

A Closer Look into the Life of Ordinary Translators through Unordinary Sources: The Use of Obituaries as a Microhistory Tool to Study Translators and Translation in Ohio

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ABSTRACT

While obituaries offer a fascinating glimpse into the life of ordinary citizens, they have not to my knowledge been used in historical research in the translation studies. This paper examines the validity of obituaries as potential extra-textual source of information that can provide a unique perspective not only for studying the social and cultural history of translators and translation, but also to discover public perceptions about the role of the translator and the task of translation in a given context. The use of obituaries—for translation historians whose focal point is the translator as an individual—harmonizes with the general objectives of micro-historical inquiry which “concentrates on the intensive study of particular lives to reveal the fundamental experiences and mentalities of ordinary people” (Lepore 2001: 131). The quantitative data analysis of obituaries in the case of the mid-Western American State of Ohio between 2000 and 2015 reveals personal information about translators (age, gender, place of birth), type of service and career field, source of income, languages spoken and translated, domain and membership of translation associations. Additionally, a comparative analysis of the data is performed to detect any patterns and trends such as prevalent gender of translators, most frequent language-pairs used and immigration trends. It is proposed here that the study of obituaries can contribute to the micro-analysis of the sociocultural history of translators by showing how the subjective accounts of “ordinary people” portray the task of translation and the role of “ordinary” translators in a specific community.

KEYWORDS: microhistory, obituaries, Ohio newspapers, Ohio translators and translation

1. Introduction: Microhistory, Extra-textual Sources and Obituaries

Translation history, as traditional history, has experienced in recent years a perceptible turning from conventional historical approaches centered on dramatic events, extraordinary people, large geographic areas and long periods of time (Magnússon et al. 2013) to a new “history from below” approach, in which ordinary men and women and their ordinary deeds take central stage (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012: xiv). The microhistory approach—initiated by Levi (1991) and Ginzburg (1976/1980)—adjusts well to the new historical paradigms that focus on the study of what, in her paper “Microhistory of Translation,” Sergia Adamo calls, “marginal individual cases in their ‘normal exceptional,’ transgression of what is commonly described as the mainstream continuity in the understanding of the past” (2006: 81-82). Historians’ motivations are, when applying this methodical framework, to rescue from obscurity the lives of ordinary men and women and give prominence to once apparently insignificant events, with the purpose of revealing new patterns, avoiding generalizations, challenging preconceived assumptions and shedding light onto macro-level issues.

In the translation context, historians of translation have progressively given prominence to the translator’s agency and to the role of translation as a cultural practice since the 1990’s. For instance, Lawrence Venuti (1995), based on Schleiermacher’s foreignization and domestication concepts, focuses on the invisibility of the translator. Similarly, Maria Tymoczko (1999) exposes the role of translation in the colonization and decolonization of the Irish culture. For his part, Jeremy Munday in his seminal paper, “Using Primary Sources to Produce a Microhistory of Translation and Translation,” claims that historical research of translation and translators benefit from the application of this new model of historical inquiry, “history from below,” which focuses on understanding the daily experiences and choices of the silent majority (2014: 67). Anthony Pym also calls for translation historians to zero in on the translator rather than on the text arguing that “to understand why translations happened, we have to look at the people involved” (1998: ix).

This new model of historical inquiry, however, cannot be successfully accomplished based solely on the traditional primary sources (source and target texts). It requires the use of extra-textual

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sources such as statements from translators, editors and publishers, archives, manuscripts, letters, translator papers, post-hoc accounts and interviews. Although there are certain scholars who treat these sources as unreliable and subjective—Toury, for example, considers extra-textual sources as “partial and biased, and should therefore be treated with every possible circumspection” (1995: 65)—the use of extra-textual sources is “indispensable resource for the investigation of the conditions, working practices and identity of translator and for the study of the interaction with other participants in the translation process” (Munday 2014: 64).

Following the same line of thought, this paper advocates for the application of the microhistory approach to construct “the cultural history from below” of translators and for the use of extra-textual sources that reveal details not provided by more “objective” textual analysis. However, the present study goes beyond and introduces obituaries as an unconventional source of information in an attempt not only to study the social and cultural history of translators and translation, but also to discover the public perception about the role of the translator and the task of translation in the particular case of the mid-Western American State of Ohio between 2000 and 2015. It is argued here that the use of obituaries can enhance the understanding of translators by showing how, through the subjective accounts of ordinary people, the task of translation and the role of translators are portrayed in a given context. In Ohio, for example, translators were perceived as altruist members of the community who, through the act of translation, served their country during wars and were influential in their communities by acting as volunteer translators in varied settings, particularly translation related to the field of medicine.

Moreover, the potential value of obituaries as historical research methodology lies in the fact that obituaries are an outlet for a variety of subjective and unheard voices (Munday 2014: 67) that communicate aspects of the life of translators that cannot be provided by other sources of information, since decisions about the content are made by family, relatives, friends and other members of the community. It is fair to say then that this “silent majority”¹ gives priority to translation accomplishments in such a reduced space because translation, in their view, is an esteemed and respected profession. Obituaries not only reveal what is considered important in

¹ “A large number of people who have not expressed an opinion about something” (dictionary.cambridge.org)

the life of the deceased—such as biographical elements, accomplishments, cause of death, schools attended, public service, survivors and church and community affiliations—but also, as Janice Hume points out in her book *Obituaries in American Culture*, “distill the essence of a citizen’s life, and because it is a commemoration as well as a life chronicle, it reflects what society values and wants to remember about that person’s history” (2002: 12). They can be considered helpful sources of information when it comes to examine the image the public in general has about professions and “the way those portrayals reflect broader perceptions of professional groups” (Dilevko & Gottlieb 2004: 154).

