p. 45)

This permanent stage of emergence is a constituent factor in all social practices and institutions. Translation is also a contextually and culturally defined practice. As in all translation, the perennial question arises in paraprofessional translation: What is the relevant similarity between source and target that allows for the interpretation that we are dealing with translation? What is translation, and what is

not? In TS, the question of what qualifies as translation has been asked across decades and answered in several ways. As 'translation' is not a natural category but a human-made and contextual one, it is to be expected that it can be understood in different ways in different times and places, and for different purposes. A classic definition from descriptive translation studies (Toury 2012) is that translation is what the target culture accepts as a translation, that is, if the receiving culture considers that the criterion of relevant similarity has been met (Chesterman 1997, p. 62) and the target text is acceptable for the new audience. This already implies that different cultures may have different ideas about what qualifies as translation. Maria Tymoczko (2007, pp. 68–77) has continued this line of thought from a multilingual perspective and argued that different languages have different meanings for their word for 'translation'. This has been challenged later by Kobus Marais (2020), who argues that while this may have been true earlier, in a less globalized world, the current understanding in all or most languages has become aligned with the Western concept of translation.

The spread of a unified Western understanding — the translation of 'translation' across cultures into a more homogeneous understanding — may well have taken place, and translation studies has probably participated in it. Still, I argue that we do not have one unified translation concept even within any one culture (or within the discipline of TS) but rather a plethora of understandings on where the relevant similarity is met and where it is not. I have therefore found Sandra Halverson's (2000) work on translation as a prototypical concept very fitting for paraprofessional translation contexts. The prototype approach accepts the premise that translation as a practice is culturally and organizationally embedded but also argues that there is a core that is accepted by most. At the same time it also acknowledges that the boundary between translation and non-translation is fuzzy, and that individuals may have different ideas of how far it can be stretched. There is no reason to assume, for example, that professional translators form an entirely unified group in terms of where they draw this line; it is even more clear that paraprofessional translators do not all share the same understanding of what counts as translation.

Indeed, it is one of the premises of this volume that paraprofessional translation with its flexible practices, agentic and strategic actors, and its often limited institutionalization and management efforts, is likely to be a rich source of observations about varied translatorial practices and resources. An overarching concept of *translatoriality* is proposed as a tool for capturing a wide range of translatorial phenomena, also those that are fleeting, fragmentary or alternate flexibly with other multilingual resources.

Translatoriality: How to account for habitual translation?

Wolf's historical study of translation practices before the institutionalization and professionalization projects of translation and interpreting is indicative of the kinds of phenomena one encounters in data and of the necessities of redefining and renaming that may ensue. What she needed to contemplate and redefine in the historical context she was researching is parallel to the contemporary scenes of paraprofessional translation. First, in many domains, the contemporary professional dualism of oral versus written translation is not necessarily a significant one. In many contexts of mediation, getting understood and passing the information are more important than the modes of delivery, and a multimodal mixture of verbal, visual and embodied forms may be used. In German, *Translation* as an umbrella term that covers both written (*Übersetzung*) and oral translation (*Dolmetschen*) allows a more flexible conceptualization than in many other languages in which a distinction between oral, written and other modes is more constrained (Wolf 2012, p. 103).

Another distinction is in the kinds of communicative situations that the term 'translation' is seen to cover. In contexts beyond the professional project, observing "translation in the wild" as performed by natural translators, the researcher soon realises that much of the activity that appears to contain translatorial elements takes place outside a confined understanding of translation as a clearly demarcated interlingual activity. In everyday life, habitual translation is often embedded in a plethora of multilingual practices.

