
.....

Cultus

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

Translation *plus*: The added value of the translator

Senior Editor: David Katan

Editor: Cinzia Spinzi

ICONESOFT EDIZIONI - GRUPPO RADIVO HOLDING
BOLOGNA – ITALY

Registrazione al Tribunale di Terni
n. 11 del 24.09.2007

Direttore Responsabile Agostino Quero
Editore Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding
Anno 2021 Volume 14
ISSN 2035-3111
2035-2948

Policy: double-blind peer review

© *Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding srl*
via Ferrarese 3 – 40128 Bologna

CULTUS

the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

Editors

David Katan
University of Salento

Cinzia Spinzi
University of Bergamo

ICONESOFT EDIZIONI – RADIVO HOLDING
BOLOGNA

CULTUS

the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

Scientific Committee

Milton Bennet

Intercultural Development Research Institute, Italy

Delia Chiaro

University of Bologna (SSLMIT), Forlì, Italy

Nigel Ewington

WorldWork Ltd, Cambridge, England

Peter Franklin

*HTWG Konstanz University of Applied Sciences, dialogin-The Delta
Intercultural Academy*

Maria Grazia Guido

University of Salento, Italy

Xiaoping Jiang

University of Guangzhou, China

Tony Liddicoat

University of Warwick, England

Elena Manca

University of Salento, Italy

Raffaella Merlini

University of Macerata, Italy

Robert O'Dowd
University of León, Spain.

Anthony Pym
Intercultural Studies Group, Universidad Rovira I Virgili, Tarragona, Spain

Federica Scarpa
SSLMIT University of Trieste, Italy

Christopher Taylor
University of Trieste, Italy

David Trickey
TCO s.r.l., International Diversity Management, Bologna, Italy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The translator <i>plus</i> : An Introduction <i>Cinzia Spinzi</i>	8
Translation <i>plus</i> and the added value of the translator: An interview with David Jemielity <i>David Jemielity</i> and <i>David Katan</i>	15
Translation <i>plus</i> and the added value of the translator: An interview with Rose Newell <i>Rose Newell</i> and <i>David Katan</i>	32
Collaborative Translation and Cases of Translator <i>Plus</i> <i>Angela D'Egidio</i>	42
Exploring and expanding the plus of translators' power: Translational agency and the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) <i>Gary Massey</i>	62
The value added of the translator in the financial services industry <i>Patrick Williamson</i>	83
Hybridisation adds value in translation and interpreting <i>Claudia Benetello</i>	100

Author as the Other Translator: From cooperation to collaboration through competition and compromise <i>Wenbao YAO</i>	124
Dear Kimon': Gatekeeping and politics in a translator's correspondence <i>Nadia Georgiou</i>	145
Creativity in Media Accessibility: A Political Issue <i>Pablo Romero-Fresco</i>	162
Notes on Contributors	197
Acknowledgements	201

Translation *plus* and the added value of the translator: An interview

David Jemielity and David katan

DK: Dave, as you know this issue of *Cultus* focuses on the recognition of the translator’s added value: the premium translator who is paid well for what she (or he) does; and, as we mean here, the translator *plus*, the translator who is part of the collaborative chain, who is part of the decision-making process – rather than at the end of a vertical chain. And you are one of the few translators, along with Chris Durban (2010; 2020), to have talked and written about this. It really appears to be a radically different – and much more optimistic – view of what a translator does and how a translator is valued. And yet, it seems to me to be an area hiding in plain sight (as also discussed by Vashee 2021).

DJ: “Hiding in plain sight” and “radically different”? I suspect we’ll end up saying “yes and no” to both of those characterizations by the end of our talk today. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. What exactly are we talking about here? You’ve just called it an “area,” whereas I’d be more likely to call it an “approach” or a “business model.” Your term “translator plus” is also new to me – it’s not a word that would spontaneously occur to me as a label for my job. I’d be more likely to reach for “the premium market” as a label for what I think you’re talking about.

Perhaps this is indicative of some difference in perspective between observers of our profession who are academics, and observers who are practitioners? Of course, one wouldn’t want to oversimplify. Many academic translation scholars also practice professionally, as Esther Torres-Simòn and Anthony Pym have demonstrated (2015). And some practitioners also teach part time in university translation-studies programs, generally as adjuncts or lecturers. So the lines do blur.