In the hope of following these new directions and contributing to this line of translation history research, this paper pays particular attention to relevant information about translators and the translation profession obtained through obituaries published in six Ohioan newspapers with an average daily circulation over 150,000 between 2000 and 2015. The data analysis reveals information related to the gender of translators; languages spoken and translated; domain; translator’s academic background and how it is related to translation; whether translation was the main source of income; type of translation or interpreting: freelancer, in-house translator, volunteer translator, consultant, service provider owner, trainer, government employee or military translator; membership in translation associations and any other relevant facts. This mid-Western state has a large population and a mixture of languages representative of the general population in the U.S. The United States Census Bureau reports that 6.7 % of the population aged five years and over speaks a language other than English. Spanish speakers constitute 2.2% of this total and other Indo-European language speakers 2.5%. Speakers of Asian and Pacific Island languages and other languages account for 1.1% and 0.8% respectively (*American FactFinder* 2014). A comparative analysis to identify patterns and trends is also considered in the present study. The data obtained is compared, when possible, with U.S. census data on translators and data obtained on research about translation’s occupational status (Hammond 1990; Dam & Zethsen 2008–2009; Katan 2009; Pym et al. 2012).

2. The Nature of Obituaries

Before digging deeply into the proposed analysis, it is of value to take a closer look into obituaries. Obits have been in circulation in America's newspapers since the 18th century. One of the first appearances of a death notice was in 1704 when the *Boston News-Letter* published a death notice in the paper's first edition (Starck 2005: 270). Later on, longer and more detailed accounts about the lives and deaths of soldiers, public servants, celebrities and adventurers made their way into the American media outlets. With few exceptions, obituaries portrayed the life and death of affluent white males and they focused on the individual's character. During a brief period at the beginning of the 19th century, obits were written in verse form. For instance, on March 17, 1917, The *Delaware Gazette Ohio*, published an obituary of a man named Guy Swain who chased a raccoon and fell from a tree and died: "A precious one is gone/ A voice we loved is still, /A place is vacant in our home/ Which never can be filled. / O Guy, it seemed so bad/ The way you had to go..." (*Funeral Consumer Information Society 2011*). In the early 1880s, obituaries focused on depicting graphic details of the cause of death. For example, the obituary of the president Theodore Roosevelt published on January 19, 1919 in the *New York Times*, included "an elaborate description of the blood clot that detached itself from a vein and entered the lungs" (ibid). In the 20th century, these announcements of death started focusing more on accomplishments and church and community affiliations than on people's characters. The obituaries' journey into the modern era has not escaped the influence of technology. Online sites such as Legacy.com started buying obituaries from newspapers, and innovative methods to publish them such as multimedia tributes and obit blogs, also entered the scene.

Obituary texts are customarily written by the newspaper's staff or by family members. Staff-written obituaries, for the most part, eulogize prominent community, national and international individuals, by recording their death and a list of remarkable achievements at no cost. They are formulaic and predictable and are not usually influenced by personal opinions or particular points of views. In general, issues related to obituaries' length, content, format and presentation are subjected to the newspaper's policies and guidelines. Many entries were staff-written obituaries portraying the lives of celebrities such as writers, composers, politicians, activists, actors and scientists. These obituaries consistently appeared in most of the newspapers.

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Family-written obituaries, on the other hand, are not necessarily neutral and objective. The order of the elements is less predictable, and these obituaries typically include laudatory comments about the deceased. The list of survivors is not restricted to the immediate family, but includes the extended family as well. Decisions in terms of length, content and style are made by the family members who paid for the publication. The cost of obituaries will depend on the newspaper's pricing policies. Some papers charge by the word, others charge by the number of lines or the number of inches printed. The cost also depends on the number of days the obituary is carried, as well as on the day of the week it is published. The average cost in 2012, was \$298.00 for twenty lines and a picture (*FuneralResources.com*).

Space and visibility of obits seems to have a correlation to the status of the departed and his or her professional accomplishments, suggesting perhaps that family deem necessary to provide more information by which the deceased should be remembered. Family-written obituaries about academicians, for example, were among the longest. The obituary length in the sample reveals that most of the obituaries are in the range of 100-299 or 300-499 words, which is consistent with the length of obituaries in general. Forty-six percent are in the range of 100 or 299 words (see table below). This can be related to the cost for publishing an obituary. Obituaries with fewer than 100 words have limited information and are included in the category of death notices².

² Death notices and obituaries are not interchangeable terms. Death notices are passing notes that provide minimal biographical information, announce the funeral arrangements and give instructions in regard to donations. They usually run as classified advertisements.