In the study of multilingualism, the co-existence of several languages has been conceptualized in a number of ways. Previous research on bilingual and multilingual practices has from the 1950s onwards been conducted in the framework of *code-switching* (and code-mixing), that is, observing speakers who alternate between more than one code (understood as language, dialect, accent, slang etc.) within an interaction. The first ideas were closely related to the advances of information technology and signal processing, hence the technical sounding label of codes (Auer 1998, p. 27–28). An alternative, ethnomethodologically oriented approach gained in popularity since the 1970s, and it sees code-switching as a resource for creating communicative and social meaning, for building group identities and remarking ethnic boundaries (Auer 1998, p. 1–2).

Although it was originally emphasized that codes are not to be equated with languages, this soon became the received understanding on which research on code-switching was based, much of it within bilingual studies where this collapsing of code into language made perfect sense. For understanding translation as part of multilingual conversations, this reduction appears quite useful: in those cases where language is shifted to another and content is repeated across language

boundaries, code-switching would appear to be a form of translation, either by the speaker or by another participant in the conversation. This kind of translatorial competence that often manifests in situational and unsystematic forms of translation has not, however, received much attention in code-switching research. Instances of fragmentary translation often abound in data, but the focus of analysis has largely been elsewhere (Kolehmainen et al. 2015, p. 373). Self-translation, which is quite common in code switching, has in mainstream code-switching research often been conceptualized as reiteration (cf. Harjunpää 2017; Harjunpää & Mäkilähde 2016).

In recent studies of multilingualism, many new terms have been introduced to cover the various practices in which speakers operate with and in-between different languages and styles. Vallejo and Dooly (2020, p. 2) have listed "plurilingual modes, heteroglossia, languaging, translingual practices, translanguaging, transglossia, crossing, codemeshing, polylanguaging, metrolingualism and transidiomatic practices". They argue that this proliferation of new terms "reflects a generalized interest — and excitement even — for acknowledging and theoretically operationalising the complexity of language use in an increasingly connected and globalized world" (p. 2). From the perspective of studying the multilingual practices of workplaces, this excitement is easy to share, but the sheer amount of seemingly overlapping terms can feel bewildering.

Particularly relevant for our purposes here is the term *translanguaging*, which has been gaining popularity during the past decade, originally in the context of studying multilingual classrooms but expanding to other social contexts as well. Of particular relevance is research on translanguaging in the workplace. Jonsson and Blåsjö (2020), for example, used linguistic ethnography to observe how Swedish office workers operated bilingually in Swedish and English, alternating between monolingual and translanguaging modes to address both current and future audiences. They emphasize the ability to translanguage as a necessary and valuable competence at contemporary work settings.

The way Jonsson and Blåsjö describe their data indicates that translanguaging is often translatorial. For example, they observe that "[f]lexible translanguaging practices, such as writing a PowerPoint in Swedish and quickly being able to present it in English without preparation, are thus expected in these work settings" (2020, p. 366). For a translation scholar this is one kind of translation, not far from prima vista translation but with a twist of self-translation. In other words, these practices are recognizable as translation activities but complex to define with existing terminology largely developed for professional translation. Reporting on a linguistic ethnography at a butcher's stall, Creese, Blackledge and Hu (2017) focus on the distinction between translation and translanguaging. They begin by defining translation loosely as an activity that involves source and target texts and (func-

tional) equivalence, and translanguaging as an ideological process and as a strategic use of linguistic resources. The definitions are quite complicated in terms of comparative analysis as one does not rule out the other. In practice, Creese et al. use the label of translation restrictively for a rather straightforward activity of parallel interlingual reiteration, and give translanguaging the role of the "hero" of the story, seeing it as the practice that enables conviviality and collectivity in creating a vivid multilingual market space. For a translation scholar, this is an unnecessary reduction of the resources that translation can offer in communication.

