When Translation Goes Digital:
Case Studies and Critical Reflections

DESJARDINS, RENÉE; CLAIRE LARSONNEUR; & PHILIPPE LACOUR. (eds). 2021. *When Translation Goes Digital: Case Studies and Critical Reflections*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

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When Translation Goes Digital attempts to take a closer look at how Digital Humanities has influenced the discipline of Translation Studies in general. Digital Humanities refers to the application of digital tools and resources in the field of humanities. This becomes especially relevant today, where technology has pervaded every aspect of day-to-day life. Thus, this book endeavours to reach beyond the conventional themes of Machine Translation (MT), Computer Assisted Translation (CAT), and Translation Memory (TM) that arise whenever the terms "Translation" and "Digital" appear together, and instead considers "translation as a social practice" altogether taking into account the digitization of human lives (2021: 3).

This book has 3 Parts and 10 chapters, with case studies and contributions from around the world, including Algeria, Brazil, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and the UK, adding to the plurality of perspectives.

Part I, titled "Redefining Human Agency", contains three chapters that take a critical look between Man and Machine, as far as translation is concerned.

In "Human and Non-Human Crossover: Translators Partnering with Digital Tools", Iulia Mihalache takes a look at how human behaviour is impacted by technology. The chapter highlights how augmented technology, by emulating human cognition, could enhance the way we process information. The application of augmented translation can very well result in the creation of "super-human translators" (2021: 27) who are able

to venture beyond automatized tasks and enhance their efficiency, creative powers, mobility, memory, cognition, and accuracy by combining "technology with biology" (Wong 2016). The author dismisses the claims and fears that human translators will be replaced by machines, but rather opines that they can be synergetic partners.

Boyi Huang, in "Subtitlers' Visibilities on a Spectrum in the Digital Age: A Comparison of Different Chinese Translations of *The Big Bang Theory",* extends the concept of the translator's "invisibility" (Venuti 2008), to the audio-visual spectrum and the subtitling of commercial movies. Till recently, subtitles were controlled by the media production houses. However, with the advent and easier access to digital technologies, many subtitlers (fansubbers) who do not conform to the standard practises of the industry have established their presence online. The chapter makes a comparative analysis of the subtitles of the television series *The Big Bang Theory*, Season 9. It was observed that the frequency of the use of headnotes (extradiegetic information or notes provided at the top of the screen) was nil for the industrial subtitles. On the other hand, fansubbers used headnotes 97 times in order to enable the viewers to understand cultural references, puns/wordplay, and non-verbal contexts. By refusing to adhere to the traditional standards and practices of the industry, by experimenting with the space on the screen, and by enabling greater comprehension for the viewers, the visibility of these fansubbers has increased.

In "You Can't Go Home Again: Moving *afternoon* Forward through Translation," Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette describes the process of translating Michael A. Joyce's *afternoon, a story* (1986), which is also the first work of hyperfiction, into French. Hyperfiction refers to hypertextual nonlinear literary fiction in electronic form having multiple plot progressions

and varying endings based on interactive action by the reader. However, because *afternoon* has become largely inaccessible due to the fact that the software it runs on has become obsolete, its translation involves the twin process of translating both text (between natural languages) and code (between machine languages). Because each word and/or sentence is hyperlinked to another word and/or sentence, special attention must be given in order to transfer the multiple meanings offered by the syntagms while retaining syntactic and semantic coherence (the author cites Joel Gauthier (2012), who mapped *afternoon*, that it contains 532 lexias spread over 31 "levels"). The author wonders if the differences and transformations that have been incurred during the process of translating such a hypertext would result in its deformation, but concludes that this is a necessary process to prevent it from becoming lost due to technological obsolescence.

Part II titled, "Social Platforms and Social Implications", contains four chapters that discuss crowdsourcing, collaboration, multilingualism, and Anglocentrism across social-media websites.