Nonetheless, I think there are important differences between the ways people whose professional context is essentially academia view the profession and the prism that practitioners — even those like me who dabble a bit in teaching and research — see it through. You, David, have explored some of these issues in an article whose title, “The Great Divide,” kinda says it all, doesn’t it? (Katan 2009; see also Katan 2011).

So perhaps it’s revealing on some level that a peer-reviewed academic journal editor spontaneously reaches for terms that cast today’s topic in terms of people (“premium translators”) and fields (“area”), while a practitioner who works in a bank will talk about it more readily in terms of “markets” and “models.” That said, I do think that all these terms map the same basic concept: a more optimistic (as you say) and ambitious (as I might) approach to doing what we translators do.

DK: Well, your own professional trajectory at BCV (Banque Cantonale Vaudoise) is certainly grounds for optimism, isn’t it? BCV is a large company, Switzerland’s 5th largest bank, so on the face of it one would never expect the in-house translators to have any access to the bank’s CEO and CFO. But your team is, in fact, in regular face-to-face meetings with them. Nor would you expect the bank to put its American head of translations in charge of creating multi-year brand identity campaigns from the ground up, leading the team that works on the messaging, writes the scripts and storyboards, and shoots the actual ads — all in French! This, to my mind, is certainly an example of what we’re calling “the translator plus,” a translator whose added value is recognized and who is viewed as a fully-fledged communications consultant. I hope you can tell us exactly how you and your team managed to position yourselves so favourably.

DJ: It really comes down to having a more ambitious vision. And although that “high-ambition” approach eventually impacts your status, your salary and the like, it doesn’t start there. It starts with the writing — your translations themselves. I know in any case that that’s where my own “high-ambition” approach to translation began. When we started developing the ideas we’ve applied at BCV, we weren’t thinking about our salaries, our place on BCV’s organization chart, or any of that “status-of-the-profession” stuff that translators so enjoy grousing about at conferences. We simply wanted to be able to produce better target-language deliverables.

Back then, when I looked at our team’s translations from French into English (including many of my own) and compared them to similar content

produced by Anglosphere banks, I often found myself thinking, “Gee, this just isn’t good. It’s not as effective as writing.” And I suspected the content we produced in our other target languages was no better. In brief, we needed to raise the bar.

And all the rest, for the last 17 years, has been figuring out how to do that. It’s all about processes – ways of making our target-language communications more effective as English and German copy designed to help my company sell stuff. And if you really drill down into all the processes relating to producing multilingual communications at a large firm, with an eye towards maximally enfranchising your translators as writers and communicators, I think you’ll find that there’s a lot that’s improvable. I know we did. And over the years we’ve managed to tweak quite a few typical multilingual communications business processes, coming up with less standard but to our mind more effective ways of getting it done.

What’s resulted is a fundamentally different overall model for translating, on both process level and product level, compared with what you tend to see on many other in-house teams.

DK: Can you tell us about the differences?

DJ: Well, for starters, on certain jobs, the English and German versions will be noticeably different from the original French. The differences are often stylistic, but I’m talking about more than the typical stylistic adjustments most good translators make for better target-text readability. For example, the order in which ideas are presented might end up changing, sometimes a lot. The last idea in the original French paragraph might end up as the first idea in the English version. Or the entire last paragraph might end up being the first. In some cases, the content might also change: we add, subtract, or modify some of the information in the original source text in the target-language versions of some content.

But I’d like to emphasize that when we make adjustments like that we’re not making them arbitrarily or independently. Everything is based on field-specific benchmarks. And it’s all discussed with the people in charge of the French-language source texts, who can range from product managers in the case of marketing material to the bank’s CEO and CFO for our corporate reporting. Generally, there’s some give and take between us and them. Often what emerges is a target text where the messages are a little bit different from those of the source text – but are still “on message.”

DK: You're now the lead writer and overall creative director for BCV's French-language brand identity campaign. So what we're talking about here is consultant status, not only for your bank's target language communications in English and German, but now also for communication 'tout court'. At your bank, at least, the process involves going to 'the translator' for communication needs, which is not 'normal'. At the moment the norm is still to go to your communications people, you go to your marketing people, you go to your copy-editing people. The default view is that you go to the translator because you want your text translated pretty closely. You are not really going to ask the translator much about it, or tell the translator much about it. And you are certainly not really interested in what the translator might think.