Researchers who promote translanguaging tend to emphasise its creative and transformative nature (Baynham & King Lee 2019) and use it as an overarching term that covers all kinds of plurilingual, pluricultural and pluricodal communicative practices. Translanguaging has been a trendy and also fruitful conceptualization for many multilingual research purposes. It is therefore not too surprising that several commentators have over the past years asked me why I have not employed it to denote flexible plurilingual practices in paraprofessional translation and beyond, and why have I instead repeatedly proposed yet another term, a neologism of *translatoriality*. Indeed, for a decade or so my research has frequently taken me to areas in which it has felt easier to account for the empirical evidence by moving away from translating and/or interpreting and to employ a more open-ended categorisation. The first of them was a small-scale study of what I ended up calling "translatedness" in the linguistic landscape of a plurilingual and multicultural suburb of Tampere (Koskinen 2012). Together with my colleagues, I then worked to categorize the continuums of *translatoriality* in everyday life (Kolehmainen et al. 2015), in making sense of the translatorial practices of a contemporary bilingual meeting (Koskela et al. 2017), in a historical context (Koskinen 2017), and in the foreign language classroom (Koskinen & Kinnunen 2022). Among these, the contemporary bilingual meeting is clearly an example of paraprofessional translation at work.

But why not translanguaging at work? For research on practices that are translatorial in nature, translanguaging poses some difficulties: (1) its scope is so open-ended that it is difficult to delimit what it would not cover, and to study translatoriality, one needs to differentiate it from non-translatorial mixing of codes; and (2) while creativity and transformation are qualities that often accompany translation, it (as many other plurilingual resources) can also be used mechanistically, and a concept that does not also account for that or value habitual usage would be detrimental to a full understanding of the phenomenon of paraprofessional translation.

It is therefore argued here that translanguaging is too open-ended for the present purposes. But *translation* does not feel entirely adequate either. If we also accept the idea put forward in the prototype theory of translation that people do

not have one culturally shared translation concept in mind but that it also varies individually from a more narrow and more restricted one to a more flexible one, it is worth considering that introducing a new term will create space for retheorizing translational practices.[1] This is the rationale behind speaking about *translatorial* practices that produce *translatoriality*. The conceptualization is intended as a reminder that analytic observations are focused on empirical evidence including but also extending beyond prototypical (Western, modern, profession-oriented) understanding of translation. In other words, translation *is* translatorial, in the wide sense of the word.

Translatoriality and *translatorial practices* are directly linked to Justa Holz-Mänttäri's classic theory of translatorial action (*Translatorisches Handeln*, 1984). This theory focuses on the various actors and actor roles involved and therefore resonates with the largely people-oriented approaches developed so far both in TS and in language-sensitive research in business studies. Rather than "translation", it discusses the communicative process of creating information offers that successfully cross the linguistic and cultural boundaries and are able to fulfil the situational communicative goals of the actors involved. It therefore supports an open-ended concept of translation that is free from any expectations of a straightforward similarity between the source language and target language renderings (often summarized into an equivalence paradigm). This fits the empirical realities often found at workplaces. The agentic and goal-oriented approach is combined with a collaborative contextualization that places the translator within a network of experts, each with their roles. In Holz-Mänttäri's model the professional translator is the expert on multilingual communication; in the case of paraprofessional translation, this role is more fluid and blends with other areas of expertise. Although Holz-Mänttäri's explicit aim was to forward the status of professional translators as experts in multilingual communication, the basic tenets of her model have also been used to map nonprofessional and paraprofessional translation practices both within translation studies (Koskinen 2017) and beyond (Ciuk, James & Śliwa 2019). It provides a conceptual framework to describe and discuss non-professional, paraprofessional and professional translation alike: *translatorial* action consists of *translatorial* practices (such as translatorial translanguaging, if you like) which in turn produce *translatoriality*.

1. I have elsewhere (Koskinen 2025) argued that changing terminology may also support the researchers' ability to break free of their own preconceived ideas of what is and what is not translation. During fieldwork, the concept of translatoriality can help the researcher to create a mindset that is alert to all kinds of micro-moments of translation that the participants perhaps do not conceptualize as translating and the researcher may also overlook.