Abdulmohsen Alonayq, in "Narrating Arabic Translation Online: Another Perspective on the Motivations behind Volunteerism in the Translation Sector", examines the factors that prompt volunteers to give their time and effort to certain Arabic translation organizations without expecting compensation in terms of pay. Instead of relying on surveys and interviews where the choices of responses are limited, the author puts forward the case for adopting a socio-narrative approach. Four Arabic translation organizations- Kalima Project, Arab Organization for Translation (AOT), Taghreedat Initiative, and Translation Challenge were examined. Three narratives were found to be common across these four organizations. They were: 1. Perpetuation and legitimization of

the idea that the translators of the Abbasid era (750–1258 CE), considered to be the Golden Age of Islam, were the pioneers of the scientific revolution; consequently, translators are promised the status of builders of knowledge and of a prosperous future; 2. Pushing for governments and institutions to initiate or invest in translation projects (Bridge to Knowledge). 3. The implied shortage of digital content in Arabic (It is believed that Arabic content makes up only 3% of the total digital content on the Internet). The author points out that there are no statistics to support the claim of this supposed shortage of content, but that this narrative is spread in order to motivate volunteer translators to dedicate their time and efforts to enrich digital content in Arabic.

"Are Citizen Science "Socials" Multilingual? Lessons in (Non)translation from Zooniverse" by Renée Desjardins discusses the prevalence of Anglocentrism in academic and scientific circles, with reference to the fact that "over 80% of scientific publication takes place in English" (Montgomery 2009: 7), while only around "6% of the world's population speaks English as a native language" (Bowker & Ciro 2019: 1). The author seeks to identify the factors that perpetuate Anglocentrism, through quantitative and qualitative data collected between 2018 and 2019 from online citizen science projects, which can be defined as "a partnership between volunteers and scientists to answer real-world questions" (Cohn 2008: 193). However, while citizen science has gained popularity around the world, English proficiency has been taken for granted, overlooking the elements of linguistic diversity and the role of translation. The author has taken the *Zooniverse* platform, a highly popular citizen science web portal, for analysis. Of 132 projects available on the platform, 9 have been translated into a total of 15 languages. The author comments that though this would seem like an indicator of

linguistic diversity, it is also a fact that only 6% of the projects in *Zooniverse* is available in a language other than English.

In "Collaboration Strategies in Multilingual Online Literary Translation", Daniel Henkel and Philippe Lacour perform a case study using *TraduXio* "a free, open-source, Web-based collaborative environment for computer-assisted translation" (https://traduxio.org), as a tool to teach translation theory and practice. In the study, 23 students used *TraduXio* to collaborate on translations of short stories or other short texts between English, French and Italian. The paper discusses the various difficulties faced while collaborating, including issues with sharing, time-out or network interruptions resulting in work being lost, lack of formatting options in the software, variation in time zones causing difficulty in synchronizing work and organizing discussions. The participants were required to complete a questionnaire after completion of the project, with an 82.6 percent response rate (2021: 163. The majority of the responses indicated that this was a "positive experience", "formative experience", and that "TraduXio is a useful tool" (2021: 163-164). The participants also responded that seeing the different methods used by the co-translators helped to improve their translations and that the possibilities of multiple interpretations and perspectives enhanced their understanding of the text.

Sung-Eun Cho and Jungye Suh in "Translating Korean Beauty YouTube Channels for a Global Audience" focus on the English subtitling and international viewership of Korean cosmetic products and fashion trends. The chapter begins with a discussion of the features of YouTube such as the interaction between creators and viewers, dynamic page-algorithms, description and tagging of related and recommended videos, possibility of adding links to other videos, multiple languages, and the comments section, which make it inherently

intertextual and heteroglossic. Five Korean beauty YouTube channels (PONY Syndrome, RISABAE, SSIN, Sunny's Channel, and lamuqe) that use English subtitles were selected for analysis on the basis of popularity and number of subscribers/views. Some of the subtitling features that the authors identified were: use of neologisms, creative transcriptions, intentional misspelling, internet/social media slang (chat abbreviations, emoticons), and free use of punctuation marks. These features were intended to engage and entertain the global audience using a lively, conversational, humorous and jovial tone.

Part III titled "Markets, Professional Practice, and Economic Implications" contains three chapters that examine the impact of the digital economy on the translation industry.

