

Managing Translation Projects: Practices and quality in production networks

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, translation workplaces have been substantially transformed by technological developments and by the emergence of production networks in which a language service provider (LSP) acts as an intermediary between translator and client. However, there is little research into how technologies are integrated in the various translation workplaces found in production networks. My research aims at enhancing our understanding of translation project management and translation quality in production networks by conceptualizing project management as a practice.

For this empirical study, a data set was collected based on 60 hours of workplace observations within a UK-based LSP and 10 semi-structured interviews with four project managers (PMs) and one vendor manager (VM). Drawing on concepts from practice theory, the study analyses routinized enactments of the practice by PMs, their integration of information technologies into such enactments, their understanding of translation quality, and their strategies to achieve quality in the translation production process.

This thesis proposes that the practice of translation project management is deeply embedded into a larger complex of interdependent translation production practices. A practice-theoretical framework emphasises the socio-material and collective nature of the practice. My study demonstrates that project management is a joint effort between PMs and other actors in translation production. Based on an analysis of how PMs use CAT tools and an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system when they are managing translation projects, I argue that technologies are inextricably linked with enactments of production practices, and that they form part of the social structures surrounding the practice. The application of practice theory affords a new understanding of skills, or competence, in which the engagement in professional activities is vital, and in which building competence is an ongoing process. Finally, I suggest that buyers of translation products, i.e. clients, substantially contribute to translation quality, as PMs carry out project management based on the notion of translation as a service.

KEYWORDS: project management, professional translation, practice theory, quality, technologies, network, sociology, vendor manager, workplace studies

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