



## Final report of the research project

# Extended translation: Socio-cognitive translation processes in the workplace

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## Project summary

The aim of the project was to study socio-cognitive translation processes, i.e. the thought processes and interactions of translators and translation project managers in the workplace.

Particular focus was placed on the influences of technology and the social environment on their work and decision processes. Various translation-related aspects – such as text production, terminology management and computer-assisted collaboration with other players relevant to a translation project (e.g. colleagues, clients, line managers) – were studied from the perspective of current approaches in translation studies and cognitive science.

The project differed from traditional, experiment-based translation process research, which is frequently conducted in a laboratory setting or uses students as study participants. Instead, the project took an ethnographic approach based on several workplace studies: the daily work routines of translators, translation project managers and people in their professional environment were observed directly in the workplace. These observations in the field were augmented by interviews with the participants to obtain insights into their perspectives, expectations and attitudes with regard to their work and their networks. The research questions were developed in part in conjunction with the participants, particularly in relation to specific aspects of current translation praxis.

To contrast different work realities, the project used a multiple case study design with (1) two freelance translators, (2) a translation agency, (3) the technical documentation department at a technology company and a partner translation agency, and (4) the translation department in a public institution. In total, data was obtained from 58 half-day observation sessions and 26 hours of interview material.

The results of the study revealed the complexity and contextuality of translation processes in their dependence on a range of interacting factors, such as the type and quality of the human interactions,

the emergence or use of existing networks, the technologies and physical environment encountered at different workplaces, whether the work was done by an individual or in a collective, and numerous other factors of influence of an organisational, business or social nature. As a subsequent comparison revealed, the impacts of these factors on the observed socio-cognitive processes depended largely on the actual work contexts.

Through its methodological approach, the study has also opened up new fields of cooperation at the intersection between research and praxis.

## Aims

1. Doing justice to the complexity of translation processes. This included looking at translation processes in authentic workplaces and examining them in terms of translation networks, actors and environments to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the individuals and interactions involved.
2. Establishing a detailed picture of the situated cognitions in translator workplaces. Special emphasis was placed on factors that have not been the centre of attention in recent translation process studies, such as the social and environmental embeddedness of cognition in translation.
3. Contributing to an expansion of the object of translation process research by studying translation as an interaction process, i.e. as a form of coupled system between humans and external entities, a form of cooperative, IT-assisted text design.
4. Integrating seemingly disparate areas like cooperation with subject matter experts and customers or text production and terminology management in one common scientific context.

## Results and contribution to the field

To expand traditional conceptualizations of the translation process as an inherently mental, individually accomplished task, a socio-cognitive perspective was developed. Empirical research was conducted in authentic workplaces to complement the experimental tradition in classical translation process research. Through the comparison of different work realities and processes based on data from real workplaces, the project also contributes to defining and consolidating the emerging field of “Workplace Research in Translation Studies”.

In an integrative advancement of the field of cognitive translation studies, cognitive, sociological (network) and workplace models were combined in one scientific framework. Special attention was paid to the role of technology in the different field studies. In a further theoretical contribution, digital and analogue artefacts used in translation and translation project management were reframed based on the concept of “boundary objects”.

Another perspective developed was the inclusion of organisational aspects and team dynamics in translation process research. In this context, translatorial creativity was conceptualised in a way that departed from an inherently mental, idea-generation-centred and individual perspective on creativity and opened it up to team and organizational aspects, to creativity as a process that includes the evaluation and implementation of new ideas and to discursive, communicative, collaborative aspects of idea generation.

The project contributed to the further development of approaches like situated cognition in the field of translation studies. The project team was visible in the international community in particular through its theory-building achievements in developing a situated, extended concept of translation, but also through its empirical investigations of the management of translation projects and the role of translation agencies in the translation process as well as through the development of a long-term perspective on changes in the translation industry. Also, the project opened up new scholarly ground in translation process research through its methodological approach of ethnographic workplace research.

Thematically clustered according to the categories in Risku, Windhager & Apfelthaler (2013), the focal points of the publications based on this project were:

### **Cognition**

- Situated learning in translation research training: To enhance students' research skills, an exploratory action research project (based on project data) was conducted with a Masters' level class. (cf. Risku 2014).

### **Action**

- In one case study, the similarities and differences between writing and translating processes were compared in terms of micro-processes, organisational processes, planning phases and use of tools (cf. Risku, Milošević & Pein-Weber 2016).
- Olivia Höffernig's MA thesis compares abstract, idealized and authentic work processes.

### **Social Network**

- Clients' and translators' different perceptions of the translator's task, their different expectations of and influence on the translation process were analysed (cf. Risku, Pein-Weber & Milošević 2016).
- Marie-Theres Gruber's MA thesis investigates translation as a collaborative product and focuses on clients' and translators' mutual perspectives on the translation process.

### **Artefacts**

- The role of translators' and project managers' tools (case study 2) was investigated and compared to data from studies conducted in the same translation agency in 2002 and 2007. Also, the artefacts were conceptualized as 'boundary objects' (cf. Risku, Rogl & Milošević 2016).

## Environment

- Factors conducive to (de)motivation within teams were identified and described (unpublished manuscript).
- The traditional view of translatorial creativity was expanded to include influences that occur on a group or organisational level and a situated, workplace perspective on translatorial creativity was developed (cf. Risku, Milošević & Rogl 2017).
- Marlene Fheodoroff's MA thesis compares job satisfaction of the freelance and employed translators interviewed in the project.
- Barbara Meinx's MA thesis explores affective influences on translation work processes.