DJ: Yeah, I think you're right that what we're doing at BCV bends that norm to some extent. That said, our translation team spends most of its time translating French source texts rather than creating new content (in any language). And on most of our jobs we translate the original source-language content closely. There are, however, some types of content where a close translation won't be effective enough as field-specific communication in the target-language. And there, it's clear that we've got an advantage as translators having that "seat at the table" for BCV's high-level communications discussions. For starters, it gives you a more complete view of the source text. My term for this is a "diachronic" experience, as opposed to the merely "synchronic" view of the source text most translators get. For most translators, the source text exists outside of time. They don't see the previous versions, how it developed. Most importantly, they don't see what the source text writers thought about doing - but decided not to. But at BCV we have access to that whole source-text-creation process. In particular, knowing what they decided not to say in the original can help you make better decisions as a translator, particularly when you're sifting through several options where each is close to the meaning of the original, but where each moves away from it slightly, and in disparate directions.

In these cases, it's a disadvantage to only have that synchronic understanding of the text. And on the contrary, at BCV we're empowered as writers in those situations by dint of the role we play upstream creating some source texts, and because there's one of us, the head of translations, who literally has a seat at the table where this stuff is being discussed, on the bank's *comité éditorial*.

Concretely, that means that every Tuesday afternoon I'm part of a committee that discusses every major piece of communication developed by the bank. So, among other things, I know what the bank decided not to do, and why, including everything from what colour schemes we decided not to use to what keywords we decided not to use. That's an advantage when it comes time to translate.

DK: Yes, absolutely. It is that two-way discussion, which should automatically be part of most translators' work. Not always, of course; if it's the weather report then it's the weather report and you can't change that. But much of the time you need some form of recontextualisation.

I'm currently working on a tourist guide at the museum here and we had exactly that conversation. I came up with a translation, and went through it with the original writers. They read through it and they said: "No, you can't say that", and I said: "But that's what you wrote"; and then one of the writers started expanding on the machinations and vagaries of the historical and political background - exactly what you were saying, sizing up the alternatives. They said: "We started with the same clarity you have in your English version, making that point, but politically we can't actually say that - and the way you've worded it puts exactly into the limelight what we wanted to be there, but we couldn't say". That was because I said: "I'd be explicit here, otherwise the new readers won't really understand" and the writers said: "Yes, well, we can't tell them that". So I then sent them a rewording in English and they sent it back. Then I tweaked it, and so on (see Katan 2022). You are right, you need the commissioners, the writers, to give these ideas to you about what wasn't said and why it wasn't said. You end up with information which highlights the underlying narrative.

DJ: What you've just described, the conversation you had with these tourism guide writers, is exactly the sort of process we have put in place at BCV. It's one of the key processes that's taken us to where we are now. I'd argue, in fact, that it's an ideal process, the best way to produce target-language content that is 100% "fine-tuned" as messaging for your client in the target language.

But to work in these "high ambition" or "translator plus" business models, you've got to earn it, in terms of your skillset as a translator. Here, two key elements are field-specific knowledge and writing skills. Chris Durban refers to the writing-skills part as "knowing the craft" (e.g. 2015): "the ability to create texts that go beyond accurate (the bare-bones

minimum) to embrace style and flow and rhythm. That goes beyond the words to the ideas behind the words. Compelling texts. Texts that entice readers to jump aboard and keep reading clear through to the end. Texts that give authors a voice in a different culture and language. That opens windows and doors”. What I would add is that your writing skills need to be field-specific. You can’t expect to be able to simply walk in, sit down, and claim to “know your craft” in a field you aren’t deeply familiar with simply because you’re a good writer.

In wealth management marketing, for example, most close translations from French to English are ineffective as field-specific communication. So, if you have any game whatsoever as a writer in your target language, you’re going to want to change stuff (at least in the French-English combination). You’ll want to “transcreate” the original text, to a greater or lesser extent. But in a specialized field like wealth management, you’ll never be able to carry that off by simply relying on your writing skills in a knowledge- and dialogue-vacuum. You need to build a “high-ambition” approach to working in that field.

It starts by knowing “how the field sounds” in English. How does JP Morgan talk about the specific area of wealth management that your source text is about? How does Wells Fargo talk about it? What about Goldman, Merrill, Lloyd’s and HSBC? In my world, this truly deep familiarity with the field, “having it all on the tip of your tongue,” is an absolutely crucial part of the process, in part because it gives us credibility in the next step of the process. (Jemielity 2014).