Table 1: Obituary Length

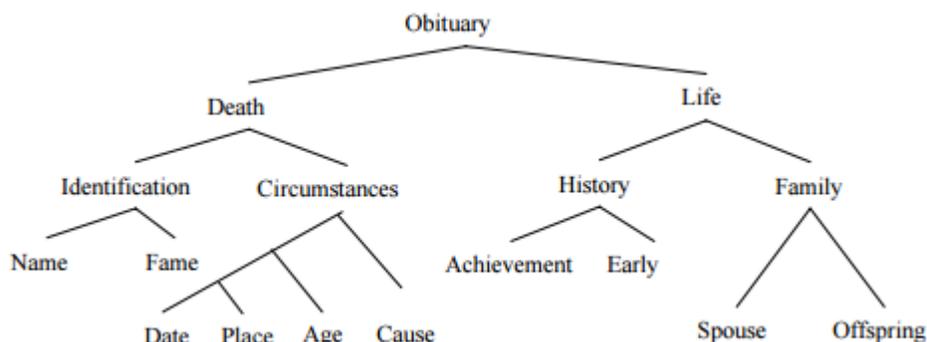
Newspapers	Fewer than 100 words	100-299 Words	300-499 words	500-799 words	800-1000 words	More than 1000
Akron	-	3	1	1	-	-
Dayton	-	7	5	1	-	-
Blade	1	9	12	9	1	-
Enquirer	-	4	1	-	-	-
Dispatch	1	14	9	1	1	-
Plain	-	9	7	1	1	1
Totals	2	46	35	13	3	1

The authoring of obituaries, whether staff-written or family-authored, influences not only obituaries’ texts and the number of thematic components included, but also how the text is structured in terms of the order of components, levels of co-occurrence, and hierarchal organization. In a paper titled “Obituaries and the Discursive Construction of Dying and Living,” Moses and Marelli (2003) apply an interesting text-structure model to analyze staff-written and family-authored obituaries from a sample of obituaries obtained from the *New York Times* between 1983 and 2002 so as to determine how dying and living is understood in today’s society (2003: 123). These graphic representations of text-structure in obituaries published in the *New York Times* are relevant to the present study because of the commonalities in relation to content and arrangement with Ohio newspapers, especially the family-authored obituaries.

The structural representation below shows the thematic components included in a staff-written or staff-edited obituary and how they relate internally to one another. In newspaper-produced obituaries the components are typically predictable and linear.

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Figure 1 Staff-Written Text Structure Model³



Source: Moses and Marelli (2003: 126)

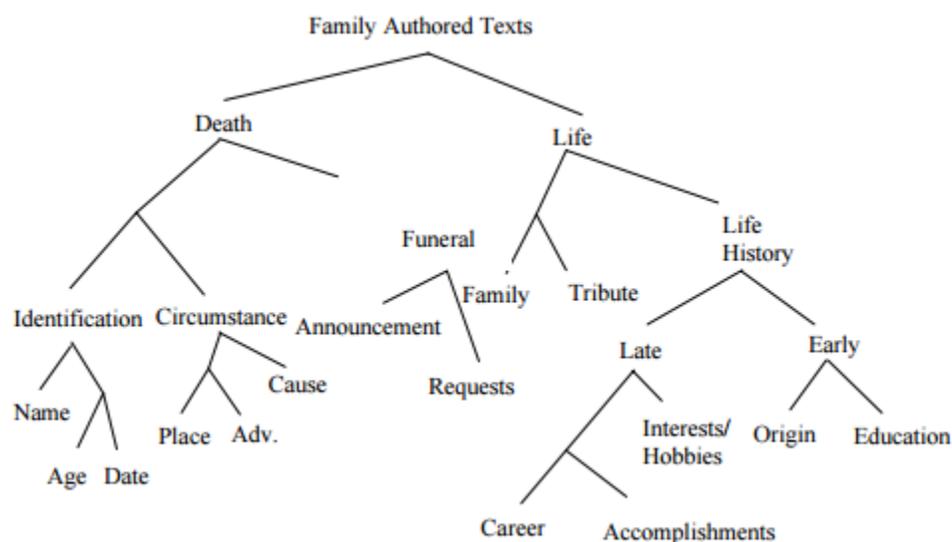
By contrast, the information in the second structural model representing family-written texts is less objective and more varying than the former. Additional elements such as accounts of the individual's education, interests and hobbies, information about funeral arrangements and a request for donations are included. According to Moses and Marelli (2003), subjectivity in these texts is present, for instance, in the added information in regard to the place of death (city, hospital or home) and the use of expressions to modify death, such as “peaceful,” “suddenly” and “in his or her sleep.” Traces of subjectivity are also evident in the number of extended family members listed in the kinship section and how the intimacy of these relationships is expressed by adjectives such as “dear sister,” “loving grandmother” and “beloved daughter” (128).

Subjectivity referring to the profession or motivation to translation can also be observed in this study, which reveals that a considerable number of translators in Ohio were involved in translation as a consequence of being immigrants, language professors, musicians or soldiers, and also because they volunteered to translate for organizations, immigrant community centers, family members and friends.

³ Obituaries in general are similarly structured. The first component is usually the announcement of the dead followed by the biographical sketch (education, career, personal interests and accomplishments) family information and funeral arrangements.