## Specific methodological contributions

- Risku (2017) reports on the methodological commitments of an ethnographic approach to translation process research.
- The researchers' planned methodological and epistemological approaches were compared with the reaction of the participants to the research proposal, their expectations of the research team and the inquirer posture the participants imposed on the researchers (cf. Risku, Milošević & Rogl 2016).
- An exchange on the applied method with Maija Hirvonen from the University of Helsinki (research project: *Mutable: Multimodal translation with the blind*, 2017-2019) was established, including a forthcoming joint publication by Risku, Hirvonen, Rogl and Milosevic on ethnography/video ethnography/online ethnography in the *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Methodology* (ed. by Zanettin & Rundle).

## Relevance for other (related) areas of science

- **For Workplace Studies:** Our project provides insights into workplaces in the service sector thus adding to a relatively small body of research on workplace studies in this domain and in knowledge-based professions.
- **For Cognitive Science:** Our project shows that in addition to being a higher-order linguistic task, translation as a work practice also involves technical, social, cultural and organisational factors and process elements. The research also adds to the body of empirical studies on distributed cognition through cognitive ethnography.
- **For Technical Writing:** For the text production processes of writing and translating, the technologies used and influencing factors were compared. This line of research will also be disseminated in the technical writing research community.

## Publications

- Risku, Hanna; Hirvonen, Maija; Rogl, Regina & Milošević, Jelena (forthcoming) "Ethnographic research". In: Zanettin, Federico & Rundle, Christopher (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Methodology*. New York: Routledge.
- Risku, Hanna; Rogl, Regina & Milošević, Jelena (2017) "Translation practice in the field: Current research on socio-cognitive processes". In: *Translation Spaces* 6:1 (Special Issue "Translation practice in the field: Current research on socio-cognitive processes", ed. by Risku, Hanna; Rogl, Regina & Milosevic, Jelena), 3–26. doi: 10.1075/ts.6.1.01ris; URL: <https://us scholar.univie.ac.at/view/o:568716>
- Risku, Hanna (2017) "Ethnographies of translation and situated cognition", in: Schwieter, John W. & Ferreira, Aline (eds.) *The Handbook of Translation and Cognition*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 290–310. doi: 10.1002/9781119241485.ch16
- Risku, Hanna (2017) "Situated learning in translation research training: Research as a reflection of practice", in: Gonzalez-Davies, Maria & Enríquez Raído, Vanessa (eds.) *Situated Learning in Translator and Interpreter Training. Bridging research and good practice*. New York: Routledge, 12–28. (Reprint, see Risku 2016 below)
- Risku, Hanna; Milošević, Jelena & Rogl, Regina (2017) "Creativity in the translation workplace", in: Cercel, Larisa; Agnetta, Marco & Amido Lozano, María Teresa (eds.) *Kreativität und Hermeneutik in der Translation*. Tübingen: Narr, 456–469. ISBN: 9783823390749
- Risku, Hanna (2016) "Situated learning in translation research training: Research as a reflection of practice", in: *The Translator and Interpreter Trainer* 10:1, 12–28. doi: 10.1080/1750399X.2016.1154340; URL: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1750399X.2016.1154340>
- Risku, Hanna; Milosevic, Jelena & Pein-Weber, Christina (2016) "Writing vs. translating: dimensions of text production in comparison", in: Muñoz Martín, Ricardo (ed.) *Reembedding Translation Process Research*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 47–68. doi: 10.1075/btl.128.03ris; URL: <http://unipub.uni-graz.at/obvugroa/content/titleinfo/1915059>
- Risku, Hanna; Milošević, Jelena & Rogl, Regina (2016) "Outsiders', ,consultants', and ,passionate participants': Translation scholars as perceived by the participants of an ethnographic workplace study." Paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> EST Congress, University of Aarhus, 15–17 Sep 2016.
- Risku, Hanna; Pein-Weber, Christina & Milošević, Jelena (2016) "'The task of the translator': Comparing the views of the client and the translator", in: *International Journal of Communication* 10, 989–1008. URL: <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/3673>

Risku, Hanna; Rogl, Regina & Milošević, Jelena (2016) "From artefacts to boundary objects: A longitudinal field study of the socio-cognitive aspects of translation project management." Poster presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> EST Congress, University of Aarhus, 15–17 Sep 2016.

Risku, Hanna (2014) "Translation process research as interaction research: From mental to socio-cognitive processes", in: *MonTi* (Special Issue "Minding translation/Con la traducción en mente", ed. by Ricardo Muñoz Martín) 1:1, 331–353. doi: 10.6035/MonTi.2014.ne1.11; URL: <http://www.e-revistas.uji.es/index.php/monti/article/view/1711/0>

### **Project-based Master's theses**

Fheodoroff, Marlene (2017) '*Ich mache meine Arbeit einfach gern*'. *Die Arbeitszufriedenheit von freiberuflichen und angestellten ÜbersetzerInnen im Vergleich.* / '*Ich mache meine Arbeit einfach gern*': comparing job satisfaction of freelance and employed translators. Master's thesis: University of Graz.

Gruber, Marie-Theres (2017) *Übersetzung als gemeinsames Werk? Der Übersetzungsprozess aus der Perspektive von AuftraggeberInnen und ÜbersetzerInnen.* / Translation as a joint creation? Clients' and translators' perspectives on the translation process. Master's thesis: University of Graz.

Höffernig, Olivia (2018) '*Alle Projekte sind typisch und untypisch gleichzeitig*': *Übersetzungsprozesse in Übersetzungsagenturen.* / *All projects are typical and atypical at the same time*': translation processes in translation agencies. Master's thesis: University of Graz.

Meinx, Barbara (2017) '*Und das schöne Erlebnis war...* *Die Rolle von Emotionen im Translationsprozess.* / '*And the beautiful experience was...*': the role of emotions in the translation process. Master's thesis: University of Graz.