Paraprofessional versus professional translation

The professionalization of translation is largely a 20th-century phenomenon in Europe. It is not too surprising that paraprofessional translation still coexists alongside professionalized practices in modern societies. In an overview of translation in contemporary business contexts, Tietze et al. (2017) note that this is a regular activity by "normal" employees (I understand this to mean those who are not translation professionals), but that it often remains hidden. But once they have started to search for these kinds of activities, researchers have located paraprofessional translators at all organizational levels and in all occupations. As paraprofessional translation is often not too controlled (see Chapter 6 on translation policy in this volume), the paraprofessional translators can exercise significant amounts of agency, as was the case in the examples of the consultant-cum-translator and the subsidiary manager above.

Some paraprofessional translators do have background in translator training and may have previously worked as professional translators; many others are natural translators. Translation can be approached flexibly, and this can lead to agile and inclusive communicative strategies, as in the case of the chair of a bilingual meeting reported in Koskela et al. 2017. Crossing language boundaries is an innate skill, a natural part of multilingual competence, Harris has argued (1977, p. 96–114; Harris & Sherwood 1978). Paraprofessional and habitual translation largely rely on this kind of natural translation skill. Naturally, some are more gifted than others. Paraprofessionals' competences and their translation awareness can therefore vary greatly, both between individuals and across different tasks and contexts. This is a significant difference to professional translation work where consistency, accuracy and reliability are highly valued and fostered through tools that support systematic collaborative output. Professional translators' main focus is on producing translations. In contrast, paraprofessional translation is by definition a multitasking effort, embedded in other professional goals and tasks that are often prioritized over translation. Once translation becomes routinized and habitualized within the organization, is not necessarily given constant reflection as other, more pressing needs for cognitive effort take priority (Jakkula, forthcoming). It is also less a fixed identity and more a skill one resorts to in order to succeed in one's work tasks.

Modern day paraprofessional translators have many kinds of technologies at their disposal. Within the past decade, automated translation tools have radically democratized the availability of translation-specific support. According to Mary Nurminen's (2021, p. 24) conservative calculations, professional translators accounted for a staggering 0.03% of the 1 billion users of machine translation (MT) apps. Since then, uptake by other users (all professional translators were

already assumed to be users in Nurminen's calculations) has likely only increased, and various AI solutions based on large language models are currently making headway in offices and workplaces as well. We can safely assume that quite a few of the estimated 1 billion users of 2021 were using MT at work. One third of the respondents to Nurminen's survey of users of one such tool had reported using it for work (Nurminen 2021, p. 90). Extrapolating this to the estimated one billion users of all MT tools would result in 333,333,333 paraprofessional translators who at least sometimes rely on AI translation tools. Regardless of how much weight is put on the exact numbers, it is certain that this is not a fringe phenomenon. What is also known is that an image of mindless usage of free and unsafe MT software is far from the full picture. Some of these MT users have been working with MT for years and developed sophisticated systems of ethical usage and risk management. For example, Nurminen's case study of patent professionals (Nurminen 2019) reveals how MT can be integrated into patent professionals' work processes in a carefully considered manner, with systems in place to also flag where and when a professional translator needs to be brought into the picture.

Interlingual translation vs. knowledge transfer

Above, the discussion has remained within the area of interlingual translation, and the conceptualizations of translanguaging, code-switching and translatoriality have all revolved mainly around linguistic operations. In the context of this volume, one also needs to consider the other understanding of translation that is less concerned with crossing language boundaries and more interested in the transfer of knowledge or practices. How does the concept of paraprofessional translation, developed primarily within the framework of interlingual translation, fare with the contexts of crossing other kinds of boundaries that require reinterpretation, modulation, or even manipulation to allow for the travel of ideas or processes? To what extent is this latter kind of translation understandable and analyzable through theories and conceptualizations developed for interlingual translation?