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Figure 2 Family-Authored Text Structure Model



Source: Moses and Marelli (2003: 126)

3. The Use of Obituaries in Research

Whereas obituaries have not been specifically studied in translation studies before, the use of obituaries in sociology, cultural studies, gender studies, psychology, history and sociolinguistics is not uncommon and has been increasing since the early 1990s. Studies based on obituaries target a wide variety of issues, including race, gender stereotypes, perceptions about death and life, demographics of the deceased, society values, portrayal of professions and marital and family patterns. In 1994, for instance, Kinnier et al. (1994) analyzed obituaries published in the *American Psychologist* between 1979 and 1990 so as to create a model demographic profile of the deceased and a ranking of the most frequently occurring value themes. A study conducted in Ohio by Matcha (1995) examined marital and family patterns such as age at marriage, marital status at time of death and number of surviving children and their offspring in obituary notices for a one-year period from a newspaper in Northwest Ohio. In Britain, Bytheway and Johnson (1996) analyzed 86 obituaries published in *The Guardian* in June 1995, paying particular

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attention to how obituaries covered the biography, age, ill-health, death and personal relationships of the deceased. A study carried out by Rodler et al. (2001) and a follow-up research by Kinnier et al. (1994) investigated changes in gender stereotypes in obituaries of women and men in leadership positions as published in four German-language newspapers between 1974 and 1998.

More in-depth studies on obituaries have become books, as is the case of Mushira Eid's *The World of Obituaries: Gender Across Cultures and Over Time* (2002) and Janice Hume's book *Obituaries in American Culture* (2002). In her book, Eid compares family-written obituaries published in the *New York Times* with those published in newspapers in Egypt and Iran so as to scrutinize how gender and gender-related differences are represented. On her part, Janice Hume examines 8,000 newspaper obituaries from 1818 to 1930 to show what they reveal about the American culture and how, in memorializing individual citizens, obituaries make a public expression of values in a given time. Obituaries in the 19th century, for example, portrayed mainly the person's character of particularly white males. At the time, values were on work and wealth of a more diverse population. The issues being addressed by both authors can be relevant and functional in translation studies research. For instance, Eid's approach may be valuable in a study to compare whether the role of female and male translators is perceived differently by the public. Hume's approach, on the other hand, can be useful to explore how the translation profession was viewed in different eras.

Particularly relevant to the present study is Dilevko and Gottlieb's study on "The Portrayal of Librarians in Obituaries at the End of the Twentieth Century" (2004). The authors examined the obituaries of librarians in the *New York Time (NYT)* between 1977 and 2002 to determine how librarians were portrayed by a major newspaper. The data revealed interesting facts. For instance, the emphasis on large-scale achievements in the obituaries produced an image of librarianship as a glamorous profession, far from the stereotyped image of a shy, dowdy, and sheltered individual. Some librarians were presented as sleuths and detectives who amassed large collections. Others were players on the global stage, founding libraries abroad and creating international guidelines that led to institutional progress. Contrary to what was expected—

female-intense profession— 63.4 percent of the obituaries in the *NYT* chronicled the live of male librarians.

Moses and Marelli's (2003) study also utilizes samples of obituaries obtained from the *New York Times* for the period from 1983 to 2002 to determine how dying and living are assimilated in today's society. Finally, in his paper "Posthumous Parallel and Parallax: The Obituary Revival in Three Continents," Starck (2005) analyzes issues of origin, definition, authorship and editorial practice in this dying journalistic art in Britain, Australia and the United States. As in other disciplines, obituary-based studies in translation research addressing issues such as the public perception of the translation profession or the profiling of translators in particular geographical areas are also plausible.

4. Data-Gathering Methodology

In the present study, six major newspapers from the six most populated cities in the state of Ohio were selected based on reported circulation figures: *The Plain Dealer* of Cleveland, for instance, has a daily circulation of 246,571, followed by the *The Cincinnati Enquirer* with a circulation of 146, 511. The newspaper that sells the most copies in the state's capital of Columbus, *The Columbus Dispatch*, has a circulation of 136,023. Next in rank are *The Blade* in Toledo with a reported circulation of 94,215, *The Daily News* in Dayton with an estimated circulation of 93,425, and *Akron Beacon Journal* with 88,040 (Cision 2012). The sample included 100 obituaries between the years 2000 and 2015, distributed as follows: *The Blade*: 32 obituaries; *The Columbus Dispatch*: 26; *The Plain Dealer*: 19; *The Dayton Daily*: 13; *The Cincinnati Enquirer*: 5; and the *Akron Beacon Journal*: 5.

This study has two types of timeframe. The first is related to the selected time when obituaries were published, which is between the years 2000 and 2015. The starting point was chosen because newspapers online resources did not yet provide online records of obituaries prior to the year 2000. It is assumed that the digitization of newspapers obituaries for commercial purposes most likely started in 2000. The second timeframe relates to the lifespans of these translators

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between 1914 and 2015. It is important to add that the number of obituaries thus identified coincidentally ended up at 100 without any type of manipulation of the sample.

Without exception, access to obituaries in the six newspapers was through Legacy.com, the world's largest commercial provider of online memorials and obituaries, located in Evanston, Illinois. It collaborates with 1,500 newspapers in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the U.K. and Europe and hosts an estimated of 20 million obituaries (*Legacy.com* 2014). The fact that the company was only founded in 1998 could explain why obituaries from earlier years were not provided by online resources. Queries could be submitted directly through the newspapers directly or through Legacy.com. Figure 3 shows the information required whether in the obituary section in the newspaper or in the Legacy.com website. The terms 'translator' or 'translation' were entered in the keyword field yielding identical results. By contrast, the drop down menu related to date had several options including 'today,' 'past three or seven days,' 'past six months,' 'past year,' 'all time,' 'specific date' and 'date range.' The selected option was 'all time.' In some newspaper, such as *The Toledo Blade* membership was a requirement to access the data.