That next step is you sitting down with your wealth management marketing head, the one who gave you the translation job, and discussing alternatives. Sometimes she’ll buy in right away. Other times she’ll tell you, “Sorry, but we can’t say that” for X or Y reason – just like what happened to you on your museum job, David.

DK: Definitely. Yes, but there is a difference. My guidebook writers are scholars, they’re experts, but they’re not experts in communication. Determinologization and popularisation (e.g. Gotti 2015) is usually only seen as dummifying down, which as far as domain experts are concerned is a no-no. But people who have spent 30-40 years working as experts in their field can’t easily get into a non-specialist way of thinking.

DJ: Yes, I see what you mean. The issue we face as translators at the bank isn’t exactly the same as yours, because our BCV marketing people are by

definition on some level “popularizers.” So our need to adapt the source text is driven by field-specific cultural differences rather than making the target text rendering resonate for lay people. For example, we’ll run up against differences between the norms of what one says, and in what order, in Anglo financial reporting as opposed to Gallic (or Swiss-French) financial reporting (cf. Jemielity 2010, 2012). Now, both the Anglo and Gallic audiences are specialists in their fields, so it’s not about popularizing anything, but rather field-specific differences in communication norms. But the overall process/product challenge you face with your tourism content is similar to ours. As is your solution!

However, I do want to make clear that we don’t employ processes like those on every text. You need to pick out image-critical content and focus your efforts on that. 80% to 90% of what we translate will not involve a client meeting. You pick your battles.

DK: I think ‘battles’ is very apt. The translator *plus* can’t sit back and presume that she will be respected for her job, and certainly shouldn’t fall into the “willing subservience” painted by Simeoni (1998).

So, should we make our translation graduates more aware of the road to take? Should we teach them how to become less timid and more – aggressive isn’t the right word – more assertive and more ready to pick up the phone, argue their case, and then go back and do that again without giving up. How do we move towards a standardization of this type of approach?

DJ: Arguing the case is of course fine, and I suspect that many translators are indeed a bit too timid in that respect. But it’s a truism in communications that showing is better than telling. What I mean is, if you can build processes that allow you both to turn out amazing work and ensure your clients know that it’s amazing work, then you won’t need to *talk* so much about your added value because you’ll have *shown* it. That’s what we’ve tried to do at BCV. Our use of meetings and our approach to meetings help us a lot with that second objective: making sure your stakeholders buy in, that they see, concretely, how good your work is.

There are entire conferences organized around the theme of how translators can communicate their added value. But I think it’s important not to put the cart before the horse: we need to start by building processes that ensure that we are, in fact, creating as much added value as we could be in our translations – and that includes the processes required to optimize

our own skill sets as translators. Once we've done that – once we are, actually, creating maximum possible added value – then we can start worrying about communicating it.

But at that point you might not even need to. If you manage things adroitly, it's likely your processes will end up showing your added value to your clients. And you can stop worrying so much about the telling.

DK: That sounds a lot like what you said in your TEF keynote address (2019): less grousing, and less whingeing. More ambition ... and perhaps also a bit more assertiveness?

DJ: Yes, exactly. When you've got a process that shows your added value you don't have to tell people about it – much less complain that it isn't recognized. And I agree with you that assertiveness is a part of that “showing.” Our BCV translators are extremely well-informed subject-area specialists who are highly skilled as writers, as editors, as rewriters in their target language. And they are, indeed, somewhat assertive in meetings.

That said, in meetings, listening skills are just as important as talking skills. Sometimes we translators are overly concerned about what we're going to say in a meeting, and it ends up distracting us from what our clients are saying to us. Which is, after all, crucial information, especially when you're brainstorming together over a tough passage of the source text and the client isn't on board with your proposed translation options. So assertiveness is important, but it should be very open-eared and open-eyed assertiveness.

DK: Yes, showing great interest is good, and the great thing is that the translator is probably the only person who will pour over every single word; the intended reader isn't going to critically look at the language. So, she (or maybe he) is the only one who should be automatically on board with discussions about how the client wants the text to work or to communicate, rather than simply “here's the brief, just translate it”.

I want to ask you how does ‘premium’ in premium translation work economically? This is the litmus test difference between technicians and consultants, and between transcreators and translators (Gabbalo 2012, 101). Is it payment by word or payment by time?

DJ: Translators, whether they're self-employed or salaried, tend to account for their output in terms of words. And in-house teams almost as a rule track their throughput in terms of words.