One tentative answer can be found by analysing Røvik's reading of translation theory and his interpretation of the emerging translator image, developed for interlingual translation, within the context of knowledge transfer. He argues that a "persistent and strong focus on the role of the translator" is one of the most salient features of translation studies (2023, p. 85), and then moves on to define the translator role he perceives relevant for knowledge transfer. There are several similarities between his organizational translator and the kind of paraprofessional translator envisioned in this volume. First, in contrast to professional interlingual

translators, the organizational translator role is only an aspect of the role, and the circulation of ideas is something that these translators do "while performing other explicit and recognized roles such as top managers, consultants etc." (Røvik 2023, p. 93). He continues that this role may be assigned by others, and that the translators themselves do not necessarily conceptualize what they are doing as translation (p. 93). Second, these organizational translators are often agentic and pursue their own goals (as opposed to the more neutral mediation role of professional translators) (p. 94). Third, in TS translators have often been depicted as solo actors, but organizational translators often operate collectively (p. 94). Based on this description of knowledge transfer translators, it is feasible to assume a lot of common ground between organizational translator and paraprofessional translator roles, to the extent of even arguing that in empirical fieldwork we can potentially identify Røvik's organizational translators as being the same actors as the paraprofessional translators discussed here. On the other hand, it may be useful to avoid easy conflation of terminologies too soon (see also Chapter 4 on boundary spanners in this volume).

Seeing knowledge transfer from the perspective of organizational translation is a reminder that an interlingual perspective to translation is only one possibility, and not necessarily to most prominent one. Broader conceptualizations of translation are not new to TS, but their prominence is clearly on the rise, together with a similar rise in the adjective 'translational' and the notion of translationality. The word translationality is not used much in this volume, and I have myself intentionally steered away from it, choosing to promote the concept of translatoriality instead. But it needs to be acknowledged that the terms translationality and translational turn, and perhaps even more so the adjective translational have been circulating in TS for quite some time (i.a. Bachmann-Medick, 2009; Robinson, 2017; Blumczynski, 2023) and acquired many meanings, often loosely defined. Mainly, however, they have been used to denote translational processes beyond or outside the linguistic realms. This typical usage might be well suited for the knowledge transfer or epistemic translation processes that have been intensively studied in IB and MOS literature, but it sits rather uncomfortably with the need to recognize and name small-scale and ephemeral interlingual movements that often take place below the radar of participants' translation concepts.

To create a terminological chain that can somehow cover the full spectrum of phenomena that scholars within and beyond translation studies have been willing to cover under the umbrella term of translation, we might at least tentatively propose the following: in addition to the contemporary, Western, big-T translation practices, recognized as such by T & I professionals and target culture receivers, we may wish to account for interlingual, translatorial practices — small-t translation (see Chapter 11). This we can call translatoriality. We may also

wish to acknowledge the elements of cultural translation intertwined with interlingual translation but then also further acknowledge that translation, or translational practices, can also take shape outside of the lingual realm and sometimes without agentic translators. This we might wish to call translationality.

It may well be that reconceptualizations such as translatoriality, or even the much more widely used translationality, will end up unnecessary if the prevailing prototypical translation concept in the fields in question accommodates easily to a spectrum from duplicating to translatorial microactions. It may also be that the prototypical understanding of translation, a concept currently on the move also in translation studies, will become extended enough to make the separate conceptualization of translatoriality redundant. As several scholars within TS engage in actively widening the scope of research to interepistemic, post-human and biosemiotic spheres, and as many more fields engage with the concept of translation from their own unique perspectives (see Marais ed., 2022), and as TS knowledge is taken to other fields to renew their theorization base (Røvik, 2023), the previously prototypical ideas of translation may give way to much more flexible interpretations. It may well become meaningful to argue, in a second-generation Touryan definition, that anything that can be illuminated by applying a translation research perspective and methodology can be understood as translation. Translatoriality may then remain a curiosity of interlingual translation, or it may be dropped entirely as an unnecessary conceptual complication.