Figure 3: Format of the Search

The image shows a search interface titled "Search Results". At the top, there are two radio buttons: "By person" (selected) and "By town". Below this are several input fields: "First Name", "Last Name", and "Keyword". To the right of the "Keyword" field is a calendar icon and a dropdown menu set to "Today". Below these are three dropdown menus: "United States", "Ohio", and "The Plain Dealer". At the bottom right, there are two buttons: "Reset" and "Search". At the bottom left, it says "Powered by Legacy.com".

Source: *The Plain Dealer* (2015)

For the six newspapers, the query yielded an average of 130 obituaries that included the keywords 'translation(s),' 'translator(s),' 'translate' or 'translated' in their text. Excluded from

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the sample were entries in which the verb ‘translate’ was used in its connotative meaning of “to bear, remove, or change from one place, state, form or appearance to another” (Merriam-Webster.com 2015). For example, “He brought intelligence, style and heart to his work — qualities that translated to our company and inspired those of us who were fortunate to work alongside him” (*Legacy.com* 2014). A great number of obituaries which contained the word ‘translators’ associated with donations to Wycliffe Bible Translators were not included in the corpus as well.

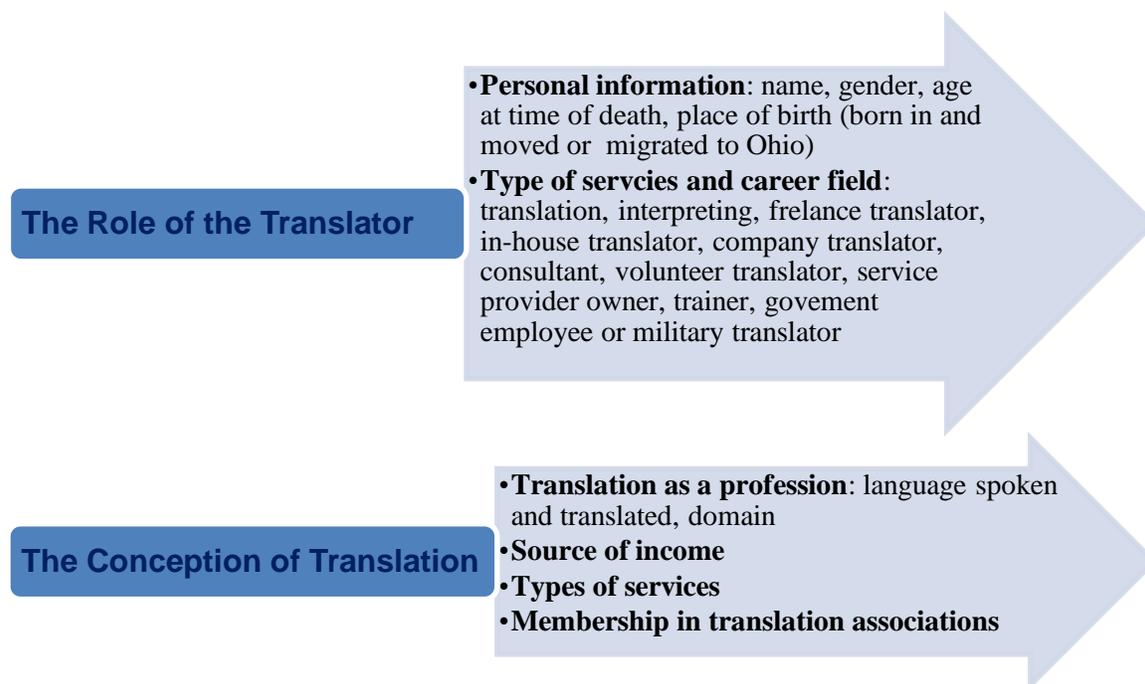
The selection of obituaries was based on: (1) the individual was born in Ohio, lived in Ohio, moved or migrated to Ohio at one point in their lives; and (2) the individual was a translator, interpreter, translation agency owner, in-house translator, company translator, free-lance translator, volunteer translator, government translator, consultant, or interpreted and/or translated when serving in the military.

The majority of the obituaries were family-authored. A few were unmistakably death notices because of the limited information offered. On the other hand, obituaries portraying university professors included lengthy and elaborated descriptions of the deceased’s academic and professional accomplishments. Conventions regarding the layout and the order of components were maintained consistently throughout all the newspapers, although some variations were inevitable. Almost all obituaries contained the following components arranged hierarchically as follows: (1) the name of the deceased; (2) date and place of death; (3) age; (4) place of birth; (5) parents; (6) military service; (7) education; (8) professional career and places he or she worked; (9) interests and hobbies; (10) survivors; (11) funeral arrangements and donation information.