At BCV, we don't. And here's why: words translated (per day, per FTE,¹ per whatever) simply aren't in our view a very meaningful metric of the added value we provide. We do of course have a good idea of how many words are going through our workflows each day, but when I report on my team up to management, words are not a metric I'll use. For starters, using the number of words translated projects an image of translation as something countable – a commodity. Like, say, coffee beans. And unless you want to have the career trajectory of a coffee bean picker that's not a smart rhetorical play.

But the more fundamental reason that I won't reach for words as an output metric relates to the grouching at conferences you mentioned earlier. Because one of the grouchers' favorite old chestnuts is that we translators have a similar level of academic training to that of lawyers, and we also have a similar level of day-to-day intellectual engagement in our work – and yet, the average translator has neither the professional status nor the taxable income of your average lawyer (generally this last observation is punctuated by at least three indignant exclamation marks: grouse-grouse-grouse!!!).

But consider this: when was the last time you heard a lawyer talk about her work-product output in terms of words?

DK: Well, lawyers work by the minute, six minute slices. Billable time for translators? And why not?

But how do we get there? You began about a decade ago advocating for a more “high-ambition” mindset for translating (Jemielity 2012, 2014). Most memorably for me in that 2014 guest essay on specialization for the ITI (11,000 views in the short period it was on-line). That essay was a forceful argument that we all need to up our game.

DJ: ITI has actually asked me to reprise that 2014 essay, with some updates, in 2022.

DK: The sequel! But my question is this. Your advocacy of “high-ambition” multilingual communications business processes is great. But...

¹ Full-time equivalent (FTE) is a way for employers to standardise their headcount and combine their part-time workers' hours to figure out how many full-time employees would work those hours.

OK, it's worked for your team at BCV, and you make a compelling theoretical case for it, but in practical terms, is this something the average translator or average translation team can apply? In a word, is your approach replicable?

DJ: Honestly, I'm not sure that's for me to say. I'm just too close to it to be objective. We've had success, to be sure, but that might just mean that my colleagues and I have succeeded *despite* rather than *thanks to* our business model, simply because we're good translators. So your question is founded. And also absolutely crucial, for an educator – I get why you're insisting a little bit. You're wondering, "Can I tell my students that they can aim higher and expect more? Or would that be unfair?"

DK: And I'm also wondering what you tell your students. Let's not forget, you are also a tenured lecturer at no less than at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, University of Geneva, teaching financial translation and transcreation.

DJ: Yes, I do proudly consider myself to be a teacher, if only on a very part-time basis. And I believe we have a fiduciary duty to our students to give them a realistic view of the profession they're about to enter. It wouldn't be fair to them to spin fairy tales.

DK: Exactly.

DJ: On the other hand, that same fiduciary duty means that it also isn't fair to tacitly discourage our students from aiming high by giving them the mistaken impression that there's nothing "high" out there to take aim at. If there are in fact a variety of different fields within multilingual communications that have premium-market segments, segments that are very rewarding but also very demanding, our students should know that they exist, how they work, and ideally, how to prepare for working in them.

So let me start with the other examples you asked for. I am in fact personally aware of several examples of freelance translators, in-house translation teams, and small boutique translation firms that have taken a high-ambition approach, positioned themselves as "premium-market" providers of highly specialized multilingual communications solutions, and bill accordingly. Perhaps the most well-known example is the Paris-based freelance financial translator Chris Durban. She wrote a book called *The*

Prosperous Translator (2010), a title which sums up her approach. And lots of other freelancers are applying similar “high-ambition” approaches – many inspired by Chris, who’s been a mentor to many of our most successful colleagues. The financial translators Dominique Jonkers, Dylan Gee, Christine Graf, Tom West, Robin Bonthron, Juliette Blume, Claudio La Rosa, Marta Villacampa Bueno, Lisa Ruth and Ralf Lemster immediately spring to mind as examples because we’ve worked with them at BCV, or I’ve listened to them speak at conferences, or both. I’ve paid their exorbitant rates :) and I’ve capitalized on their amazing work. These people are expensive and they’re not always available, but they are well worth your time and money. I could also cite high-end boutique firms like Scala-Wells here in Lausanne, Anglocom in Montreal and Quebec City, and Translations in Paris.

DK: Most of those examples relate to finance. Do you think this sort of thing can only happen in the financial sector?