Be that as it may, these two kinds of translation — interlingual and organizational — are two sides of the same coin, two intertwined ways of realising paraprofessional translation in organizations (Piekkari et al., 2020).

References

Auer, P. 1998. Introduction: Bilingual Conversation revisited. In P. Auer (Ed.), *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity* (pp. 1–24). Taylor & Francis.

Bachmann-Medick, D. (2009). Introduction: The Translational Turn. Trans K. Sturge. *Translation Studies* 2(1), 2–16.

Back, H. (2024). *Skilled yet minoritized: An equality, diversity, and inclusion perspective on skilled migrants in multilingual organizations.* PhD. Aalto University. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-64-2041-7

Baynham, M. & King Lee, T. (2019). *Translation and Translanguaging.* Routledge.

Blumczynski, P. (2023). *Experiencing Translationality. Material and Metaphorical Journeys.* Routledge.

Chesterman, A. (1997). *Memes of translation. The spread of ideas in translation theory*. John Benjamins.

Ciuk, S., James, P., & Śliwa, M. (2019). Micropolitical Dynamics of Interlingual Translation Processes in an MNC Subsidiary. *British Journal of Management*, *30*(4), 926–942.

Creese, A., Blackledge, A., & Hu, R. (2017). Translanguaging and translation: the construction of social difference across city spaces. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *21*(7), 841–852.

Cronin, M. 2006. *Translation and identity*. London and New York: Routledge.

D'Hulst, L. & Koskinen, K. (Eds.) (2020). *Translating in Town*. Bloomsbury.

Gutierrez-Huerter, O.G., Moon, J., Gold, S., & Chapple, W. (2020). Micro-processes of translation in the transfer of practices from MNE headquarters to foreign subsidiaries: The role of subsidiary translators. *Journal of International Business Studies 51*, 389–413.

Halverson, S. (2000). Prototype effects in the "translation" category. In A. Chesterman, N. Gallardo San Salvador and Y. Gambier (Eds.) *Translation in context. Selected papers from the EST Congress, Granada 1998* (pp. 3–16). John Benjamins.

Harjunpää, K. (2017). *Translatory practices in everyday conversation: Bilingual mediating in Finnish — Brazilian Portuguese interaction*. PhD. University of Helsinki. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-3227-7

Harjunpää, K. & Mäkilähde, A. (2016). Reiteration: at the intersection of code-switching and translation. *Multilingua*, *35*(2), 163–201.

Harris, B. (1977). The importance of natural translation. *Working Papers in Bilingualism* 12. 96–114.

Harris, B. and Sherwood, B. (1978). Translating as an innate skill. In D. Gerver & H.W. Sinaiko (Eds.), *Language interpretation and communication*, pp. 155–170. Plenum Press.

Holz-Mänttäri, J. (1984). *Translatorisches Handeln. Theorie und Methode*. Suomalainen tiedeakatemia.

Jakkula, M.A. (forthcoming). Paraprofessional translators' fluctuation along the "becoming aware–awareness–habituation" cyclical continuum. In T. Escudero, T. Kinnunen & P. Kuusi (Eds.), *Exploring Translation (Un)awareness*. Routledge.

Jonsson, C. & Blåsjö, M. (2020). Translanguaging and multimodality in workplace texts and writing, *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 17(3), 361–381.

Kolehmainen, L., Koskinen, K. & Riionheimo, H. (2015). Arjen näkymätön kääntäminen: translatorisen toiminnan jatkumot [Invisible everyday translation: Continua of translatorial action.] *Virittäjä*, 3, 372–400.

Koo, E., & Kim, A. (2024). Linguistic Inclusiveness in Organizations: A Russophone Bank in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Academy of Management Journal*.

Koskela, M., Koskinen, K. & Pilke, N. (2017). Bilingual formal meeting as a context of translatoriality. *Target* 29 (3), 464–485.