The selection of items was driven by the main objective of this study: constructing the social and cultural history of translators and translation. The selected items are grouped under two main categories and six subcategories (see chart 2 below) to facilitate understanding. However, a coherent interpretation of the data requires the analysis of the content as a whole due to the inextricably intertwined relationship between the translation profession and the role of translator, which also makes unavoidable the overlapping of subcategories and items—types of services can be also included as a subcategory of the task of translation. Age at the time of death, for

example, supports information about type of services as in the case of individuals who played the role of translators and interpreters in the different American wars (WWII, Korea and Vietnam). Likewise, languages spoken and translated and domain are closely related to place of birth, immigration and mobility patterns. For instance, in geographical areas where universities have a greater presence, most translators were literature and language professors. Whereas items such as personal information data, place of birth and type of service were common denominators across the sample, source of income, career field and language spoken and translated were not found in all obituaries. The items “Born in” and “Moved or Migrated to Ohio” appear together in Table 5. Statistics on career field and type of service and language spoken and translated were too large to be presented in table form, hence there were not included in this published version.

Chart 2: Categories and Subcategories



5. Interpretation of the Data

5.1 *The Role of the Translator*

The first step in reconstructing the life of ordinary translators and the social and cultural history of translation through obituaries is to take a closer look at the role of the translator in a given community. A good start is the listing of basic details such as age at the time of death, gender and place of birth, which should be studied in light of their relationship with other subcategories. Twenty-two obituaries mention individual interpreting and/or translating during WWII and other U.S. wars when they were young and before they started their professional careers. The quantitative data, on the other hand, shows that seventy-two percent of the profiled translators died between the ages of 70 and 99. The highest percentage (35%) died between the ages of 80 and 89. One translator died before fifty (25 years old), and two died after reaching 100 years of age. According to the data, life expectancy among translators in Ohio is high and coincides with the national rate of 81%. Obituaries can also be useful in research that includes variables such as mortality rate of translators. In this sample, age at the time of death relates to type of service category. It allows the corroboration of information—included in obituaries as well—about the participation of individuals in the different wars.

Table 3: Age at Death

Age Range	Under 50	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	100 +	Not Provided	Total
Akron	-	1	1	-	2	1	-	-	5
Dayton	-	1	3	3	2	3	-	1	13
Blade	1	1	1	6	15	5	1	2	32
Enquirer	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	3	5
Dispatch	-	2	3	6	12	2	1	-	26
Plain	-	-	3	4	3	6	-	3	19
Totals	1	5	11	20	35	17	2	9	100

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A second important item in this subcategory is gender. The results in Table 4 suggest that there are more male translators than female translators in the state of Ohio and that the highest concentration of translators is in Toledo. The percentage for female translators (40%) is lower than the national rate of 52.2% for women in the labor force, and even lower than the proportion of women in translation in other geographical areas, which is about 70% and above⁴ (Pym et al. 2012: 85). Other surveys, such as the one conducted among 1,140 interpreters in North America, found that 76% of interpreters were women (Kelly et al. 2010: 9). According to Kelly, one common explanation for this predominance of women is the degree to which part-time and freelance work can fit in with having and bringing up children (2010:86). In contrast, the low percentage of women in the field in this study might suggest that being a part-timer or a freelancer is so commonplace that it may not be worth mentioning as an achievement in their live. To men, on the other hand, voluntary service would be a matter of pride.

Table 4: Gender

Newspaper	Male	Female	Total
Akron Beacon Journal	5	-	5
Dayton Daily	9	4	13
The Blade	16	16	32
The Cincinnati Enquirer	2	3	5
The Columbus Dispatch	15	11	26
The Plain Dealer	13	6	19
Totals	60	40	100

The third component of this subcategory is place of birth and mobility of translators in Ohio. A large number of obituaries found in the newspapers under consideration were about individuals who were not born, or did not live or work in Ohio; they just happened to die in Ohio. Also,

⁴ Information obtained from the report sponsored by the European Union about the status of the translation profession, which is based on previous surveys and input from some 100 experts and informants. For purposes of comparison, data from Australia, Canada and the United States are included (Pym et al. 2012: 3).

families who lived in Ohio published an obituary of a family member who was a translator but was born, lived and worked in another state or country. These obituaries were not included in the sample. The selection criterion was based on whether translators were born in, moved or migrated to Ohio: (1) the translator was born, lived and worked in Ohio; (2) the translator was born in Ohio, but his or her translation work was performed outside of the state of Ohio and (3) the translator was not born in the state of Ohio; but did his or her translation work in Ohio. The results found that 71% of translators moved or migrated to Ohio. These results reflect migration patterns in Ohio, which in turn relate to other important issues such as type of service, domain and languages spoken and translated.

Migration trends in Ohio can answer questions such as why a great amount of translators were also engineers and scientists or why translation seems to be a common job for immigrants who were bilingual and multilingual. Migration has been an ever present phenomenon in Ohio's history since its foundation in the mid-18th century. First, as a consequence of being an important route for migrants moving south, west and north; and later, in the 19th century, as a result of becoming a global industrial and manufacturing center. Major companies, such the Dow Chemical Company, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and Ohio Automobile Company, were established in Ohio attracting an influx of immigrants into the region. The first major wave of immigration to Ohio was from northwest Europe, mainly from Germany and Ireland, in the eighteenth century as a result of economic hardship in Europe. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the need for labor and entrepreneurial skill in industrial cities like Cleveland was a major attraction for immigrant groups from south and east Europe between 1870 and 1914, among them Poles, Lithuanians, Slovenians, Astro-Hungarians, Italians, Greeks and Slovaks. During this period, the persecution of Jews in Europe also fostered an increase of Jewish settlements in Cleveland. According to the historian George W. Knepper, in 1900, 75% percent of Cleveland's population was either foreign-born or first generation descendant of foreign born. He further adds that, "more than forty languages could be heard on the streets of Cleveland"

(*Ohio Memory*, 2014)⁵. Since the 1950s non-European migrants, Asian and Hispanics constitute the latest immigrant groups moving to Ohio.