DJ: Actually, although I’m obviously less familiar with the economics and work practices of other fields and other language combinations besides those we work in at BCV, I know for a fact that no, it’s not just a bank-and-finance thing (c.f. Jemielity 2012, 2018). For instance, Anglocom and Scala-Wells are both active in corporate communications outside of finance, and they both also have people who specialize in museum translations. For yet another example, in a very different field, there’s a huge premium market in the sci-tech and defense sectors. The Russian-to-English sci-tech specialist and former ATA spokesperson Kevin Hendzel has spoken and written extensively about it (2013, 2014). If you look hard enough, you’ll discover that we have “translator *plus*” colleagues in fields as diverse as wine, waste management and recycling, healthcare, fashion, the humanitarian sector and corporate law. Not to mention Google’s large in-house language team, by the way....

DK: Yes, as does Booking.com (Huston 2016), like all multilingual platforms which actually only in theory auto-magically substitute the translator.

DJ: My former student Svein Hermansen, who went straight from FTI Geneva’s masters in translation program to a job at Google, has spoken and

written (2014) about what Google’s large in-house translation team does. It’s high-ambition stuff.

So yes, I think it’s safe to say that there are in fact many different “premium market” corners of our profession.

But there is an important caveat, and it’s a key takeaway point I’d like to leave your readership with: if you want to penetrate the premium market in any field, be it sci-tech, finance, watchmaking or wine, you’re going to need to have exceptional qualifications, both as a field specialist and as a writer in your TL. In particular, the standard of what constitutes a “meaningful” degree of field-specialization in these markets should not be underestimated (Hermansen 2014; Jemielity 2014, 2019).

DK: So whether you want to take a position on the matter or not, it’s beginning to sound like a “translator *plus*” or “premium market” approach is indeed a replicable, if demanding, model.

DJ: I’ll stick to my Renaissance aphorisms here and continue to plead “*nemo iudex in causa sua*” regarding the particular process model we’ve put in place at BCV. But there are clearly translators out there who’ve taken a high-ambition approach and made it work.

I would however point out that it’s actually more likely what we’re talking about is a group of similar but not identical approaches. People have been advocating for these ideas for well over two decades, so there has obviously been time for different translators to start from the same basic “we can do this better” observation and take it in somewhat different directions. For example, back in 1996 the Washington, D.C.-based IMF language head Neil Inglis gave a conference talk on the low-ambition “poverty cult” he felt was dragging our profession down (Inglis 2016). Neil’s talk remains a seminal piece of thinking, one that I subscribe to 100%. But that doesn’t mean that Neil and his team at IMF do things just like we do them at BCV, even though our respective visions of what we’re doing and how we do it are probably fairly congruent. Which suggests that your “translator plus” and my “premium market” / “high-ambition approach” collectively map what Wittgenstein (1953/2009) might call a “fuzzy concept” or a “family resemblance” – an important point being that even if the idea or concept in question is subject to some degree of variability or “fuzziness” around the edges, it’s still useful.

DK: Perhaps it's because of that fuzziness that I sometimes feel that this translator plus / premium market model is, as it were, hiding in plain sight?

DJ: Ah, yes, I knew we'd get back to that. It is true that these "high-rent" corners of our industry can seem a bit like gated communities. Most people are on the outside looking in. And those markets are, in fact, in many cases gated, in the business sense of "moated." As Kevin Hendzel has pointed out, (2013, 2014), the sci-tech and defence solution providers who sell language assistance, among other services, to the American government are not exactly falling over themselves to explain their trade secrets to either translation studies academics or to potential-competitor practitioners. They prefer to dig an "information moat" around their business, thereby protecting themselves. So we're unlikely to be hearing from them at the ATA, SFT or TEF² annual conferences or reading about them in the *Journal of Specialized Translation (JOST)* anytime soon. But that doesn't mean those markets don't exist. If a tree falls in the forest but it wasn't written up, peer-reviewed and published, did it still fall? Yes, David, it sure did!

What I'm saying here is that both academic research and industry-led market surveys have blind-spots. And my feeling is that those blind-spots tend to contribute to an overly bleak view of the economics of our profession. Large industry surveys like those commissioned by Common Sense Advisory (CSA 2020) or the various national translator associations likely miss out some high-ambition, high-earning translators, as Pym, Grin, Chan and Sfreddo point out in their book-length study of the status of the profession (2012, cf. esp. p.3, p. 92). But it is also no doubt true that the high-end pockets within our profession remain small relative to the bulk of the translation industry. And they also appear to remain a black box for translation scholars, even to some extent for the hardy few who are starting to sharpen their focus on those corners of the industry (see for example Pym, 2015, 16:50-17:20).

