

The Dynamics of Extratextual Translatorship in Contemporary Sweden: A Mixed Methods Approach

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with Swedish translators and the society in which they work. It begins with an exploration of the concept of translatorship, leading up to a three-part distinction of 1) textual translatorship, 2) paratextual translatorship, and 3) extratextual translatorship. Adopting a mixed methods approach, the empirical body of the thesis consists of three studies in which different aspects of extratextual translatorship – defined as the translator’s social role – are investigated. In doing so, the thesis makes new and valuable contributions to the field of agent-oriented translation sociology.

The first study explores translators’ perceptions of translatorship using data collected through a widely distributed questionnaire. It employs a comparative approach derived from questionnaire-based studies originally designed by Helle V. Dam and Karen Korning Zethsen and previously conducted in Denmark and Finland. Although the group of respondents are fractionalised in many respects, perceptions concerning both the profession’s characteristics and its value on a societal level are highly unanimous. Statistical tests, however, reveal interesting nuances within the broader unanimity. Furthermore, in relation to previous research on translator status conducted in Denmark and Finland, the results display significant similarities but also some noteworthy differences. The second study investigates the ongoing socialisation of two groups of translation students in the process of becoming translators through a longitudinal focus group study. The data, collected over the course of two years, are analysed through deductive thematic analysis. A special emphasis is placed upon exploring the contextual structures in which the students’ socialisation processes are embedded and the structural factors influencing it. In the third study, in-depth interviews were conducted with five individual translators with different specialisations. Using deductive thematic analysis, the functions of their translatorships are investigated from an individual-centred perspective focusing on their respective roles as translators on an individual, professional and societal level, which correspond, respectively, to a concern for personal satisfaction, a sense of social community, and a higher purpose. Such a framework distinguishes and differentiates individual translators’ approaches to the profession while simultaneously providing an encompassing picture of the different functions of translatorship in translators’ lives.

Overall, the thesis adopts a mixed methods approach in order to generate greater understanding of the dynamics of translatorship in contemporary Sweden. Targeting different levels of

translatorship, it unravels a number of significant social dimensions of translatorship, such as the social recognition needed in order to become a translator. Together, the studies also point towards a number of common features as especially relevant for translatorship in contemporary Sweden, namely individualism, entrepreneurialism, collectiveness, translator status, responsibility and exit, i.e. the prospect of leaving the profession. Taken as a whole, the thesis demonstrates the value of a mixed methods approach in the field of agent-oriented translation sociology by shedding considerable light on the links between the translator and society and indicating further avenues through which these links can continue to be explored.

KEYWORDS: extratextual translatorship; mixed methods research; sociology of translators; translation sociology; translatorship; qualitative longitudinal research

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