Table 5: Place of birth and mobility of Translators in Ohio

Newspaper	Born in Ohio	Moved or Migrated to Ohio	Totals
Akron Beacon Journal	3	2	5
Dayton Daily	4	9	13
The Blade	7	25	32
The Cincinnati Enquirer	-	5	5
The Columbus Dispatch	12	14	26
The Plain Dealer	3	16	19
Totals	29	71	100

Type of services and academic background were combined in one subcategory because, for the most part, academic background influences the type of translation-related service carried out. One explanation for this correlation is that only 12% of the translators in the sample were full-time translators or had translation as their main source of income. For instance, a literary translator was in most cases a university professor of languages or related subjects, and a technical or scientific translator was usually working as an engineer in a company. The results show that there are some geographical areas where the translators were mostly professors. One reason could be that universities have a greater presence in those areas as is the case of Bowling Green State University close to Toledo and Ohio State University in Columbus. There were also several scientific translators working for Battelle Memorial Institute, a private nonprofit applied science and technology development company based in Columbus.

⁵ Maria Tymoczko, a Cleveland native, in the introduction of her book *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007), talks passionately about Cleveland’s multilingual environment and how it shaped her conceptualization of translation and the way she thinks about translation.

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Volunteer translation was done mainly to help immigrants with medical appointments and legal issues. Volunteer translation was reported most conspicuously in some newspapers than others, suggesting perhaps that there is a correlation between volunteer translation and average income of a particular area with a higher proportion of non-native speakers of English who might require translation or interpreting services. On several occasions obituaries mention women helping members of their immigrant community to translate letters from loved ones. The focus on translation as a volunteer service, analyzed under the light of the microhistory framework, communicates the idea of an altruist profession composed of unselfish individuals who use their highly appreciated skills for the benefit of others. These subjective accounts by ordinary people reflect the collective values of a society.

Similarly, most of the reported military translators/interpreters did this work prior to beginning their professional careers, especially during the Korean War and World War II. The idea of translation as service provided in wars seems to be considered as an esteemed respectful achievement that made the family proud. There were 19 different types of service reported, some very unusual—such as creator of a foreign translation software program, translator of Old German script, translator of lyrics, translation of the Lorrha-Stowe Missal, not to mention translation researchers. Twenty-two percent of the translators had been military translators/interpreters. Although the distinction between interpreters and translators was not made, information about the war, the languages involved and the duty performed were clearly established in the obituaries. There is mention of an individual who participated as an interpreter in the Nuremberg trials. Volunteer translation accounts for 14%, followed by a tie between literary translation and freelancers⁶.

⁶ The number of freelancers in the European Union range from 50 to 89 percent, depending on the country and the sector. (Pym et al. 2012: 89)

5.2 The Conception of Translation

Needless to say, a first and main component in the category of the conception of translation is languages spoken and translated. There were 24 languages reported in the sample. Some of them were less common languages including Yiddish, Provençal, Latin, Hungarian and Catalan. The results also show 28 language combinations. Fourteen of these included a third language (for example, English-Spanish-German). The most common language pair was Spanish-English at 15%. Some obituaries reported of individuals translating five, eight or many languages. One entry indicated that the translator translated Danish, French and Spanish and had knowledge of German and other Scandinavian languages. This may reflect the perception of the public that language competence is generally associated with translation. On the other hand, there is not enough information to make a clear distinction between languages spoken by the deceased and languages translated by the deceased. As expected, there is no mention of directionality. Sixteen percent of the obituaries in the sample did not mention any language at all. For further research, it will be interesting to study the relationship between languages and the demographics of the region.

In terms of main source of income, the findings show that only 12% of these Ohio translators were fulltime translators or their main source of income was translation; 88% had other sources of income. According to Wolf (2009) translators are often professionally active in other occupations as well. More importantly, however, is the fact the family, relatives and friends of the departed, by listing translation accomplishments instead of achievements related to their main careers (engineering, scientists and academicians), seems to value translation accomplishments over other accomplishments, contradicting the generalized stereotype of translation as a low-status profession.

Table 6: Main Source of Income

Newspaper	Yes	No	Totals
Akron Beacon Journal	-	5	5
Dayton Daily	2	11	13
The Blade	2	30	32
The Cincinnati Enquirer	-	5	5
The Columbus Dispatch	6	20	26
The Plain Dealer	2	17	19
Totals	12	88	100

In regard to domains, most of the information obtained was deduced from the type of services performed by the translators and from information about their professional background. Literary translation was the most popular domain at 12%. The medical, technical and scientific domains were the next highest in rank. These findings can be explained by the high percentage of professors who were also literary translators. The percentages of these three categories somewhat reflect the finding of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014)—that is, professional, scientific and technical services 30% and health care services 13%. It also coincides with Hammond’s study which shows that literary translators and scientific and technical translators are also university professors of translation and foreign languages (1987: 139). Kelly et al.’s study about interpreting in North America reports that “health care is clearly the area where interpreters work most frequently (29.91%). Once again, these statistics seems to reinforce the public perception of translation as an esteemed profession.