DK: Perhaps these high-end, translator plus opportunities are essentially confined to areas like banking and finance, healthcare, luxury products and other segments where there's a lot of money floating around and a lot more at stake? I was speaking to Rose Newell (see this issue), and she was saying that as far as she's concerned the only way that a translator can be regarded

² ATA American Translators Association; SFT Société française des traducteurs; TEF Translating Europe Forum

as a translator *plus* is where a lot of money rides on what and how something is being said.

DJ: Rose is probably right. Kevin Hendzel (2020) has written about the premium translation segment as being composed of "markets where the cost of failure is dramatically higher than the cost of performance." And Chris Durban has been introducing herself for years at the start of her conference talks by saying "I work in a field where the price of failure is high".

More generally, I think what Rose, Chris and Kevin would all agree on is that "life ain't fair" – and that includes translators. For instance, no matter how good and how dedicated you are, you will make less if the supply of translation into your TL and in your field outstrips demand in that TL/field, or if the economic stakes for whatever you're working on are low. (I mean as compared with how you would do financially in a more favorable macro environment, all other things being equal.)

And on some level that's not fair. But I think it's important to simply get over it, and, as you Brits are so fond of saying, get on with it. Kenneth Kronenberg (2016), who has disagreed with me passionately and articulately on some of these issues, is to my mind stuck at the "This is so unfair!" stage of the process. And the problem with that is that it does not, to my mind, generate any possible solutions or even any paths forward, other than a sort of "Translators of the world, unite!" battle cry that is not in my opinion realistic or helpful.

A corollary of all of this is that translators should make business decisions with clear eyes and dispassionate hearts. I'm talking about choices like what field to work in and whether to live in your target language region or your source language region. As Dylan Gee (2009) has argued, these are business decisions, and the choices you make will have economic consequences.

DK: Your advice to be more "business-like" recalls the beginning of our conversation, where we observed the differences in our terminology and wondered if perhaps academics and practitioners, at least the high-end practitioners we've been discussing today, view the translation profession through somewhat different prisms.

DJ: Yeah, you're right. But if so, then what you're doing here, with this issue of *Cultus*, should help to make the premium translation market less of a black box for scholars, so in my view it's a step in the right direction.

References

- CSA. 2020. "The state of the linguist supply chain: a CSA report on translators and interpreters in 2020". <https://insights.csa-research.com/reportaction/305013106/Toc>. Retrieved December 28, 2021.
- Durban, Chris. 2015. "Post #3 — Your world view", Chris Durban's Blog, <https://chrisdurbanblog.com/2015/03/14/post-3-your-world-view/>, Retrieved December 28, 2021
- Durban, Chris. 2020. "Finding Your Place in the Premium Market", keynote address, Japan Interpreting and Translation Forum, August 11, 2020. Slides provided via personal communication to D. Jemielity. https://www.japan-interpreters.org/en/event_news/forum2020-durban/ Accessed 28 December 2021.
- Durban, Chris, and Eugene Seidel. 2010. *The Prosperous Translator: Advice from Fire Ant and Worker Bee*. Lulu Press.
- Gaballo, Viviana. 2012. "Exploring the boundaries of transcreation in specialized translation." *ESP Across Cultures* 9: 95–113. <https://edipuglia.it/wp-content/uploads/ESP%202012/Gaballo.pdf>
- Gee, Dylan. 2009. "Being a Businesslike Translator." Presentation at the ASTTI Université d'été de la traduction financière (UETF), July 5.
- Gotti, Maurizio. 2014. "Reformulation and recontextualization in popularization discourse". *Ibérica, Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos* 27: 15-34. <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=287030196011>
- Henzel, Kevin. 2013. "Three Lessons: Humility, Collaboration, Perseverance." *Word Prisms*, March 8. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://www.kevinhenzel.com/three-lessons-humility-collaboration-perseverance-all-three-in-that-order-hold-the-key-to-becoming-a-world-class-translator/>
- Henzel, Kevin. 2014. "It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times: How the Premium Market Offers Translators Prosperity in an Era of Collapsing Bulk-Market Rates." *Word Prisms*, September 2. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://www.kevinhenzel.com/it-was->