Koskinen, K. (2012). Linguistic Landscape as a Translational Space. The Case of Hervanta. In J. Vuolteenaho, A. Newby, L. Ameel, and M. Scott (Eds.), *Language, Space and Power: Urban Entanglements*, COLLeGIUM 13, pp. 73–92. https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/38600

Koskinen, K. (2017). Translatorial Action in Non-Professional Translation Communities: The Tampere City Council in 1875. In K. Taivalkoski-Shilov, L. Tiittula, & M. Koponen (eds), *Communities of Translation and Interpreting*, pp. 37–61. Éditions québécoises de l'œuvre.

Koskinen, K. (2020). Translatorial Linguistic Ethnography in Organizations. In S. Horn, P. Lecomte, & S. Tietze (Eds.), *Managing Multilingual Workplaces: Methodological, Empirical and Pedagogic Perspectives*, pp. 60–77. Routledge.

Koskinen, K. (2025). Translating at work. Identifying and contextualizing paraprofessional translatoriality in organizations. In Rogl, R., Schlager, D. & Risku, H. (eds.). *Field Research on Translation and Interpreting*. pp. 36–54. John Benjamins.

Koskinen, K. & Kinnunen, T. (2022). Mediation in FL learning: from translation to translatoriality. *Stridon* 2 (1), 5–29.

Logemann, M. & Piekkari, R. (2015). Localize or local lies? The power of language translation in the multinational corporation, *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 11 (1), 30–53.

Marais, K. (2020). Eleven different names, one practice: towards a phenomenology of translation. *Perspectives*, 29. 1–15.

Marais, K. (Ed.) (2022). *Translation Beyond Translation Studies*. Bloomsbury.

Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. (1999). Adopting a common corporate language: IHRM implications. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 10(3), 377–390.

Meylaerts, R. (2017). Studying language and translation policies in Belgium: What can we learn from a complexity theory approach? *Parallèles* 29(1), 45–59.

Nurminen, M. (2019). Decision-making, Risk, and Gist Machine Translation in the Work of Patent Professionals. In T. Utsuro, K. Sudoh & T. Tsunakawa (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 8th Workshop on Patent and Scientific Literature Translation*, pp. 32–42. European Association for Machine Translation.

Nurminen, M. (2021). *Investigating the Influence of Context in the Use and Reception of Raw Machine Translation*. PhD. Tampere University.

Piekkari, R., Welch, D. E., Welch, L. S., Peltonen, J. P., & Vesa, T. (2013). Translation behaviour: An exploratory study within a service multinational. *International Business Review*, 22(5), 771–783.

Piekkari, R., Tietze, S. & Koskinen, K. (2020). Metaphorical and Interlingual Translation in Moving Organizational Practices Across Languages. *Organization Studies* 41(9), 1311–1332.

Pym, A. (2011). Translation research terms: a tentative glossary for moments of perplexity and dispute. In A. Pym (Ed.), *Translation Research Projects 3*, Intercultural Studies Group. 75–110.

Robinson, D. (2017). *Translationality. Essays in the Translational-Medical Humanities*. Routledge.

Røvik, K.A. (2023). *A translation theory of knowledge transfer: Learning across organizational borders*. Oxford University Press.

Tietze, S., Tansley, C. and Helienek, E. (2017). The translator as agent in talent management knowledge transfer, *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* 17 (1), 151–169.

Toury, G. (2012[1995]). *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. John Benjamins.

Tymoczko, M. (2007). *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*. St. Jerome.

Tyulenev, S. (2014). *Translation and Society. An Introduction*. Routledge.

Vallejo, C., & Dooly, M. (2020). Plurilingualism and translanguaging: emergent approaches and shared concerns. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 23 (1), 1–16.

Wilmot, N. & Tietze, S. (2020). Englishization and the Politics of Translation. *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 19 (1), 46–69.

Wolf, M. (2012). *Die vielsprachige Seele Kakaniens. Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der Habsburgermonarchie 1948 bis 1918*. Böhlau Verlag.