Table 7: Domain

Domain	Literary	Technical	Scientific	Medical	Commercial	Legal
Akron	1	-	-	-	-	-
Dayton	-	-	-	-	-	1
Blade	4	4	-	1	-	2
Enquirer	1	-	-	-	-	-
Dispatch	3	1	4	1	-	1
Plain	3	1	-	1	-	
Totals	12	6	4	3	-	4

Surely, in this sample, professionalism was not defined by academic qualifications (in many instances it cannot be inferred from the information provided that the deceased had an academic degree) or by affiliation attained by authentication. Membership in translation associations, for example, was considered an important fact to record. Four obituaries reported this information. Three of these translators belonged to the American Translation Association (ATA) and one belonged to the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI). This mentioning of membership in the International Translator Association was the only connection this individual had to translation. According to the bylaws of IAPTI (2015), in order to be admitted as an active member into the organization the individual has to possess a diploma as a translator or interpreter issued by a recognized institution or has had a minimum of four years of experience as a translator or interpreter. The inclusion of this person in the study was based on the assumption that the he or she complied with the requirements of admittance of IAPTI.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In making the case for the value of obituaries as unconventional primary source of information to construct the social and cultural history of translators and translation, the main argument is that obituaries, especially through the subjectivity of the authors, show how certain occupations or roles in society are perceived in specific communities at a given time. Other extra-textual sources such as census data and data obtained from research about occupational status of translation may provide information about translator demographics and statistical information about the status of the profession. Interviews, biographies or memoirs, on the other hand, provide information “about the process of translation and condition under which it takes place” (Munday 2014: 70). However, a more detailed study that includes aspects such as how translation as a profession is defined within a social context, what is the role of translators or how the image of translators is reconstructed from the perspective of ordinary members of any given community will demand the consideration of other sources of information. It is here that obituaries particularly useful. By commemorating rather than chronicling the life of the deceased, obituaries become an invaluable source of information to understand the role of the translator in a community and translation as a social activity based on the concept of the translator as a subject, which correlates with the latest trends in translation studies that give preference to the individual involved in the act of translation over the process or the product, and reconstruct “a contextualized sociocultural “microhistory” of translation and translators” (2014: 64). The fact that family members, friends or associates decided to include detailed information related to translation in such a reduced space suggests, to cite Janice Hume, “what society values and wants to remember about that person’s history” (2002: 12). In this case study, these subjective accounts highlight the social visibility of the translator and his or her power and influence within their context. Whereas translation stakeholders, critics, theoreticians concentrate on how productive translators are or how visible they are through their translations, society values how these individuals served their country and their communities (e.g., migrants who were bilingual and multilingual). Translation in obituaries is also presented as a multipurpose task. There were more than 19 different types of service reported ranging from the most general community service such as a family members serving as a translator in a medical or legal setting to those found in more specialized contexts such as military translator and translator researchers. Additionally, data collected in this study

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indicates that the role of the translator as well as characteristics of the profession were consistent with social, economic, cultural, political and historical-geographical tendencies (e.g., immigration patterns, political events, society values) at the time, manifested not only at regional level but also at national level, making the use of obituaries for the study of translators available to other demographic areas.

With regard to limitations, most of these have been addressed by categories in the data interpretation section, although there are some broader limitations to this study that must be mentioned in general terms, such as, data accuracy, limited information and levels of subjectivity in terms of description in family-authored obituaries. With regard to objectivity and accuracy, obituaries may seem too elusive as a source of information since they are idealized accounts of life events and achievements. Whereas subjectivity is a strong argument in favor of the use of obituaries in research, the aggrandizements of the deceased's virtues and professional accomplishments with the purpose of linking the family to an important past can have a misleading effect on the results. In the same way, the lack of understanding of translation by the writer of the obituary, very common phenomenon among people outside the translation discipline, affects the classification of the type of services, thereby affecting the accuracy of the data. A case in point is the indiscriminate use of the terms 'translator' and 'interpreter' to refer to different translational acts. Moreover, the failure to use the correct prepositions to denote language directionality, such as 'into,' 'from' and 'to', may prompt researchers to make conjectures about languages spoken and language translated. Finally, obituaries are not all-inclusive. There may be translators whose translation activities were not listed; thus, a study based on obituaries could be triangulated with other post-hoc accounts including memoirs, autobiographies and translator's correspondence.

The findings of this study are not conclusive or final. This is a preliminary attempt to investigate the unexplored use of obituaries as sources to study translators and translation within a particular social, cultural and linguistic context in a specific area. Further research will demand the inclusion of larger samples and other types of selection criteria (e.g. same geographical areas but different eras). In terms of future research, obituaries can be used to study whether the report of a large number of volunteer translators is influenced by the average income of a certain region and

to compare Ohio with a state(s) with different demographics. Also, research can be conducted to find out how to use language pairs reported in obituaries to trace immigration patterns in a particular area or to compare whether the role of female and male translators is perceived differently by the public. In short, there are a myriad of research possibilities with regard to this topic waiting to be explored.

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