-
- [the-best-of-times-it-was-the-worst-of-times-how-the-premium-market-offers-translators-prosperity-in-an-era-of-collapsing-bulk-market-rates/](#)
- Hendzel, Kevin (2020). “eMpTy Pages: Comments about translation technology, new collaboration models, and inspiration”. kv-emptypages.blogspot.com. Retrieved December 28, 2021.
- Hermansen, Svein. 2014. “Shaping Google’s Voice in 60+ Languages.” *Multilingual Magazine* 25, no. 2 (March): 36-40. <https://multilingual.com/pdf-issues/2014-03.pdf>
- Huston, Darren. 2016. “Priceline’s CEO on Creating an In-house Multilingual Customer Service Operation”. Harvard Business Review, April. <https://hbr.org/2016/04/pricelines-ceo-oncreating-an-in-house-multilingual-customer-service-operation>. Accessed 28 December 2021
- Inglis, Neil. 2016. “Revisiting the ‘Poverty Cult’ 20 years on”. American Translators Association (ATA), May 18. Retrieved December 28, 2021.
- Jemielity, David. 2010. “Benchmarking Style in French-English Financial Translation”. Distinguished Speaker Presentation, ATA Annual Conference, Denver, USA. Available upon request to ATA or the author.
- Jemielity, David. 2012. “Managing Multilingual Communications: The Way Forward”. in *BSL Banking Switzerland and Liechtenstein* yearly review, 38-49.
- Jemielity, David. 2014. “Specializing: A Ticket to the High End of the Profession?” *The Pillar Box*. Currently off-line; available upon request to the author.
- Jemielity, David. 2018. “Translation in intercultural business and economic environments”. In *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, edited by Sue-Ann Harding and Ovidi Carbonell Cortés, 533-557. London: Routledge.
- Jemielity, David. 2019. “Translation in Corporate and Institutional Environments – a blueprint for creating higher added value and communicating it to stakeholders”. TEF 2019 keynote address, Brussels. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fC0zXETkyFE>
- Katan, David. 2022. “Translator traditore?”. In *Guide to Jewish Salento*, edited by Fabrizio Lelli and Fabrizio Ghio, 5-13. Lecce: Capone Editore.
- Katan, David. 2009. “Occupation or Profession: A survey of the translators’ world”. In *Profession, Identity and Status: Translators and Interpreters as an Occupational Group* 4, no. 1, edited by Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Miriam Shlesinger, 187-209. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamin. ISBN: 9789027285010 <https://doi.org/10.1075/tis.4.2.04kat>

- Katan, David. 2009. "Translation Theory and Professional Practice: A Global Survey of the Great Divide". *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication in Business* 42 (August): 111-153.
- Kronenberg, Kenneth. 2016. "Translation in the Twenty-First Century: The Need for a New Model." Presentation at NYU Translation Day Symposium, October 1.
<https://neta.wildapricot.org/resources/Pictures/Fall%202016%20NETA%20News.pdf> Accessed December, 2021.
- Pym, Anthony. 2015. "The market for translators and interpreters." Lecture, University of Vienna. May 11. Accessed November 2, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbrxnXor5co>
- Pym, Anthony, Francois Grin, Andy L.J. Chan and Claudio Sfreddo. 2012. *The Status of the Translation Profession in The European Union*. European Commission.
- Simeoni, Daniel. 1998. "The Pivotal Status of the Translator's Habitus". *Target. International Journal of Translation Studies* 10, no. 1 (January): 1-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/target.10.1.02sim>
- Torres-Simòn, Esther and Anthony Pym. 2015. "The professional backgrounds of translation scholars. Report on a survey. Draft 3.2." http://usuaris.tinet.cat/apym/online/research_methods/2014_ESTsurvey_article.pdf Accessed December 2021.
- Vashee, Kirti. 2020. "The Premium Translation Market: Hiding In Plain Sight". *eMpTy Pages: Comments about translation technology, new collaboration models, and inspiration*. August 20. <http://kv-emptypages.blogspot.com/2020/08/the-premium-translation-market-hiding.html>
- Wallace, David Foster. 2001. "Tense present: Democracy, English, and the wars over usage". *Harper's Magazine*, 1 Apr. 2001: 39–58
<https://harpers.org/author/davidfosterwallace/>
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953 / 2009. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by Anscombe, Hacker and Schulte. London: Blackwell.