Call for Papers

Translation on and over the Web: Disentangling its conceptual uncertainties and ethical questions

Workshop organised by Cornelia Zwischenberger, Mar Mañes-Bordes & Leandra Sitte

Venue: Centre for Translation Studies, University of Vienna

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Deadline for short abstracts: 23rd May 2021

Deadline for extended abstracts: 10th September 2021

Several relatively new forms of translation made possible by Web 2.0 have already caught the attention of Translation Studies researchers. These include unpaid fan translations by self-organised fansubbing, romhacking and scanlation communities (Fabretti 2019; Lee 2009; Massidda 2015, 2020; Muñoz Sánchez 2007, 2009), interlingual knowledge-sharing through Wikipedia (Jones 2017, 2019; McDonough Dolmaya 2015, 2017) or Yeeyan (Yang 2020), (self-)translation on social media (Desjardins 2017, 2019; McDonough Dolmaya 2011), or *translation crowdsourcing* – the outsourcing of translation to a large crowd of internet users (Jiménez-Crespo 2017).

Even though these more recent phenomena and the communities involved in the translation process have been studied from multiple perspectives, two lacunae have been identified by Zwischenberger (2021). Firstly, there is no consensus as to what constitutes the most appropriate top-level concept for these translation phenomena. Several candidates are currently being used concomitantly. Secondly, research into the ethical implications of these online translation practices is lacking in depth and number.

A meta-concept widely used to define translation activities in Web 2.0 is *online collaborative translation*, which, according to Zwischenberger (2021), encompasses all the above forms of online translation. The use of this concept also brings the transcultural dimensions of these practices fully to the fore (Zwischenberger 2021). There is no other translation practice where dozens, hundreds or sometimes even thousands of translators and other actors contribute to a final translation product, thereby creating a highly hybrid and heterogeneous whole. Désilets & van der Meer (2011) take the concept even further and include various collaborative approaches such as *agile translation teamware*, *collaborative terminology resources* and *post-editing by the crowd*, among others. Jiménez-Crespo (2017) distinguishes between *solicited* and *unsolicited* online translation practices: *translation crowdsourcing* and *online collaborative translation*. The latter also acts as a potential top-level concept. A different emphasis can be found in O'Hagan (2009), who introduces the term *user-generated translation* as a top-level concept for *fansubs, fandubs, scanlations, translation hacking* and *translation crowdsourcing*, later replacing it with *community translation* (O'Hagan 2011).

Building on social media studies, some meta-concepts include the qualifier "social" to reflect the human-computer interaction resulting from Web 2.0. For example, building on O'Hagan's (2011) *community translation*, McDonough Dolmaya & Sánchez Ramos (2019) coin the term *online social translation*, while Hebenstreit (2019) recommends *social-media-driven translation*. Another popular, albeit contested, core concept is *translation crowdsourcing*. Jiménez-Crespo (2017) considers a call to a crowd a *sine qua non* condition for crowdsourcing, and McDonough Dolmaya (2015) suggests that Wikipedia translation also falls under this category because the translation is done by an anonymous, self-organised, unremunerated crowd. Pym (2011), however, views *crowdsourcing* as an equivalent to *fan* and *lay translation* and *collaborative translation*. He instead suggests *volunteer translation* to describe all unremunerated translation work performed online.

This *overlexicalisation* suggests that there are "competing ideologies" at work (Beaton-Thome 2013: 386). Ideologies are never neutral – they propagate a certain worldview and thus a certain way of seeing, perceiving, and talking about a given phenomenon. Thus, the choice of a single top-level concept for representing the above online translation practices has consequences that go beyond mere theoretical-academic implications. It also raises ethical questions, even though these are hardly ever addressed in depth in this field.

The most recent literature has tackled the ethical issues in terms of the exploitation that surrounds translation crowdsourcing, whether for profit-oriented (Zwischenberger 2021) or for non-profit and/or humanitarian organisations (Piróth & Baker 2019). The ethical dimensions of the various forms of online fan translations – for example, the fact that fan labour heightens the revenue generated by a product but also gives fans an opportunity to showcase their labour of love – have not yet been addressed (Baym & Burnett 2009). The ethical dimensions of self-organized forms of online translation as in the case of Wikipedia have been indirectly addressed via its lack of a language or translation policy, despite the fact that the knowledge-sharing processes that build the encyclopaedia are to a large extent dependent on interlingual translation (McDonough Dolmaya 2017).

Ethical concerns raised by the growing employment of *gamification* in online translation settings in order to keep the translators' motivation high have also been evaluated. Some authors have highlighted the consequences of this practice, such as profit-oriented companies making large amounts of money from volunteer work or the perception that professional translation is no longer necessary and does not need to be remunerated (Rogl 2016, Zwischenberger 2021). All of this is closely related to the notion of *free labour*, as proposed by Terranova (2013), which points out the problematic capitalist acquisition and privatisation of labour happening in digital spaces.

With these issues in mind and considering that all of these types of online translation can be viewed as prototypical forms of transcultural communication (Zwischenberger 2021), we wish to disentangle the conceptual uncertainties surrounding them and discuss their ethical implications in our workshop. In our one-day workshop we will address the following questions:

What is the most appropriate meta-concept for the online translation practices described above? How can we conceptualise the diverse types of translation underlying the various candidates for top-level concept? What are the ethical implications of these online translation phenomena? In this regard, we hope to explore the following topics more specifically:

- Best suited top-level concept(s), their subordinates and various other concepts related to online translation practice and the ideologies behind it
- Conceptualisation and characterisation of various online translation practices
- Mapping online translation activities within the discipline of Translation Studies or the wider field of Transcultural Communication
- Ethical implications of translation crowdsourcing for profit-oriented and non-profit organisations
- Ethical implications of fan translations ('fan labour')
- (Ethical) consequences of gamification
- Effects of online translation practices on the perception of translation as a profession

The workshop will consist of 20-minute presentations, followed by a 5-minute discussion by a discussant, then a general round of Q&A from the audience for another 10 minutes. To ensure a dynamic conversation among peers during the first 5 minutes, the discussant will receive the extended abstract of their paper well in advance. The working language of the workshop will be English.

We aim to publish the papers in a special issue of *Perspectives*. The goal of the discussions is to establish common threads between the different topics and to work towards preparing expanded versions of the papers for publication.

Please send your **first short abstract** (200-300 words excluding bibliography) to Mar Mañes-Bordes (mar.manes-bordes@univie.ac.at) by **23rd May 2021**.

Please send your **extended abstract** (800-1000 words excluding bibliography) and a short biographical note to Mar Mañes-Bordes (mar.manes-bordes@univie.ac.at). The deadline for submission is **10th September 2021**.

Note: We hope to meet you in person in Vienna. However, due to the uncertainty of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the modality of the workshop (in-person, online or hybrid) will be confirmed over the summer of 2021.

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