In "The Reception of Localized Content: A User-Centered Study of Localized Software in the Algerian Market", Merouan Bendi discusses the different aspects of localization of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office into Arabic, its acceptance, and factors that determine its acceptance or rejection in Algeria. Starting off with defining localization, the chapter maps the linguistic positioning of the different languages in Algeria including Arabic, Amazigh, French, and English, along with numerous other dialects and variations. Data regarding the use of localized software, language proficiency, language use, and demographics were collected through an online survey. The sample size of 33 was rather small, and the results indicated that though 96% of the respondents were fluent in Arabic, only 13% preferred to use the Arabic version of the software with a 45% satisfaction rate, whereas the majority (70%) preferred French (2021: 215). The respondents also indicated that unclear and/or partially translated commands/options presented the greatest difficulty in using the localized version, along with the problem of

culturally inappropriate content (2021: 218). Considerably a larger sample size would be able to provide a clearer picture about these trends.

Akiko Sakamoto, in "The Value of Translation in the Era of Automation: An Examination of Threats", adopts a sociological approach by analysing automation against the symbolic value of translation as a work. The author begins by citing a report by Frey & Osborne which ranks the job of "Interpreters and Translators" as 265 out of 702 jobs in the order in which they are most resistant to automation due to the necessary involvement of human agency (2013: 62). The chapter then proceeds to discuss the various systems of Machine Translation (MT), and how advances in Neural Machine Translation (NMT) has enabled pattern-recognition in computers, which was till recently considered as a human-cognitive process. At the elemental level, translation is essentially a process of pattern-recognition. However, on a higher level, formal, sociocultural, and cognitive proficiency becomes necessary in order to produce high-quality translations (Izquierdo & Ressureccio 2001: 136). Therefore, while computers are unable to contribute in terms of quality of translation, their ability to recognize patterns has resulted in MT being able to produce translations at a much faster rate and higher quantity than human translators. The author conducted a case study with 22 translation project managers, who were supervising translation tasks. The respondents stated that the use of MT by human translators who were hired to deliver translated works was ethically/morally inappropriate. However, Post-Editing of Machine Translation (MTPE), was considered to be a viable option when forced to work for lower rates with faster deadlines. It is also interesting that the project managers tended to symbolically place value upon human translation due to the perception of this activity as being hard and involving suffering. Medical, legal, patent and IT were

identified as industries that would require only raw-MT without post-editing, in the near future. However, marketing, entertainment, and political speeches still require close human intervention due to factors of culture and context.

In the final chapter titled, "Neural Machine Translation: From Commodity to Commons?", Claire Larsonneur examines whether the rise of Artificial Intelligence in MT has resulted in translation being viewed more as a digital commons (resource accessible to everyone), rather than as a commodity (which has economic value and must be paid for). With regards to pricing, translation service providers have shifted towards translation packages rather than billing for volume. On the other hand, individual/freelance translators continue to charge per word. Neural Machine Translation (NMT) has resulted in these per-word rates falling lower and lower, while at the same time increasing the demand for post-editing. This has resulted in an increase in revenue for translation service providers, while side-lining freelancers. The increased pervasiveness of NMT has shifted the perception of translation from that of a labour-intensive activity or highly-skilled task, to an activity that is instant, automated, and free. However, the author also raises doubts about the "legal, social, and political implications" of NMT with questions of "transparency, accountability and standardization" (2021: 265). Another disconcerting fact highlighted is that most NMT research is taking place in the USA and in China, which causes concerns about infringing upon users' privacy, censorship, and the propagation of fake information. As far as legal issues are concerned, there is no human accountability for events that could happen due to the possibility of inaccuracy, unreliability, or mistranslation. In addition, the prevalence of NMT will result in the standardization of languages and the digital colonization of English with the subsequent digital extinction of minor languages.

When Translation Goes Digital: Case Studies and Critical Reflections takes a critical look at how Digital Humanities has impacted translation as a profession, and Translation Studies as a discipline. With chapters presenting studies from different regions, the readers are presented a small cross-sectional view of this impact around the globe. Since the sample sizes in the case studies are comparatively small, the results can be taken only as a first look at the changing trends in TS caused by the digital age. Continued studies from more regions, with larger samples, would lead to a deeper understanding of the implications of digitalisation upon translation.

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